The Role of Organizational Learning and Social Networks in School Improvement: A Case Study of Corrective Action Schools

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving family. First, I am so grateful to my sisters, MaryJean and Lynn, and my brother, Paul, for all their support and encouraging words throughout this process. I appreciate my sister- and brother-in-law, Nancy and David, for their support as well. I have completed this journey because you were all there for me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Role of Organizational Learning and Social Networks in School Improvement: A Case Study of Corrective Action Schools

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Much research has been conducted on effective schools and school reform efforts. However, many schools are failing to meet the NCLB demands and an increasing number of schools are falling under the “in needs of improvement” sanctions, especially in the corrective action phase. The schools in the corrective action phase are those that have not
met Yearly Adequate Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years. Current research suggests there may be more to school reform than intellectual and human capital investment. Reform efforts may require a shift in the way that change strategies are conceptualized and enacted within schools and the districts in which they reside. This shift would involve a move from a spotlight on individualized segments of the organization to engaging the entire system in a connected network. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the processes school staff used to diagnose problems, define solutions, and access effective strategies in corrective action schools. It also investigated how these schools implemented these reforms; determined in what ways and to what extent these reform efforts were diffused through the schools using the social networks of information, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication; and the district’s role in supporting reform. The study utilized a mixed methods case study design and analyzed results through the lens of organizational learning and social network analysis theories. The study involved two secondary schools in corrective action Year 3 in a large urban district. This study was intended to extend prior research and contribute to theory, policy and practice.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One of the American promises is the right to a free, equal, accessible, and good quality education for all children. Throughout America’s history, this notion has caused educators to debate many aspects of what constitutes a free, equal, accessible, and good quality education. Educational experts have been continually challenged by the gap between the realities of overall student performance and the American promise. In the present era the struggle continues between competing reforms and mounting public dismay concerning student achievement. Questions arise concerning where professional energies should be focused, and what will genuinely make a difference for children.

In recent years, more and more critics of public education have proclaimed that our nation has a moral imperative to close the achievement gap between low-income children and their more advantaged counterparts (Elmore, 2000). Single school success stories are not enough and can no longer be the solution to this educational challenge. To accomplish this moral imperative, the solution will demand systemwide approaches that touch every school in every district. We need to think of the moral imperative as everyone having a responsibility for changing the larger context of education. It has to be on an organizational or systemic level.

Passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was an attempt to change the public educational system in order to close the achievement gap for all students. This law enacted a series of reform efforts aimed at improving the nation’s schools. Embedded in the Act were accountability provisions that established targets and sanctions for not making Adequate Yearly Progress. As a result of these provisions many
districts are being designated as “in need of improvement” status. After two years of inadequate progress, a school enters the corrective action phase. Continued failure results in restructuring which involves changes ranging from staff reconstitution, state operation, charter school conversion, or privatization. The state of New York, for example, has reported 56 districts in need of improvement (New York State Education Department, 2008). The heavily populated states of Texas and California have 59 and 96 districts, respectively, receiving Program Improvement status (Texas Education Agency, 2008; Posnick-Goodwin, 2008; California Schools News, 2008). This represents many schools not meeting expected levels of performance. For example, in the state of California, there are 2,218 schools designated as “schools in need of improvement.” This represents nearly 1/3 of the schools receiving federal funding and the numbers have been predicted to dramatically increase in the next few years. (Stullich, Eisner, McCrary, & Roney, 2006).

These staggering statistics imply a need for a shift in thinking about the strategies used in reform efforts. One change may involve districts acting as institutional forces for organizational learning that will directly affect a way a school approaches problem solving of learning issues, in order for all students to achieve desired levels of performance (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). Recently, research has begun in the area of social networks as a way to foster communication and share knowledge within schools and between district central offices and school site administrators to influence the determination and direction of change (Daly & Finnigan, 2009; Burch & Spillane, 2004; Dailey, Fleischman, Gil, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosmer, 2005).
Problem Statement and Rationale

Many leading experts conducted research on successful schools and concluded that these schools share common characteristics which contributed to their success. Effective schools have strong leadership (Elmore, 2000), quality professional development (Fullan, 2006), and standards-based, data-driven curriculum and instruction (Marzano, 2003; Feldman & Tung, 2001). Successful schools have a focus on student achievement, frequent assessment and close monitoring of student progress (Reeves, 2000), and distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006). The staff in these effective schools work collaboratively in professional learning communities (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many 2006). In these successful schools, there has been much attention paid to increasing the intellectual and human capital investment, the investment in learning at all levels, improved structures, and measures of student progress (Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000; Marzano, 2003; Grissmer & Flanagan, 1998). However, there may be a need to examine how these staffs in these schools share the intellectual and human capital with each other. The schools may profit from focusing on increasing their social capital as well. Social capital is the ability of people to work together for common purposes in groups and organizations (Fukuyama, 2002).

Many experts have also conducted research on effective districts. They have found similar characteristics as those implemented in successful school reform (Chrispeels, 2004). The current research on effective districts offers implications for improving teaching and learning as a way to increase student achievement. There is a focus on districtwide increased quality of leadership, goal orientation, data-driven instruction, quality professional development, cohesive structures, professional cultures,
and alignment of programs and practice to standards (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). These districts’ efforts have been focused on improving systems to support schools as they improve student performance.

Yet, even with examples of successful districts providing support to schools and effective schools improving student achievement, there are still many schools at risk of being sanctioned for not meeting the federal demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The question arises as to why some schools are successful and others are not. The inconsistent performance of schools across the country implies that there may be more to reform than improved human and intellectual capital (Burch and Spillane, 2004; Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Datnow, 2000; Griffith, 2004). Attention needs to be given to the processes school staff uses in diagnosing problems, defining solutions, accessing research-based evidence, and evaluating the effectiveness of decisions as measured by improved student achievement, especially in our schools serving our most underserved students.

The NCLB Act refers to the need to use scientifically-based research in selecting strategies for school reform. Using research-based evidence to improve practice, resulting in improved student performance, requires an understanding and knowledge of the problem underlying the lack of achievement, and knowledge of strategies to address these problems. In addition, it requires knowing how to implement these strategies; who must be involved for successful implementation; and an understanding of why action is necessary. In current practice, there is an emphasis on knowing what the problem is, but not much emphasis on the other important aspects of implementing appropriate strategies.
effectively (Nutley, Walter, & Davies, 2003). The use of research in practice rarely occurs in a linear way, but in a more complex, multi-dimensional manner that involves more social and interactive processes. To date, there is little research on the impact of these social processes on effective strategy use in improvement efforts (Nutley & Davies, 2008).

The process of identifying the problems affecting student achievement, finding solutions, and implementing effective strategies into practice is most effective at an organizational level. This work builds on the theory of organizational learning studied by many experts as a way to affect organizational change (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Huber, 1991; Levitt & March, 1988). As school staff seek out different sources of evidence and integrate effective strategies into change processes, they engage in the process of organizational learning (Honig, 2008). The search may involve the staff exploring the external environment for ideas or bringing expertise into the organization. This infusion of new perspectives is important to organizational learning. The people in the organization incorporate these ideas into practice, and through a retrieval process integrate new ideas over time when faced with new situations. These ideas or strategies become part of the organization's history and way of practice (Huber, 1991). Schools in need of improvement may need ways to access new innovations that address learning issues. These new innovations can be blended with existing current practices to prevent recycling the same patterns of dealing with teaching and learning challenges.

In addition to the need for organizational learning to occur, examining the social network aspects of information sharing, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication are important (Daly, 2008). It may be illustrative to investigate the way
strategies are chosen and implemented by schools using social networks of information, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication. Schools, especially those in need of improvement, need the access to, and support for, new internal and external ways to exit NCLB sanctions (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002; Tsai, 2000).

Reform efforts require a shift in the way that change strategies are conceptualized and enacted within districts and their schools. This shift involves a move from a spotlight on individualized segments of the organization to engaging the entire system in a network of connections (Daly & Finnigan, 2009; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Current research has begun to investigate the area of social networks as a way to study the relationship of communication and sharing of knowledge within schools and between district central office and school site administrators in affecting organizational change and learning (Daly, 2008, Burch & Spillane, 2004; Dailey, Fleischman, Gil, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosner, 2005).

In successful schools and districts, the use of social networks may have been an implied feature in their success. Successful districts tend to have tighter/better networks of communication that help build their social capital (Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008; Datnow, 2000) influencing organizational learning ultimately in their schools (Honig, 2008). These ties can be measured through Social Network Analysis (SNA), a method used to track and evaluate social ties of individuals, groups, and organizations (Brass, Gaaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004).

There is little empirical evidence to date about the role of social networks in successful school reform. Certain types of networks may be a feature inherent in the schools showing marked improvement. If so, a plan for developing social networks for
effective communication of information and knowledge sharing needs to be operationalized in reform efforts. Valuable information on social networks can aid in developing better communication systems for the exchange of information and knowledge. With better understanding of how networks evolve, districts may be able to modify information routes by putting in place the positions and structures to facilitate information sharing to their school sites (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Haythornthwaite, 1996). Exploring the processes schools use to determine how to effectively implement strategies to address problems toward better student achievement and the diffusion of this social capital through efficient network structures may be the links necessary to affect organizational learning in school reform. More research is needed on the intersection of organizational learning and social networks.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

NCLB has imposed a series of sanctions that apply once a school has been identified for program improvement. Decisions during stages of sanctions, especially the corrective action phase, are supposed to be informed by evidence on best practices. Despite the amount of evidence available and the demand of legislation to use that evidence, there are still too many failing schools and districts. Research indicates that schools often receive limited new information or resources to assist with improvement, or are not provided with ways to access innovations to address needed change. There is a need to fill this gap in empirical research and to create opportunities for better access of the research, especially for schools facing corrective action sanctions.

This research study was part of a larger district study, and the researcher drew on extant data in support of investigating this study’s research questions. The purpose of this
study was to (1) examine the processes school staffs used to diagnose problems, define solutions, and access effective strategies in corrective action schools (2) to determine in what ways and to what extent these reform efforts were diffused through the social networks of information, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication and (3) to examine the degree of district support in implementation of reform efforts at the school sites. The following questions were examined in this study:

1. What processes does school staff engage in to diagnose problems and define solutions for schools in corrective action under NCLB?

2. How do schools in corrective action implement reform and how does the district support these reform efforts?

3. In what ways do the social networks in corrective action schools promote organizational learning?

Overview of the Methods

A mixed methods case study design was used. The study was conducted in two secondary schools in corrective action status in a large urban district. A case study approach was appropriate to use because the phenomenon of interest was complex and required multiple data sources in order to gain a deep understanding of the topic researched (Yin, 2003). The case study approach allowed for the examination of the processes schools used in identifying problems and solutions, ways effective strategies were implemented in daily practice, and the flow of knowledge and communication within the schools and between central office and school sites. Data was analyzed in an effort to understand the organizational learning and social networks occurring within the schools. The concepts of single-loop and double-loop learning and exploration and
exploitation in organizational learning were the guiding concepts in data collection and analysis. The measures of density, closure, and centrality were examined through the networks of communication, knowledge, trust, and innovation and provided further insight into the organization’s ability to learn on an organizational level. The case study incorporated interviews and document review in the data collection portion of the study. Extant data, in the form of SNA survey data from the larger study, was used to triangulate themes elicited from the qualitative data collection and analysis.

Significance of the Study

The intention of this study was to produce results that will contribute to educational research and provide direction for schools and districts in their reform efforts to improve student achievement for all students. This research study provided information about the processes schools used in decision making about problem identification, selection of solutions, and the flow of information, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication within the corrective action schools and between the district office and school sites. It also provided information on how districts make decisions that support, do nothing to impact, or hinder improvement efforts throughout their organization. This knowledge may inform practitioners about ways to share research and practices within schools in order to improve student achievement, especially in low-performing schools.

The results may also guide districts on how to effectively implement social networks to improve the flow of resources to, from, and within their schools. This focus on the link between organizational learning and social networks will help inform districts
on what may be needed in order to grow, adapt, and move schools out of corrective action status.

Another potential benefit from this study will be to provide the school sites and district office studied in the project with information about how their organizations learn and disseminate strategies throughout the system. Information from the study addressed the processes these schools used in decision making around problem identification, selection of solutions, and the flow of information, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication within and between corrective action schools and the district office. This information could assist these sites and their district in assessing the current status of their organization and provide insight into areas needing attention. The schools and district would benefit from examining the data offered.

Finally, this study will extend prior research and contribute to theory, policy, and practice development. The results will provide educators and policy-makers examining schools in program improvement with greater insight as to how to disseminate research and practices that will improve outcomes for students. The study findings will also provide greater understanding as to social learning processes that may better facilitate the flow of innovations, information, and knowledge into and within schools. It may have a positive impact on improvement efforts in urban schools, helping reduce the number of schools facing sanctions as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Organization of the Study
This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is an overview of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of the related literature dealing with organizational learning and social networks related to reform efforts. Chapter Three outlines the
research design and methodology used. Also described are the instruments utilized to gather the data, procedures for collecting and analyzing data, and sample selection procedures used for the study. Chapter Four describes the qualitative data results and analysis. Chapter Five provides a concluding summary and discussion of the study.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Current Educational Context

Our nation has struggled with the challenge of educating all children equitably for many years. In response to federal and state calls for action, studies of a myriad of aspects about school and district reform have been undertaken in an effort to find ways to support teaching and learning to better meet students’ learning needs. The passage of the NCLB Act in 2001 has presented educators with the directive to improve all students’ achievement to proficient levels of performance as measured through state adopted assessments. The NCLB legislation is designed to close the achievement gap between marginalized groups of students and their peers through the use of four principles: (a) stronger accountabilities for results; (b) increased flexibility and local control; (C) expanded options for parents and (d) an emphasis on proven teaching methods.

NCLB makes about 110 references to the need for the use of scientifically-based research (SBR) or evidenced-based research (EBR) in school reform. The emphasis on proven methods illustrates the importance of SBR in NCLB. Experts have suggested that evidence-based education is the integration of professional wisdom and evidence into practice (Smith, 2003). However, it is also argued that for the past years there has been too much focus on anecdotal wisdom and not enough on the use of empirical research (Smith, 2003). It may be beneficial for schools to examine the processes they use to diagnose problems and determine solutions in their reform programs. Future research may need to explore the quality of the process and resulting solutions selected when evaluating the success of reform efforts.
The NCLB Act has placed an emphasis on providing all students with high quality instruction to close the achievement gap for marginalized students. The legislation proposed annual measures for performance based on state standards assessments, with the goal of all students reaching proficiency levels by the year 2014. While well intended, NCLB has unintentionally put strains on many schools and districts because of the sanctions imposed for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools enter “in need of improvement” (INI) status if they do not meet the expected levels of performance in any subgroups of the student population. The schools then proceed through stages of more restrictive sanctions until the final stage of restructuring, if they do not improve the scores of all student subgroups on site.

In 2006 – 2007, twenty percent of Title I schools, 10,781 schools, across the nation were labeled “in need of improvement,” thereby creating the challenge of finding ways to improve instruction in order to move out of this status. Almost half of these schools are in the corrective action and restructuring stages and 73% of these Title I schools are in poor districts serving marginalized populations of students (US Department of Education, 2010).

Current patterns of performance and approaches to reform have yielded limited results in our most impacted schools and districts, making this an untenable situation. Much research on school and district reform has emphasized the importance of improving intellectual and human capital investment (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Current research has provided common characteristics found in some successful schools, such as quality professional development, cohesive structures, and strong leadership (Togneri & Anderson, 2003;
Reeves, 2000; Teddlie, Kirby, & Stringfield, 1989). However there are still far too many schools and districts falling under the corrective action stage of sanctions each year. In 2008-2009, California had 145 districts and 1,180 schools in corrective action and restructuring status. The number of schools entering this status increased by 167 schools from the previous year (Scott, 2009).

There is little evidence that schools are moving out of the status once they enter the restructuring stage of “in need of improvement.” For example, only 10 of California’s 401 Title I schools in restructuring from 2005-2007 improved enough to exit INI (Center for Education Policy, 2007). The question arises as to why corrective action schools are not moving forward. Research is beginning to suggest that organizational learning, and schools’ ability to share or engage with learning, may play a role in affecting change in the schools that have successfully exited INI status (Daly & Finnigan, 2009; Honig, 2008; Griffith, 2004). Therefore it is important to examine the frameworks of organizational learning and social networks when studying school reform, especially when addressing the needs of schools in corrective action stages of improvement.

Overview of the Literature Review

This literature review will address the intersection of two areas of organizational learning and social networks as they relate to school reform. Although the two concepts are going to be explored individually, it is important to see them as interdependent for understanding how district and school personnel diagnose the problems affecting student performance in corrective action schools, how solutions are chosen for the problems, and what social networks in the schools and district office are in place. This literature review is organized to examine key aspects related to school reform. Current district reform
strategies supporting school efforts are outlined, then related concepts in organizational learning theory are discussed, and finally basic constructs in social network analysis and theory are examined. The literature review is organized to show the connectedness of these different aspects of district reform strategies.

**District’s Role in Reform**

While the focus of the study is corrective action schools, it is critical to examine the role of the school district in understanding reform efforts that occur at schools. Therefore, it is beneficial to review research on successful districts and their role in school reform. Several experts in the field of education have conducted research on successful district reforms. In an effort to understand the context of modern schools, these scholars have shifted their focus from the site as the unit of reform to examining the relationship between district offices and sites in promoting change (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Chrispeels, 2006; Honig & Coburn, 2008). This line of thinking recognizes that schools are embedded within the larger district context and that this context may have a serious influence on the success or failure of change efforts. The studies have been conducted in different countries and across our nation in a variety of district settings, including large urban districts. The results from research indicate that effective districts possess common attributes that have contributed to their schools’ success (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001).

Successful districts understand how their cultures, systems and structures, resources, stakeholders, and environments reinforce one another and support the implementation of strategy across schools (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn 2004; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Marzano, 2004; Elmore, 2000; Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006).
Findings have emphasized the importance of providing cohesive structures, focusing on data-driven instruction, and providing high caliber professional development, as well as increased leadership (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004; Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). These features were present in effective districts that supported schools, providing unified direction in reform.

Districts that showed success had clear plans based on improving instruction and developed strategies for districtwide improvement and implementation (Honig & Coburn, 2008). These effective districts provided coherent organization focused on student achievement (Elmore, 2000; Dailey, Fleischman, Gil, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosmer, 2005). They recognized that a variety of strategies can produce results and allowed for individual sites to make adjustments to meet their student population needs (Datnow, Borman, Stringfield, Overman, & Castellano, 2003; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). The successful districts established systems that held all stakeholders accountable for student results (Grissmer & Flanagan, 1998).

These successful districts made changes in infrastructure and improved students’ achievement. They aligned systems, standards, curriculum, and assessments and held schools accountable for improvement of all students (Grissmer & Flanagan 1998; Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006). They had strong leadership on all levels and cultivated strong cultures based on achievement. The effective districts were results-driven and used data and multiple assessments to measure attainment of objectives (Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson 2000; Reeves, 2000; Grissmer & Flanagan, 1998).

Other characteristics noted in districts that made marked improvements in their schools’ performances were clear rationales provided to schools for selection of reform
efforts, efforts made to seek personnel buy-in for greater achievement of goals, (Datnow, 2000; Madda, Halverson, & Gomez, 2007) and implemented new approaches to staff development that transformed teaching and learning practices in the classroom (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; DuFour, DuFour, Lopez, & Mohummad, 2006; Stein, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2004). The districts developed strong relational trust in schools and throughout the system and recognized that social exchange is central (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005). Central office staff was strategic in disseminating resources, research evidence, knowledge, and ideas across the district (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Honig, 2008). These studies suggest the importance of the connection between central office and site leaders in reform efforts based on research.

The research about successful districts suggests that there may need to be a shift in the way change strategies are conceptualized and carried out in school districts. This would entail moving away from a focus on individualized segments of the organization to involving the whole system in a network of connections. There is a need for a more interconnected systems approach to organizational change and the exchange of knowledge and information (Fullan, 2005; Hargraves & Fink, 2006). Successful school districts that have strong intra-organizational ties have developed strategies including creating structures for increased collaboration between central office and school sites (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003), strong communication channels (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006), shared decision making, and distributed leadership (Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007; Spillane, 2006). Districts benefit from developing networks of learning partnerships as one method of moving resources and best practices throughout a system (Honig, 2008; Knapp & Copeland, 2006).
More recently, research has stressed the importance of the role districts need to play in the change affecting schools and that the district as a whole needs to undergo organizational learning for sustainable, continuous improvement to occur (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheuinch, 2008). Districts need to act as institutional agents brokering new and innovative learning to their organizations, especially in assisting corrective action schools in their improvement efforts. There is little research available that has examined the improvement processes of schools in restructuring, the support they receive from their district’s central office, and whether these districts and schools operate as learning organizations.

Summary

In summary, much research has been conducted on school and district reform. Although this study was focused on school reform, it is important to look at districts as research shows they have an important influence on their schools’ processes in reform. However, many schools and districts continue to fall into the “in needs of improvement” status year after year. Researchers are beginning to recognize that school improvement needs to be systematic, and occur at an organizational level with district personnel and site leaders working interconnectedly on reform efforts. The district should act as broker in the sharing and exchange of resources, knowledge, innovation, and communication through formal and informal social networks into and between their school sites. Further research is needed on how schools operate as organizations and the organizational learning they undertake in diagnosing problems, selecting effective reform strategies based on researched best practices, and sharing the information throughout the system in order to change the trend of increased numbers of failing schools. This is particularly
important for schools in corrective action. Little research has been conducted on districts’
work in improving schools in the restructuring phase of NCLB.

Organizational Learning

Models and Frameworks

Organizational learning involves the way a company builds, enhances, and
organizes knowledge and practices around its activities and within its culture, and adapts
and develops organizational efficiency by improving the use of the extensive skills of its
workforce (Dodgson, 1993). In order for change to occur through organizational
learning, there would need to be a flow of information and communication throughout the
district. The flow of information and communication is associated with the development
of social capital in organizations. Social capital is fundamentally about how people
interact with each other. A district’s social capital is enhanced through effective and
efficient network systems and is important in developing organizational learning.

Organizational learning theory has its origin in the business and management
worlds. Over the past sixty years in the fields of business and management, researchers
and practitioners have studied organizational learning as a path to improving the
productivity of organizations for profit and growth. This was done in an attempt to
maintain a competitive edge and avoid stagnancy in innovation and creativity (Levitt &
March, 1988; Senge, 1990). There are many definitions of organizational learning, but all
share common fundamental assertions (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991). The basic
premise of organizational learning maintains that organizational learning is the process in
which members of an organization identify and use information in a way that leads them
to action which results in achievement of the groups’ goals (Honig, 2004; Mulford, 1998).

In the 1950’s, W. Edwards Deming dramatically altered the Japanese economy with the introduction of his Total Quality Management (TQM) program. After World War II, Deming worked with Japanese top management and engineers on methods for management of quality in their businesses. He developed the TQM system as a way to improve management which in turn organized the business for increased production and profits. The 14 step program focused on striving for maximum internal and external customer satisfaction and called for continuous improvement. Continuous improvement meant constantly trying to improve the way things was done in an effort to better satisfy the customer. In manufacturing, TQM involved constantly checking the quality at each stage of the production process. The driving force in TQM was customer satisfaction through an organized system of communication and interrelated work output (Deming, 1986).

Recognizing the value of organizing productivity and the sharing of learning throughout a business, and building on knowledge derived from organizational learning theorists, businesses and organizations have evolved organizational learning through the development of communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Communities of practice have become the foundation of effective knowledge sharing strategy in today’s companies. Communities of practice are made up of teams and business units that generate, use, and share knowledge throughout companies, spanning boundaries of departments and units. Creating communities of practice is a way to
encourage innovation and the spread of new knowledge throughout organizations (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Senge, 1990).

Communities of practice help to nurture employee imagination and organize knowledge for problem solving issues facing today’s organizations. They can be designed to share best practices, influence company strategy, generate new business opportunities, connect personal development to business goals, and enlist and maintain a skilled workforce. Communities of practice benefit the individuals who work in a company, as well as the long term success of a company. (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Senge, 1990).

There is an increased interest in exploring how organizational learning can influence school improvement (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). In the context of a school site, Silin, Mulford, and Zarins (1999) refer to organizational learning as the way an entire school staff learns collaboratively and then applies their new learning to situations on a continuous basis. As a learning organization, the learning becomes the responsibility of individuals, teams, and the organization itself. Fullan (2001) also corroborates the need or responsibility for “knowledge building, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, and knowledge management” in school settings (p. 77).

Educational researchers are using models from management and organizational psychology as frameworks for examining school effectiveness and have discovered that various aspects of school organization can be evaluated using management and organizational models (Griffith, 2003). Other experts have developed predictors of organizational learning, taken from management and organizational research, as a way to better understand how schools might incorporate organizational learning strategies into
practices in an effort to become successful organizations (Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 1999). For example, in school settings, communities of practice have evolved into professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities are becoming a common way for school personnel to organize what we already know as a profession into action in a school setting (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Fullan, 2006; Schmoker, 2004). The heart or focus of a professional learning community is a commitment to each child’s learning. Every member of the learning community recognizes that s/he must work interdependently to accomplish the goal of educating every student (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). Professional learning communities build their cultures on the foundation of organizational learning. Schools that adopt the professional learning community concept value and participate in on-going professional development, shared decision-making and common assessments to measure achievement (Datnow, 2000; Stoll & Louis, 2007).

The above mentioned models or structures were created and evolved as ways to guide organizations and businesses’ development. They provided frameworks to help businesses and organizations perform better and increase the quality and productivity of the organization. The degree of success of these models is dependent on the understanding and degree of execution of the underpinning concepts involved in organizational learning.

Concept of Organizational Learning Theory

Organizational learning is predicated by a need or a problem that leads a group to a collective search for a solution (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). According to
Honig (2004), organizational learning has to happen intentionally within organizations as new information is required and utilized. With many schools struggling, especially entering corrective action and restructuring stages of sanctions, drawing on organizational learning theory might be a way to better understand how knowledge enters the system, is disseminated, and finally supports practice. Educators can begin examining processes that school sites put in place and analyze their effectiveness which could lead to schools achieving their set goals (Griffith, 2003). To date, there is little research on these knowledge and information exchange processes in schools.

Organizational learning supports the idea that in order for an organization to experience success, all members need to take on the responsibility of learning, of sharing the learning, and engaging in collective work toward determined goals. Educators are beginning to see the value of organizational learning in school settings as a way to promote better teaching and learning. However, learning is also important at the district level, especially from the perspective of reform. As new problems arise and more strenuous demands and expectations are placed on schools and districts, a deeper understanding of learning may be necessary in the educational setting, especially in those districts where schools are under great pressure to achieve (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1995). With an increase in the number of schools falling into corrective action status, in many districts, organizational learning may need to occur at a more than superficial level. In an effort to understand how to better engage districts and schools in organizational learning, it would be beneficial to examine the concepts involved in organizational learning theory.
Organizational learning theory is based on the principle that an organization has the ability to learn, unlearn, or relearn based on its past actions (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizational learning involves the development and maintenance of systems that influence members of the organization, and are passed on to others by way of the organization’s history and norms (Lawrence & Dyer, 1983; Martin, 1982; Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976). New learning will be a reflection of the organization’s history and culture, and is influential in what and how an organization learns and what the organization will preserve (Levitt & March, 1988). Organizations that are open to learning develop cultures that embrace learning and adopt strategies that allow for flexibility within the organization. They create structures encouraging innovation and the exchange of new ideas. These organizations have cooperative employees and environments that have permeable boundaries (Fiol & Lyles, 1985).

According to Huber (1991) there are four stages of organizational learning. In the first stage, an organization attains new knowledge. Obtaining new knowledge may be achieved in many ways. New information may be shared from members already in the organization, or from new members hired by the organization, or from studying similar organizations in the field. In the second stage, the organization communicates information throughout the entire organization. This takes place when a single source shares the information or can occur from building collegial relationships, or by a combination of the two. New information may be shared by someone at the top of the organization and then spread out laterally or begin at the bottom and rise to the district level. The third stage involves the interpretation of the learned information. This interpretation of the learned information may result in a change in organizational norms,
behaviors, and routines (Argyris & Schoen, 1978). The final stage comes about when the organization stores the new learning in its organizational memory. The new learning becomes part of the organization’s culture and will be conveyed to new members through organizational norms (Huber, 1991).

Organizational learning involves the process of identifying and rectifying problems in an effort to improve organizational effectiveness (Argyris & Schon, 1996). According to Marks and Louis (1999) organizational learning is the “social processing of knowledge” (p.711). This is where individuals in an organization develop and share new knowledge and tools that result in shared ideas and practices. Organizational learning results in members changing both norms and behaviors (Collinson & Cook, 2007). In order to understand the degree to which learning is occurring in an organization, it is important to understand the underlying theories of action that guide an organization.

Theories of action deal with the processes an organization engages in when determining actions and outcomes within the organization. There are two types of theories of action in play. There is the Espoused Theory which is the explicit description of the way in which an organization intends to make decisions and act. There is also Theory in Use which is the implicit process the organization uses to actually guide its decision making and actions (Arygris and Schon, 1996). Often times, there is an inconsistency between the two theories and frequently the individual or the collective organization is not aware of the discrepancy between the two (Argyris and Schon, 1996). The refinement of the theories requires careful examination of the underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs of the individual and the organization, and can result in the development of new Theories in Use.
**Single and Double Loop Learning**

According to Argyris and Schon (1996) learning may occur as “single loop” or “double loop.” Single-loop learning involves learning that remains within the current organizational belief system, and does not dramatically change the status quo. Single-loop learning addresses how best to achieve existing objectives and goals within the organization’s existing norms (Argyris & Schon, 1996). It does not remedy any gap between Espoused Theory and Theory in Use.

Double-loop learning involves examining underlying beliefs, norms, and values, and can result in a change of theories in use. According to Argyris and Schon (1978), double-loop learning involves analyzing “incompatible organizational norms by setting new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring the norms themselves together with associated strategies and assumptions” (p. 24). This type of learning would address differences between Espoused Theories versus Theory in Use. Double-loop learning may also involve the examination of underlying values or assumptions that may have been compatible with organizational goals at one time, but now interfere with or hinder the organization’s ability take on new learning.

**Exploration and Exploitation**

A final aspect to consider in the study of organizational learning involves analyzing the way in which practices or ideas develop in and flow into or out from an organization. Experts purport that organizations need to strike a balance between exploration and exploitation. Exploration involves experimenting or exploring with new knowledge or ideas and exploitation involves the refinement of use of existing knowledge (March, 1991; Levitt & March, 1988). The search or exploration process might involve
searching the external environment for new practices or ideas, or bringing in experts into
the organization (Levitt & March, 1988; Honig, 2008).

According to Huber (1991) this flow of information into and throughout the
organization is essential to organizational learning. Organizational members, both
formally or informally, assimilate these approaches or ideas into practice and eventually
over time adopt these practices when faced with new situations. Failing organizations
have been shown to engage in limited search, choosing strategies that result in only
surface level improvements (Honig, 2008; O’Day, 2002). Low performing schools may
have a disadvantage in trying to capitalize on internal sources because they have already
been identified as failing and may have limited internal capacity which may limit their
ability to use existing information to improve performance.

Recent efforts to organize school settings in order to share new learning at an
organizational level have occurred at the district level, and involved structural systems or
investment in human and intellectual capital. There is limited research, to date, on the
effects of organizational learning at the district on reform efforts, especially those
involved with schools in the corrective action or restructuring stages of sanctions as a
result of NCLB legislation. A recent study was conducted to assess whether restructuring
schools operated as learning organizations (Daly & Finnigan, 2009).

The study involved document reviews, observations, and surveying and
interviewing of over 600 school personnel in a large urban district. In addition, case
studies were conducted in two restructuring high schools in the study. The researchers
explored the schools’ abilities to analyze problems and select solutions to address the
problems, as well as how they shared the learning throughout the schools. The
conclusions indicated that these schools did not operate as learning organizations. The staff blamed test scores and other factors for poor performance results, and did not examine the root causes of poor performance. They also exploited existing solutions for improving overall student performance. School personnel did not have clear processes for diagnosing problems or defining solutions, and had limited support from outside sources. These schools reported receiving little support from their central office, and examination of network structures indicated that there were poor systems for the flow of communication and information throughout the organization (Daly & Finnigan, 2009).

Summary

In summary, many researchers have strived to understand the factors contributing to group effectiveness in an effort to find solutions that will enhance an organization’s success (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). In education, district personnel, principals and teachers need to cultivate social capital in order to maximize organizational learning. Organizational learning is a social process and therefore it would be beneficial to help understand the social interactions between actors, such as teachers in a school, to understand the exchange of ideas, innovation, and transfer of knowledge. This kind of exchange would involve a system with both vertical and lateral capacity building. The networking system would need to engage in tight connections with the right people placed in the right positions throughout the entire system.

Organizational leaning must occur purposefully in schools and that learning is enhanced when districts act as institutional actors in facilitating the flow of communication, knowledge, and innovation. This is critical for schools in the “in needs
"improvement" status. These findings and similar findings in the literature suggest the importance of, and need, for strong social networks in district reform.

Social Network Theory

*The Role of Social Network Analysis in School Reform*

Research is beginning to address the need to develop social networks in schools and districts to assess the ways in which, and efficiencies of, new ideas, information, and innovation permeate throughout the entire organization. District social networks can enhance or hinder or not impact the development of the social capital needed for organizational learning to occur in schools. Districts’ attempts to improve organizational learning and the social networks used to share new learning within and between schools need to include the study of how to best incorporate research-based evidence into daily practice at the classroom level.

This section of the literature review discusses the importance of social networks in school reform. Organizational learning suggests that in order for progress to be made, a process through which one examines problems and identifies solutions holds promise for improvement. In order for schools to accomplish this goal, schools and districts need to recognize the importance of learning at an organizational level. Staff across the school needs to be able to share information and communicate in order to disseminate new learning and innovations throughout the entire district using an effective and efficient network system. Social capital is a necessary aspect of organizational learning and schools need to develop efficient social network systems to capitalize on a district’s focus on reform.
Social Capital and Social Network Analysis

Social capital refers to the “goodwill that is engendered by the fabric of social relations and that can be mobilized to facilitate actions” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p.17). There are many different definitions of social capital, but the common thread in all definitions addresses the benefits accrued to individuals by virtue of their ties with others (Tsai, 2000; Balkundi & Kilduff, 2005; Adler & Kwon, 2002). At the organizational level, research has been conducted on the value of social capital connections or ties to the benefit of the organization. Social networks are the structures and systems related to the flow of information, increasing the social capital needed to sustain organizational learning.

Many of the lessons on the value of social capital come from research found in the organizational literature focused on the business world. Much research has been conducted on the impact strong and weak ties have in business settings. Educators are beginning to apply this learning to the organizational aspects of communication, trust, innovation, and knowledge transfer in reform efforts.

In order to measure social capital in organizations, many researchers utilize social network analysis in their research. Social network analysis (SNA) is an approach and set of techniques for the study of information exchange. It focuses on the patterns of relationships between actors, or the people in the network, and the availability of resources and exchange of information between them. SNA involves plotting the connections or ties of actors or people in groups. Actors are represented by dots on a graph and interactions or ties are marked by arrows. SNA measures who actors communicate with, and the frequency of interactions. The results show patterns of
communication between actors, such as who has the most interactions, with whom actors share information, and the connection of each actor to other actors (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai 2004; Haythornthwaite, 1996).

Businesses and districts/schools are recognizing the importance of cultivating social capital in their organizational learning as a way to share knowledge and information for increased performance. SNA is the method for measuring connections of groups in an organization. Businesses and schools/districts are the context for applying SNA. Successful district reform efforts organize their infrastructures to support communities of practice that build capacity both vertically and laterally through efficient systems of networks (Datnow, 2000; Elmore, 2000; Freeman, 2004). These districts know that central office leaders are critical in this implementation (Mintrop & Trujillo, 2005; MacIver & Farley, 2004; Burch & Spillane, 2004; Dailey, Fleischman, Gil, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosmer, 2005).

Social Capital Framework

Naphapiet and Ghoshal (1998) provide a framework for understanding social capital. They present three dimensions involved in social capital, each dimension addressing different aspects of networking. The three dimensions are structural, cognitive, and relational. The structural aspect of social capital has to do with the connections and ties formed between and among the groups in an organization. The cognitive dimension focuses on the common language and organizational context groups have in an organization. The relational dimension addresses the trustworthiness of groups in an organization. Each dimension plays a role in the development of social capital in organizations’ learning (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Veugelers & O’Hair,
Various studies have examined the benefits and deterrents of social capital in promoting better business practices.

Several studies have been conducted in diverse professional fields to explore the value creation of social capital in business settings and the premise that individuals with greater quantities of ties receive more positive benefits (Edelman, Bresnen, Newell, Scarbough, & Swan, 2004; Tsai & Ghoshal 1998). Findings from research conducted in companies in the fields of telecommunications, construction, chemical, and multinational electronics all indicate that using social capital networks has both positive and negative aspect for organizations. Social capital network ties can enhance or constrain communication and knowledge transfer, depending on the circumstances and output intentions of a business (Ahuja, 2000; Edelman, Bresnen, Newell, Scarbough, & Swan, 2004; Tsai, 2000; Hansen, 1999; Granovetter, 1973).

Social capital has many beneficial effects in the areas of information access and retrieval, community building, and underlying group norms. In the dimension of structural social capital of the organizational network, bridging and bonding are necessary for effective knowledge transfer (Ahuja, 2000). This implies that the more ties or connections people in an organization have with different people the better the exchange of information (Ahuja, 2000; Burt, 1997). People in various groups or departments know other people in different groups or departments, and information is shared through their connections. When all the actors in a specific group share the knowledge learned from other departments with members of their departments, there is a great flow or transfer of information (Edelman, Bresnen, Newell, Scarbough, & Swan, 2004; Stuart, 1998).
The transfer of information is efficient when the organization is stable and has established players in certain roles. However, organizational contextual factors, such as restructuring, can leave holes in social capital networks causing the network to be ineffective. Relying on social capital networks in an organization that is prone to change or continually undergoes major changes would be detrimental to the organization (Burt, 1997).

Research shows that at the group level, cognitive social capital produces bonds based on experiences that assisted knowledge sharing and common language. People in the same business, with common bonds and understandings, benefit from social network ties (Tsai, 2000; Edelman, Bresnen, Newell, Scarbough, & Swan, 2004). However, at the organizational level, these bonds can hinder problem-solving efforts by producing barriers between groups with different sources of knowledge or ideas. The groups need key members who understand both sources of information and their relationship to each other. Otherwise, this reduces innovation and creativity (Ahuja, 2000; Burt, 1997).

At the relational level, norms can create a helpful, knowledge-sharing, trusting environment. Businesses that are not competitive can build synergistic relationships. This type of bonding is beneficial to both companies. However, relational bonds in some circumstances can cause individuals to closely guard their knowledge. This can be a deterrent to knowledge distribution (Burt, 1997; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Implications for the educational field are that bridging and bonding are beneficial aspects of social capital (Burch & Spillane, 2004). Schools can benefit from sharing and receiving knowledge from each other and district offices. However, when districts or schools are under threat
of sanctions, they are less trusting and open to outside information and this inhibits or slows down communication and information sharing (Daly, 2008; Burt, 1997).

Creation of Social Capital

The results of the research provide strong support for the argument that social capital facilitates value creation, especially at the dyadic and business unit level. The three dimensions of social capital – social interaction, trustworthiness, and shared vision – have significant effects on resource exchange and knowledge transfer. Investing in the creation of social capital within a firm eventually creates value, and the role of intrafirm networks contributes to product innovations at the business unit level. Researchers have linked the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of social capital and have shown how they interact within an organization (Naphapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Balkundi & Kilduff, 2005).

There are positive implications for the value of social capital network ties in the educational field. Both the bridging and bonding aspects are critical when engaging social capital. A coordination of ties or connections of people in various departments at the central office to school site personnel increases information sharing and transfer knowledge to all personnel throughout a district (Burch & Spillane, 2004; Dailey, Fleischman, Gill, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosmer, 2005). Efficient use of network ties assists in communicating district goals, providing supports for improving teaching and learning, professional development learning, and sharing of best practices among the teaching personnel (Mintrop & Trujillo 2005).
Types and Quality of Ties

Another aspect to analyze about the use of social capital in an organization is the types and quality of the ties involved in the network. Three aspects of a firm’s ego network should be considered in assessing the quality of the ties. They are direct ties, indirect ties, and structural holes (Ahuja, 2000; Burt, 1997; Granovetter, 1973). Research indicates that the more direct ties a firm has, the greater the innovation output. Indirect ties also produce greater innovation output but are related to the level and quantity of direct ties the firm maintains. A firm needs quality indirect ties for those ties to be beneficial (Ahuja, 2000). Structural holes, requiring competent and knowledgeable persons to connect different groups, are beneficial in large organizations. However, with interfirm collaborative networks increased structural holes have a negative effect on innovation. Optimal structure of interfirm networks depends on the objectives of the network members (Ahuja, 2000; Hansen, 1999).

Other research indicates that the number and quality of ties make a difference to the value of social capital in an organization. The value of social capital is contingent on the number of people doing the same job (Burt, 1997). In a competitive business, a manager benefits from weak network connections. The more structural holes the manager spans, the more diverse the contacts, the better quality of information gathered and shared (Burt, 1997; Ahuja, 2000; Granovetter, 19973). In less competitive businesses, strong ties facilitate information transfer.

Research indicates that strong and weak ties are important depending on the content and complexity of the knowledge shared. Weak ties speed up the knowledge transfer when the knowledge is not complex; however, strong ties are better for complex
information sharing (Hansen, 1999). It is important to analyze the knowledge content and complexity when assessing the value of weak or strong connections in a social network.

District reform efforts would likely benefit from having both weak and strong ties for exchange of knowledge. Districts can quickly gather and share less complex information from a variety of sources with weak ties. A district could disseminate operational information gathered from loose tie connections quickly throughout schools. More complex information, such as current best practices, would benefit from exchange in a strong network. As district central office leaders recognize the value of creating communities of practice to promote social capital in their schools, it will be critical to address the creation of efficient networks for building vertical and lateral capacity for both communication and transfer of knowledge purposes (MacIver & Farley, 2004; Burch & Spillane, 2004).

Network Position/Centrality

A third important aspect to consider in developing social capital in organizations in order to improve knowledge sharing and communication is the position and interactions of actors in the network. Researchers conducted measurements of how organization units create linkages for resource exchange (Tsai, 2000). They conclude that both social capital and strategic relatedness positively affect the development of new interunit linkages. Strategic relatedness occurs when managers of two different units have a similar mindset that emphasizes similar strategic assets. Network centrality, trustworthiness and strategic relatedness affect the rates at which new linkages are formed (Tsai, 2000; Stuart, 1998).
Organizational units that have well established social capital can more quickly generate new linkages for resource exchange and those that share a higher degree of strategic relatedness are more likely to form new interunit linkages for mutual benefits in business operations. Research concludes that the more complex the communication process and the degree of the intangible resource exchange, the more important the role trustworthiness plays (Tsai, 2000). This is important when schools are considering the organization and sharing of quality staff development (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; Spillane, 2006).

Further research purports that the firm’s position in a network matters. Centrality and the building of relations are important to the quality of information sharing. The studies contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of an organization’s internal social structure (Stuart, 1998). Districts also benefit from having an organized structure with key central office personnel in positions to effectively communicate and connect district business and information to site personnel efficiently. For example, it would support the efforts at reform in and at both the district and site level if initially administrators held central positions and as such were able to better distribute resources throughout the system, and then over time move themselves out of that network position and support others in taking more central roles (Daly, 2008; Elmore, 2000; Spillane, 2006).

The results of studies on social capital conclude that a network of many non-overlapping ties would provide information benefits to a non-competitive organization. This type of network would be ideal for an organization whose primary purpose involves the brokerage of information or technology (Ahuja, 2000). The studies show that context
and the type of linkages matter in the transfer of knowledge and innovations. Direct, tight ties work best for information sharing in non-competitive businesses and actors in central positions can assist in effectively brokering information to related units (Ahuja, 2000; Eldelman, Bresnen, Newell, Scarbough, & Swan, 2004). These types of structural networks benefit an education system looking for reform because of the nature of work involved (Ahuja, 2000). Recent research is beginning to examine the area of social networking as a way to study the relationship of communication and transfer of knowledge between district central office and school site administrators in affecting the determination and direction of change (Daly, 2008, Dailey, Fleischman, Gil, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosmer, 2005).

*Social Networks in School Settings*

Research conducted in the educational field has indicated that understanding network structures may be helpful in reform efforts. Change occurs through the interaction of people and dense ties are a way to build absorptive capacity, a team’s ability to absorb and reproduce new information from external sources, and support overall organizational goals (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Tsai, 2001). Research suggests that the depth, speed, and sustainability of large-scale reform are connected to the informal social networks in an organization.

In a district setting, an exploratory case study was conducted to examine the communication and knowledge network structures of the central office and site leaders in one district in California (Daly & Finnigan, 2009; Daly & Finnigan, In Press). As a result of NCLB sanctions, this district was designated as “in need of improvement.” Social network analysis was applied to examine the communication and knowledge
network structures of central office and site leaders. Findings from this study indicate that there were sparse ties among and between school site and central office administrators. The results further indicate that the district had a centralized network structure that may have been constraining the exchange of complex information and ultimately inhibiting efforts at change. The pressures from the NCLB sanctions further constrained the communication and knowledge transfer because the district acted in many ways as a person or organization under attack, displaying threat-rigidity behaviors (Daly, 2008).

Other research projects focused on the importance of district networking. They explored the role mid-level central office staff played in implementing district reform (Burch & Spillane, 2004; MacIver & Farley, 2004). The research suggests that mid-level staff should operate as brokers that bring school people together to share their expertise and then translate this collective expertise into strategies, guidelines, tools, and procedures in order to make relevant district reform to classroom practice.

The brokers are responsible for cultivating the exchange of information and expertise within and across schools and between instructional leaders working at the very top of the system, and those running reforms from inside the schools. Research concludes that district leaders should consider creating communities of practice around instructional reform, with the mid-level staff acting as partners with district and school personnel. The research supports the value of establishing social networks in district reform (Dailey, Fleischman, Gil, Holtzman, O’Day, & Vosmer, 2005; Burch & Spillane, 2004).
Summary

In summary, researchers are beginning to examine the importance of social networking in the areas of density, closure, and centrality/boundary spanning as they relate to school reform. Understanding these network structures may be useful for organizational learning in reform efforts as these underlying networks may be leveraged for the betterment of the creation, utilization, and dissemination of knowledge and evidence into daily practice (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002). However, there are only a few empirical studies to date on the value of social networks in school reform. Understanding how networks evolve and work may assist districts and schools in creating efficient routes and establishing appropriate positions and structures to facilitate dissemination of meaningful information to, within, and between school sites throughout the districts, especially those in corrective action status.

After a thorough review of the literature the following model has emerged. The model reflects the way the literature fits together. It shows the relationship between organizational learning and social networks in school reform efforts. The model helps visualize the two areas presented in the literature review as overlapping and interconnected and in service of school reform.

In the model, school reform lies within the intersection of concepts involved in organizational learning and social network theories. Organizational learning behaviors promote the school’s learning of effective strategies that align to identified problems, and the social networks enhance the school’s ability to access internal and external sources of effective strategies for sharing throughout the school. When schools undertake the process of identifying problems interfering with student academic success and select
effective strategies to remediate the problems, the steps in the process must be predicated on the underlying concepts of organizational learning and social network theories. Successful reform occurs at the intersection. The two circles are encompassed by two larger circles representing the district and NCLB’s accountability system. They are the larger context in which schools lie and they either support or hinder schools’ reform efforts.

Figure 2.1  Theoretical Frameworks: Model of the Link Between Literature Review Concepts
Gaps in the Research

After careful analysis of current research, it is evident that there are gaps in research relevant to schools in corrective action status. There is little empirical research on schools facing progressive accountability sanctions. The research has not systematically brought together organizational learning and social networks in understanding those reform efforts while at the same time recognizing the situated nature of the schools in the larger district and NCLB contexts. Researchers are now recognizing that organizational learning is socially constructed and a critical aspect of reform. There is also little empirical research on the value of effective and efficient social networks in promoting new learning at an organizational level, especially in corrective action schools.

Review of the Purpose and Questions for Study

Recognizing that there exists gaps in the research on school reform efforts, especially as they relate to corrective action schools, it was timely and relevant for conducting this research study. The purpose of this study was to examine the processes school staff used to diagnose problems and define solutions in reform efforts; to determine in what ways and to what extent schools implement reform efforts and how schools and district office support, remain neutral, or constrain reform efforts through social networks and; to examine the relationships between social network structures and organizational learning. The information gathered in this study will help inform policy, practice, and future research efforts.

The study endeavored to answer the following questions which should shed light on the issues missing in current research.
What processes does school staff engage in to diagnose problems and define solutions for schools in corrective action under NCLB?

How do schools in corrective action implement reform and how does the district support these reform efforts?

In what ways do the social networks in corrective action schools promote organizational learning?

Chapter Summary

Current research indicates that educational experts are realizing the value of developing human, intellectual, social and other forms of capital in school reform efforts. Even with the plethora of research results available on successful schools, schools and districts are continually struggling with the challenge of closing the academic achievement gap. With more public scrutiny focused on performance and accountability, school personnel may need to investigate the processes they use to diagnose problems, find solutions and analyze the quality of the strategies selected, in order to survive and be successful in this day and age. Districts will need to explore how they can support schools at an organizational level using effective and efficient social networks that promote the exchange of current and relevant research-based evidence for improved teaching and learning resulting in increased student achievement. Districts with increasing numbers of schools in “in need of improvement” status would do well to explore the density, closure, and centrality/boundary spanning capacities of their organizations. For the future progress of our nation’s public education system, schools will need to “capitalize” on their social capital in order to operate as highly reliable organizations where failure is not an option.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This is a research project in which a case study design was used to explore two areas of inquiry in two high schools in the corrective action phase. One emphasis was on the process schools used to diagnose problems and determine solutions, and to what extent effective strategies were used in the process to address the problems. The other focus was on the social network structures used to share information, innovation, trust, knowledge, and communication. A case study approach was selected because the nature of the phenomenon had a level of complexity that required multiple methods and data sources in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants in their natural settings (Yin, 2003).

A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, for example, an activity, event, process, or individuals based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2008). The study was bounded because the selection of schools was made from a specific sample of the corrective action schools. The research questions in this study constituted a case study design because the questions suggested the study of a process, explored a particular phenomenon, included “how” and “in what ways” questions where the researcher had little control, and where the spread of evidence for findings was vast compared to narrow findings drawn from other method designs (Yin, 2003).

Connection to Larger Study

This study was part of a larger longitudinal comparative case study consisting of two phases and spanning over a three year period. The larger longitudinal study
investigated the degree to which corrective action schools, defined by NCLB, diagnosed problems, defined solutions, and acquired and used research-base evidence in the process. It also addressed how the flow of resources within and between schools and district office support, constrain, or leave neutral improvement efforts. The main purpose of this larger longitudinal study was to gain insight into the improvement process of schools in corrective action, and to contribute to educational reform efforts. This study used selected extant data (survey and social network analysis data) gathered from the larger longitudinal study. The design of the larger study and this study was to mutually inform one another’s work.

Context and Participants

Selection of District

In this study, the researcher followed a mixed methods design of a case study. The study involved case studies at two urban high schools in corrective action in a large urban district. According to Merriam (1998) the suitable method for selecting sampling for qualitative research is the non-probability sampling method. The most common form of non-probability sampling method is referred to as purposeful sampling which emphasizes selecting only information-rich cases which can add a great deal of learning about issues of central importance (Patton, 1990). Using the purposeful sampling procedures, the investigator endeavored to discover, understand, and gain insight around the issue of central importance, and therefore selected a sample that provided rich learning opportunities (Merriam, 1998). The district provided the rich context from which to investigate the study’s questions and was also part of the larger, longitudinal study described above.
The district in this study is the second largest district in California and the eighth largest district in the United States. It has a diverse student population serving approximately 133,000 students. The demographics were composed of 44% Latino, 25% White, 13% African American, 9% Asian, and 7% Filipino students. Sixty-three percent of the students received free and reduced lunch, classifying them as socio-economically disadvantaged, and 15% were identified as student with disabilities. Twenty-two percent of the student population was identified as English Language Learners, with Spanish being the prominent language spoken. Of the districts’ 250 schools, 54 schools are in program improvement with 23 in the restructuring phase and 14 in corrective action. Schools in the corrective action and restructuring phases have significantly higher percentages of non-white students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Selection of Schools

A comparable case selection is defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as selecting individuals, sites, and groups with the same relevant characteristics over time. Using this type of selection procedure was possible in the district because it had 14 schools in corrective action which have similar relevant characteristics over time. The case study focused on two high schools in corrective action. Both high schools were of similar size and demographics, and were in year three of corrective action status. The purposeful sampling decision to select two sites with different performance levels within the corrective action status was to examine if there is any difference between the sites’ organizational learning, problem/solution decisions, and social network structures. This helped assess the differences in organizational learning within the schools in corrective
action, including the distinct networks of information, innovation, trust, knowledge and communication.

The two schools selected for this study were part of the small school complexes in the district funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The schools are each on a complex with other small high schools. Each school features a specific area of study and emphasizes building a foundation for higher education. The schools run independently of the other schools at their complexes, and have separate administrators, office staff, staff, and teachers. The small school concept provided students with a more personalized education where staff knew and took interest in students as individuals.

One of the schools in corrective action status is located in the mid-town area of the city and has 364 students. Ninety-four percent of the students are classified as socio-economically disadvantaged, and qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The student population was made up of 44% Hispanic; 34% African-American; 13% Indochinese; 6% Asian; 2% white; and 1% other. Forty-three percent of the students were English-language learners. The school has an API score of 621 and its small school focus is on health and medical practices.

The second corrective action school was located at the edge of the city’s newly revamped downtown and has 445 students. Ninety percent of the students were socio-economically disadvantaged and took part in the free and reduced lunch program. The student population was comprised of 79% Hispanic; 13% African-American; 7% white; and 1% other. Forty percent of the student population was English-language learners. The school has an API score of 555 and its small school focus is business.
Selection of Participants

Select personnel from the sites and district were chosen to participate in interviews. Ten personnel from each of the in-depth case studies of the corrective action schools were interviewed totaling 20 staff members. To increase reliability, stratified purposeful sampling techniques were used (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Teachers were selected based on principal input concerning formal and informal leadership positions on campus. Each site had an instructional leadership team with approximately 10 people on the team representing the various subject areas on campus. Interviewing 10 staff members from each site represented approximately a third of the personnel on campus. The purposeful selection sampling technique was utilized so that the participants would reflect representation of specific groups, thus capturing the range of responses in the different domains being measured.

The staff also represented the formal and informal leadership on site. Three interviews of district personnel who were mostly responsible for improvement of schools were conducted. These interviews included the Superintendent and High School Improvement Officers. This intentional or purposeful selection sampling techniques was utilized to ascertain the districts’ understanding of organizational learning and social networks, as compared to site personnel’s understandings. A total of 23 interviews were conducted, transcribed and analyzed.

Data Collection

The data collection for the case study involved interviews and document reviews at each school site and the district office. Refer to Table 1.1 for a summary of the study’s research questions, methods, and analysis.
**Qualitative Data:**

**Document and Artifact Reviews**

The document review included studying improvement plans, report cards, annual reports, and school websites. Also reviewed were documents the schools used to develop school-wide reform strategies focused on exiting corrective action status. A draft protocol (Appendix B) modified from the larger longitudinal study was used as a guide for collecting data on how the organization identified problems and solutions, selected strategies for improvement, and diffused information through the schools.

Each document was reviewed and triangulated with interview data and extant data. The document review was important to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003), in this case the alignment of espoused theory and theories in use (Argyris & Schon, 1978) in improvement efforts. Content analysis was used as the systematic procedure for describing the content of the relevant documents collected (Merriam, 1998).

**Interviews**

Ten interviews were conducted with administrators and staff members at each of the two high schools in corrective action. These interviews, in addition to data review, provided additional information on the process used for determining problems, selecting strategies, and the social networks used for diffusion of information and knowledge. This information helped shed insight on the use of single-loop/double-loop and exploration and exploitation concepts associated with organizational learning. A staff meeting was conducted to provide an overview of the study’s’ intent and provided the staff with the opportunity to ask questions. The staff members were selected using a purposeful
selection technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The principal at each site provided information on a list of staff members in formal or informal leadership positions. The staff members were contacted individually and asked if they would be willing to participate.

Personnel were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide focused on ascertaining their perspective on the process described above (Appendix A). The semi-structured interview guide (Patton, 1990) drew on the concepts of organizational learning, and social networks. The purpose of the interview was to see how personnel identified problems, how they arrived at the possible solutions, and the degree to which related strategies were used within the school. The information gathered reflected whether the strategies used were on a surface level, or if they were aligned to address a solution to the identified problem. This provided information on the degree of single- and double-loop learning (Arygris & Schon, 1978) occurring in improvement efforts.

The interviews also helped reveal the social network structures used to help, hinder, or not impact the flow of information and innovation within and between the schools and the district. Interview questions addressed how networks were developed, what kinds of resources flowed through the network, and why certain types of resources flowed within and between schools and the district office. The interviews also assessed if other external networks were used within the system for staff to acquire knowledge and innovation, exploration / exploitation (March, 1991).

The school staff selected included members involved in school site decision making teams. The interviews took approximately an hour and were audio recorded (Appendix D) and transcribed verbatim. Interviewees were asked several questions
related to personal background, identification of problems/causes, development of
improvement plans, implementation of improvement strategies under PI, and social
networks. The interviews were voluntary, confidential, and adhered to the IRB
standards. Interview questions were previously piloted with staff from corrective action
schools not involved in the study, and were revised and refined after consultation with the
dissertation chair.

Three district central office personnel, superintendent and each site’s School
Improvement Officer, charged with school improvement responsibilities were
interviewed using the same semi-structured interview protocol. These interviews yielded
information about how personnel in high district positions perceived the operation of
organizational learning and social network structures in service of corrective action high
schools. The entire interview data were triangulated with document review and relevant
extant data, discussed in the following section.

Extant Data: Social Network Data

The quantitative data for this study was extrapolated from the data collected from
a survey conducted in the larger longitudinal study (Daly & Finnigan, 2009). A survey
was conducted by the larger longitudinal team with school and district staff on social
networks. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on how people were
connected to one another and how they shared resources. It helped assess the ways in
which new ideas entered the schools and districts relative to how problems were
diagnosed, solutions were selected, and whether the information exchanged supported or
hindered organizational learning. The data provided insight into whether the schools and
district searched for new ideas from outside sources or depended on internal knowledge
and the use of single- or double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) and exploration/exploitation (March, 1991) in the schools.

The social network analysis data was important to understanding organizational learning. Research has shown the importance of organizational learning in schools and district reform (Daly & Finnigan, 2009). In order to increase social capital in an organization, all members must take on the responsibility of learning, sharing the learning, and engaging collectively in working towards desired goals. Organizational learning involves the social interactions, therefore the social network data was important for showing how an organization learns. The social network data revealed how people in the schools and district studied were connected to one another and how they shared resources throughout the organization. The social network analysis measures informed this study on the structure, frequency, and strengths of the interactions among schools and district personnel around the exchange of information and knowledge and the qualitative data revealed information on the actual content and context of these interactions.

Data Analysis

This study utilized a variety of measures for analyzing the data collected. A comprehensive data analysis plan brought together interview and document data to maximize use and triangulation of the data collected. Extant data was gleaned as an additional source of data to support findings of relevant themes in investigating the questions of the study. Each of the types of data and the analysis that was performed for each is described in detail.
Qualitative Data Analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis involved preparing the data for analysis by going from the particular, detail data to the general codes and themes in order to understand the larger, consolidated picture (Creswell, 2008). In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis are iterative activities since previously collected data is constantly compared to other data. The researcher continually recycled the data in looking for major ideas. Reading and rereading qualitative data helped to develop a deeper understanding of the data collected from participants in an effort to understand the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2008).

The analysis of qualitative data reflected the level of organizational learning occurring at each site and the use of effective reform strategies in the decision making process. All data was analyzed through the lens of the relationships between single- and double-loop learning, exploration/exploitation, and espoused theory versus theory in use concepts involved in organizational learning theory. In addition, this data was analyzed through the lens of social network theory. Each data source was examined in isolation for its own merits and then analyzed collectively to elicit themes that emerged from all the sources.

Interviews

In order to determine answers to the research questions that guided the study, interviews were conducted with school staff and district personnel. An analysis of the transcripts helped develop a picture of the phenomenon of the organizational learning occurring at each site and throughout the district from the different perspective of the participants. A constant comparative approach of analysis was utilized to assist in
making meaning of the data (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Transcripts were investigated for emergent patterns where trends were identified, coded, and linked to representative quotes. Noted relationships were compared in the case studies where common themes were determined (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The first cut of the interview data analysis elicited codes related to organizational learning and social network theory which allowed for important themes to emerge. These themes emerged out of the data rather than being predetermined prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990). The research questions guided the development of the codes and themes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the process of coding as assigning codes, tags, or labels to units of meaning in descriptive data used in this study. Codes took the form a comprehensible category labels and were attached to words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that were connected to a specific concept. The important part of the connection with the identified codes was the meaning of the underlying words or phrases. Codes assisted the researcher in pulling together cluster segments relating to specific questions or theme. Clustering the sets allowed for drawing conclusions in the analysis of data (Huberman, 1994).

The next cut included utilizing a constant analysis method (Boeije, 2002; Glasser & Strauss, 1967). This method involved checking and rechecking emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process of recursive analysis led to both descriptive and explanatory categories and provided a deeper understanding of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The emerging themes were constantly examined through the lens of
organizational learning, social capital, and social network theory. After several cuts essential themes were determined that best reflected the findings of the study.

Document Review

Document review analysis, in conjunction with interview data, was part of the content analysis conducted using a thematic approach (Trochim, 2001) to detect patterns. The researcher analyzed the documents collected using the existing protocol to analyze ideas around organizational learning and social networks. This helped identify significant themes and regularities, dissimilarities, and patterns that resulted in propositions to consider for the research questions leading this study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In qualitative research, triangulation is used for corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection. The process is used to confirm descriptions and themes elicited from the different sources of data collected (Creswell, 2008). Triangulation reduces the risk of drawing conclusions that reflect systematic biases or limitations as a result of using only one source in data analysis. Using multiple sources allowed the researcher to confidently share understandings and conclusions to the questions researched, minimizing the threat to validity (Maxwell, 2005). To further strengthen the reliability, as well as the validity of the study, Yin (2003) suggests that converging lines of inquiry ensure that similar patterns and categories exist in the data analyzed. In this research project, data were collected from multiple sources, and analyzed using a variety of techniques. This helped ensure the high reliability and validity of any results acquired.
Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data collection and analyses was drawn from the larger, longitudinal study described previously in this study. The data completed a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon studied and complemented the qualitative data collected and analyzed.

Extant Data: Social Network Analysis

The extant data analysis was obtained from the longitudinal study. The five distinct networks of information, trust, innovation, knowledge, and communication were examined in order to understand informal networks in the corrective action schools and at the district level. The social network constructs of density, closure and boundary spanning were analyzed.

Density measures were used to determine the frequent ties within each of the networks to help measure the connectedness in a network. This was important for organizational learning because it promoted social capital which was necessary for new learning to occur throughout an organization such as a school setting. Dense networks have tight ties and can move resources more quickly than networks with less dense ties (Scott, 2000). This process assists with effective exploitation and exploration for innovation of ideas and new learning to occur.

Closure measures the relationships between people in a network, including cliques. Organizations with high levels of close relationships often have a higher level of organizational learning and performance (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). Closure in organizational learning can facilitate shared language for learning, common understandings of goals, and curricular demands, and the ability for people to feel
confident in supporting each other’s development. This can reinforce the progress needed for successful single-loop and double-loop learning in problem identification and in developing solution in reform efforts (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

Centrality is another measure of the relationships in a network. People who have central positions in a network have increased access to resources and the ability to link and spread social capital throughout the organization (Stuart, 1998; Tsai, 2000). This measure helped determine the existence of boundary spanners, the staff who were connected and facilitate connections. There was also an analysis to determine the flow of information and whether it was from internal or external sources (Burt, 2000) enhancing the exploration and exploitation of new learning and innovation (March, 1991).

Table 3.1 Summary of the Research Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What processes does school staff engage in to diagnose problems and define solutions for schools in corrective action under NCLB?</td>
<td>Interviews, Document and Artifact Review</td>
<td>Constant Comparative Analysis, Coding schema, Content Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do schools in corrective action implement reform and how does the district support these reform efforts?</td>
<td>Interviews, Document and Artifact Review, Social Network Analysis (extant data)</td>
<td>Constant Comparative Analysis, Coding schema, Content Analysis, Network Measures—Density, Closure, Centrality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Daly & Finnigan 2009
Researcher’s Role and Ethical Considerations

As researcher, I needed to consider positionality because I am an administrator in the district in which the study was conducted. Although I am an administrator in this district, my positionality did not interfere with my objectivity in this study. I am an elementary school principal and by district design have very little contact with high school personnel. My positionality, however, allowed me easier access to district contacts at the high schools. My positionality also provided me with insight of the nuances in the districts, and knowledge of the structures in place. I took caution to avoid bias or recognized it, and addressed it, in order to remain objective throughout this project.

All participants had the opportunity to remain anonymous and without threat to their current positions. All individuals’ information remained confidential. The UCSD’s IRB requirements were met by the researcher and the stipulations of the process were followed throughout this study. The study involved only adult participants and there was no anticipated risk of harm. The risks were considered minimal for negative affects to their emotional, psychological, physical, social, economical, or political well being. The participants were notified of the study’s premise and procedures and that their participation would be voluntary. They were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the study (Appendix C).

The interviews were conducted without using participant’s names, only positions. To increase the probability of participation and receive adequate number of interviews, a professional development session was conducted at each site and for school personnel addressing the concepts being studied before any collection began. These
meetings presented a rationale and clarified understanding of the purpose of the study. It also informed the participants of the benefits and value of being part of this study because it would inform their next steps and future learning opportunities to influence and guide their reform efforts. During these sessions there was a general discussion of social networks survey questions and interview and document review procedures and lasted about an hour. Study results were shared with site and district office staff involved.

Limitations of the Study

The case study offered insight into the improvement process of schools in corrective action under NCLB. However, there were some limitations to the scope and generalizability of this study. They involved limited context and sample size, interim district leadership, and temporal concerns.

The first limitation addressed the limited context and sample size of the study. The study examined high schools in corrective action status in a large urban school district. The findings may not address all educational settings such as elementary and middle schools, rural settings, and small school districts. The processes used by the schools studied may not be generalizable to high performing schools or schools in different phases of the INI status or successfully exiting corrective action status. The sample population included high school and district personnel only, and of limited number of participants. The sample population was selected by a purposeful sampling procedure and participants may not have represented the entire school personnel or high school personnel from other settings.

The final possible limitation was the status of district personnel utilized in this case study. The district had an interim superintendent and people in key leadership
positions were not consistent. The district had been in a state of flux for the last five years, i.e. four superintendents in the last five years. This inconsistency in leadership may have affected site personnel’s’ knowledge of district support, organizational learning structures, networks and flow of research-based evidence for best practices.

Given these limitations, it was critical to pay attention to the way data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. In order to produce valid and reliable results there must be high levels of trustworthiness in the research process (Merriman, 1998). To ensure high levels of trustworthiness the researcher used multiple sources of evidence and established a chain of evidence (Yin, 2003) as outlined in the methods section of the study. To further promote trustworthiness in the study, careful triangulation of the data was conducted to report consistent findings.

Chapter Summary

The intent of this case study was to examine the processes school staff used to diagnose problems, define solutions, access effective strategies in corrective action schools, and to determine in what ways and to what extent these reform efforts were diffused through the schools and district office through social networks. This information was examined through the lens of organizational learning theory and social network theory. A case study design was used to conduct two in-depth case studies in corrective action high schools. A mixed method design was implemented to collect and analyze data. A comprehensive analysis was conducted on the qualitative data sources of interviews and document review to assess the use of single- and double-loop learning, exploitation and exploration in organizational learning involved in site reform.
In addition, quantitative data, in the form of extant data was taken from a larger longitudinal study, and used to corroborate findings derived from the analysis of the qualitative data. The quantitative extant data combined with the qualitative data analyzed provided a better understanding of the research problem and questions (Creswell, 2008). Themes emerged from the triangulation of the multiple data sources. The mixed method research design was selected because it built on the strengths of both qualitative and qualitative data. This allowed the researcher to present a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon studied. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4.
Overview of Data Presented

In this chapter the findings are presented from the data collected on the organizational learning occurring in the two high schools in corrective action, and the social networks in place that promoted the flow of communication, innovations, and knowledge. The chapter also includes the data on the district’s role in supporting reform efforts at these two sites. The data is presented in three sections, reporting the results for the study’s three research questions.

Descriptive Statistics - Interviews

In investigating the research questions, ten interviews were conducted with staff at each of the two corrective action high schools. Three central office district employees were also interviewed. The staff interviewed represented a variety of roles found on campus including classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators. The central office participants were the superintendent and two School Improvement Officers (SIO). Table 4.1 displays the participants and their roles. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the schools and the staff members, the names of the schools and staff members will remain anonymous. Staff members are assigned numbers to conceal their identities. The district’s name will not be used and the district will be referred to as “the district” and the SIOs will be identified by their school and title, SIO.
Throughout the chapter, the staff at each site will be identified by school number and assigned number. For example, the counselor in corrective action school 1 will be referred to as (1.1) because the counselor works at corrective action school 1 and is staff member number 1 listed in the table above, right below the principal. The SIOs will be identified by the corrective action school number where they supervised and their title. For example the SIO for corrective action school 2 will be identified as (CAS 2 SIO) because he works in corrective action school 2 as the SIO.

In corrective action school 1, the interviewed staff’s work experience at the site varied, ranging from one year to six years when the small school started. The average years of being at this school was 3.81 years. The staff also ranged in years in education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corrective Action High School 1 Staff</th>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience School/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>School Leader</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Counselor</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Health and Biotech Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 World History Teacher</td>
<td>ILT, SSC</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 English Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Chemistry Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 English Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Health Care Essentials Teacher</td>
<td>ILT</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 English Teacher</td>
<td>ILT</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>ILT</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corrective Action School 2 Staff</th>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience School/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>School Leader</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6/10+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Education Specialist</td>
<td>ILT, SSC</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Math Teacher</td>
<td>Math Dept. Chair</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 English Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Math Teacher</td>
<td>ILT</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Science</td>
<td>ILT</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.5/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Business Teacher</td>
<td>Coordinator of the Finance Academy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Culinary Arts Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 English Teacher</td>
<td>ILT</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Math Teacher</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Office Staff</th>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience School/Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>District Superintendent</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Improvement Officer (SIO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Improvement Officer (SIO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The range was from 1 year to 27 years, with the average being 11.3 years. Five out of the twelve staff interviewed, (42%), were members on the site’s leadership teams. The corrective action school 2 staff’s work experience ranged from one year to six years when the school opened. The staff’s experience in the field of education ranged from 2 to 21 with an average of 10.5 years in education. Six of the ten staff interviewed, (60%), were members on the site leadership teams. See Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics – Surveys

Extant data, from a larger national study, was also used to triangulate data collected at both of the two corrective action high schools. Portions of the data were used throughout this analysis. In corrective action school 1, twenty-three out of twenty-six teachers and paraprofessionals were surveyed, with 88.5% of the sample being classroom teachers. 9 out of the 23 respondents claimed that they were part of the school-based planning team, and the rest were not. For the 9 respondents claiming to be on the plan team, their lengths of stay on the team ranged from the first year to year 6, with an average of 3.43 years (SD=2.57). See Table 4.2. In Table 4.2 and Table 4.4 (Plan Team members in CAS 2) the number 1 represents the staff on the planning team and the number 2 are those that are not on the team.

Table 4.2 Corrective Action School 1 Plan Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
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The survey respondents’ work experiences at corrective action school 1 varied, ranging from the first year to 20 years, but the average years of being at this school was 6 years (SD=6.303). Their experience of being an educator also showed a wide range from the first year to year 28, with an average of 12.73, which indicated that the surveyed teachers and staffs were generally familiar with the education profession (SD= 8.475). See Table 4.3

### Table 4.3 Corrective Action School 1 Descriptive Statistics

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The sample population from the survey for corrective action school 2 included 31 teachers and paraprofessionals. Twenty-eight out of the total 31 sampled school staff participated in the survey, and the response rate was 90.3%. 85.7% of this analysis sample was classroom teachers. 10 out of the 28 respondents indicated that they were part of the school’s leadership teams. For the 10 respondents claiming to be on the leadership teams, their lengths of stay on the teams ranged from 1 to 7 years, with an average of 3.33 years (SD=2.345).

### Table 4.4 Corrective Action School 2 Plan Team

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The survey respondents’ work experiences at this site varied, ranging from the first year to 12 years, but the average years of being at this school was 4.35 years
The staff seemed to be at this school for a relatively short period of time. Their experience of being an educator also showed a wide range from the first year to year 33, with an average of 11.23, which indicated that the surveyed teachers and staffs were generally familiar with the education profession (SD= 8.728).

Table 4.5 Corrective Action School 2 Descriptive Statistics

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The following section will provide an overview of the findings. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews and documents review will be analyzed for each question. Quantitative data will be dispersed throughout to support the qualitative findings.

**QUESTION 1**

*What processes does school staff engage in to diagnose problems and define solutions for schools in corrective action under NCLB?*

The data collected to answer question one, examining the process used in defining problems and solutions, will be framed using the headings: how decisions were made, what decisions were made, who engaged in the decision making, and the leadership support involved.

**How Were Decisions Made?**

*Organization/Structure*

The process the two high schools identified were described as occurring in three types of structures: formal schoolwide committees, formal weekly professional
development meetings, and informal communications. Each structure was created to improve the organization’s process for sharing information in decision making around problem identification and solutions for improved student achievement. The majority of teachers at both corrective action schools felt that the structural design of the small school model provided for many opportunities to identify problems and solutions in an informal manner.

*Formal Committees*

Document analysis revealed that the schools espoused to have formal teams that address program improvement issues in an effort to exit program improvement status. The formal schoolwide structures involved organized teams designed to create schoolwide plans that included goals and strategies/interventions to improve student performance in response to federal, state, and district requirements. The plans are fluid documents that are to be monitored and adjusted at regularly schedule meetings and shared with the staff throughout the year. Staff input is supposed to be sought in all decision making around problem identification and solutions for improved student performance.

The School Site Council (SSC) is a state required committee created to oversee the budgets and expenditures of the school’s state and federal restricted budgets. The SSC is responsible for writing a Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) incorporating the budgets and expenditures for resource/ interventions to address student achievement needs and monitor the achievement of the schoolwide SMART goals written in the plan. The sites’ SSCs created schoolwide SMART goals based on assessment results and with collaborative input from all stakeholders. The five SMART goals and
the strategies and interventions identified to support the achievement of these goals were the overarching guide for the year’s work. The members of the SSC were voted in by constituent groups they represented and there was parity between staff and community members. (See Appendix E for SPSA goals).

Another team on site was the Instructional Leadership Team. The role and responsibility of this team was to plan the implementation of supports and interventions, identified in the SPSA, in order to move students to proficient levels of performance on assessment measures. The ILT was also responsible for planning the professional development on-site to address areas of needs called out in the school’s SPSA. The ILT members were staff members strategically identified by the principal on site.

The third committee on site was the Governance Team. The Governance Team was created in response to an agreement with the district and teacher union in an effort to provide teachers with some shared decision making opportunities. The Governance Team was responsible for overseeing decisions related to the school’s day-to-day functioning. It was also supposed to provide input into the SSC regarding issues related to student achievement. The Governance Team members were representatives of grade level/subject areas and parents of students on site.

Each of these formal structures was created to improve student achievement and assist with communication of decisions made on site effecting student achievement. The work of each committee would be inclusive of program improvement requirements and solutions for improving student performance on accountability measures. Each of these formal committees was described on the schools’ websites. The schools espoused to have representation of all stakeholders on each team. The SSC and Governance Team
were charged with meeting regularly, having minutes documented from meetings, and bylaws to guide the process used for decision making. It was suggested by the district that the ILT meet at least twice a month. The formal committees were responsible for sharing the information and decisions made with the rest of the staff and parents in the community.

In both schools the majority of staff interviewed when asked directly about the process for identifying problems and solutions at their site stated that there was no formal process, described informal processes, or said that they were unfamiliar with any process for problem identification and selection of solutions. Only after asking follow-up questions were any references made to the formal structures of SSC, ILT, Governance Team or their weekly professional development meetings.

In corrective action high school 1, when asked about the process staff engaged in to identify problems and select solutions none of the staff mentioned these formal structures. Some of the staff interviewed was not clear on what program improvement was and the requirements for their school. The majority were not familiar with the details of their school’s PI plan. One teacher, a member of the ILT and SSC, mentioned the SPSA, but was not sure if it was a district requirement or school sponsored plan. Many staff believed that the program improvement (PI) plan had to do with increasing the API (Academic Performance Index), a state measure based on performance on the statewide assessment. They shared that they were trying to increase their school’s API to 661. They did not share many details on the goals in their plan or the target groups of students or strategies or interventions determined in order to meet those goals. They all believed that program improvement had something to do with increased scores.
The interviews for this study were conducted in December through February. The staff was asked these questions in the middle of the year. One teacher summed up the thoughts of many staff members interviewed:

So program improvement with the AYP and the API scores, etc… I mean I don’t know… and I’m not sure what the plan is. That hasn’t been shared. I’m a first year teacher. It could have been shared last year with the staff, and let’s assume that they know the specifics and what needs to be improved with the school, but I don’t know. (1.2)

Still another teacher shared her understanding about the school’s program improvement status:

I mean I do know that we need to raise test scores, and getting the API scores will flush us out of program improvement, but I don’t know exactly what… I don’t know what program improvement number we’re at right now. Do you by chance?… Three? So we’re at year 3 now? Wow! (1.4)

Three teachers who are listed as members of the ILT and/or SSC committees did not share these structures as part of the process in decision making related to student achievement. Only two teachers discussed SMART goals. One teacher who is a member of both the SSC and the ILT shared her perception of the program improvement plan, SPSA, and SMART goals:

…But we don’t hear about it too much. Program improvement doesn’t really come up too much right now…I really don’t remember coming up with a plan or discussing a plan since that second year… But like our principal came in and said, “Well, we’re going for 661 which is a 40 point jump… I don’t know if there’s a plan or how we’re supposed to get there… We don’t have a committee specifically designed for choosing interventions because we have our grade level teams… (1.8)

At correction action school 2, all interviewed knew that the school was in program improvement and had varying degrees of understanding about the requirements involved. All the staff had knowledge that the Instructional Leadership Team, School
Site Council, a committee, or a task force worked on a plan or set goals for improvement. The majority of staff knew that these committees were working on schoolwide reform and improving student achievement. All the staff referred to schoolwide goals and was aware of the need to improve. The staff shared varying degrees of understanding of how these formal structures supported decision making.

One teacher sums up the teachers who appeared to have strong knowledge of their school’s program improvement efforts and the supporting formal structures:

I know at the SSC we do a lot of brainstorming too, you know, it’s like teachers, the SSC is a school site council and its teachers, principal and parents and students and a lot of times our plan, we identified areas for improvement… we have our smart goals…it’s all staff involvement…it’s just a continuous thing. I think we’re getting better and better at it. (2.1)

Although all interviewed knew about PI/SMART goals and shared their knowledge about this information being reviewed by the School Site Council, Instructional Leadership Team, and Task Force, some staff members were not clear how these committees made decisions. A few teachers knew these formal committees were on site but they appeared not to understand their work toward addressing the school’s program improvement status. All the teachers gave the impression that the information was shared with them in the various forms of the weekly Tuesday Meeting.

One teacher’s comment represented the staff members who were not certain of the role of these formal committees:

This task force right here that meets with our principal’s mentor has been identifying some of the issues and some of the solutions and some of the programs that need to take place... We have faculty meetings every Tuesday. And some of the things are discussed. That’s how I know about the task force... (2.7)
The staffs at both schools appeared to have a formal process for identifying problems and solutions. The staff members from both schools reported various responses as to their understanding of the role the formal process plays in their daily practice. Several shared an awareness of the existence of a program improvement plan. The majority shared that they thought it focused on increasing scores.

Formal Weekly Professional Development Meetings

When asked about the process used for identification of problems and solutions, staff at both schools explained how issues are brought up and solved at their weekly professional development meetings. The majority interviewed shared this structure as the main place for identifying problems and solutions. Some of the professional development meeting time was dedicated to grade level or department meeting and roundtable. Teachers reported that these times supported problem identification and solutions.

In corrective action school 1, many of staff interviewed, seven out of ten, shared that the weekly meeting structure was a place they brought up issues. In corrective action school 2, the majority, six out of ten, talked about the opportunity to share issues or concerns at the weekly meeting and that the principal was active in identifying problems that needed addressing on site. One teacher from each site shared the process used for identifying problems and solutions as follows:

...on our staff development days... Well, first it's discussed as a big group, I think, and it's just kind of thrown out there... We call it a round table... And then after that, it's more about breaking down in department and then even more detailed than that, by grade level... (1.7).

...we meet as a staff every Tuesday, and we always have time for a roundtable discussion. So, if problems are not brought up as part of the
principal’s agenda and often they are, then they’ll surface during roundtable. (2.6)

At both sites, many of the problems teachers shared when discussing the process were not at the schoolwide level or about reform efforts. The concerns were more geared toward every day concerns for students and school operational issues, and the weekly meetings were shared as more of a very informal setting for addressing any issues on site. The following comment highlighted staff’s sentiments.

Well if somebody has any problem, concerns they usually just bring it into the meeting we have on Wednesdays, somebody saying I have the concern about this student or this process, or you know, the way we’re doing things and then it’s addressed openly so everybody can have an input. (1.8)

A couple of teachers thought that the principal shared numbers, scores, analyzed results, and brought this information for teachers to identify problems and solutions and to talk about them at Wednesday meetings.

You show the numbers. You show the results. And what do we do? And the staff, you know . . . Wednesdays are our staff meetings, and we usually sit down and talk… We just need some thoughts, and we’ll come back together. (1.1)

The solutions to the identified problems are listed in the formal documents on site. The majority of staff members shared that they believed solutions to problems were selected by staff at the weekly meetings. The majority of staff shared that grade level and department teams met to discuss and problem solve student concerns and issues in the school. “It depends, it’s up to the grade, and it’s up to that individual team.” (1.3)

Yes, the solutions that we’ve come up with so far . . . They come up in our Wednesday professional development meetings which are about an hour and a half long. (1.2)
The staffs at both schools shared that the weekly professional development meeting was the place and time to share problems and select solutions. They reported that they had opportunity to bring up issues, problem solve, and agree on resolutions with input from all staff members. The staff did not report solutions developed or selected in the formal documents when describing the process for selecting solutions.

**Informal Process**

The majority of staff at both schools’ first responses when asked about the process for identifying problems reported that they had no formal process. The survey data supported the teachers’ belief about not having a formal process. In corrective action school 1, 36.4% of the respondents thought there was a formal process for evaluating programs or practice (M=2.23, SD=.813) See Table 4.6. In corrective action 2, 48.7% believed there was a formal process (M=2.30, SD=.724) See Table 4.7 The numbers represented in the tables throughout the chapter are based on an agreement scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree.

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Table 4.6 Corrective Action School 1 Formal Process
Table 4.7 Corrective Action School 2 Formal Process

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In corrective action school 1, five out of ten staff shared that there was an informal process when first asked the question. Two teachers initially said they did not know of a process, two reported that the process involved telling the principal a problem, and another teacher responded that there used to be a process but it no longer existed. When asked additional questions, many clarified the process used by describing the other formal structures. Two teachers believed the process involved sharing the problem with the principal and he would take care of it. The informal nature of the process is reflected in the following comment.

I think mostly just tell the principal if you have a problem… We do E-mail each other a lot… Like the teachers, saying “Hey, you know, I have this student. We’re seeing this problem . . . I’m seeing this problem. Does anyone else have any input into the student, but I think it’s not a formal process. I think it’s just more informal talks. (1.8)

There has been a change in leadership at corrective action school 1 for the past three years. One teacher felt that the process for identifying problems and solutions has changed over the last few years as a result of these changes in leadership at the site. He clarified that this was not the result of the current principal’s decisions, but the principal from the previous school year:

… there was an incredibly formal process, and we spent hours and hours. We’d have not just the professional development every week, but we had
another meeting on Mondays after school… We built in different avenues to address different issues… In the past in these after-school things, we would have the issues… What do you propose? We’d come to a consensus, and we’d do it. And, again, our former principal made sure that we’d follow up on this. So, we did have something. Now . . . There’s a lot of frustration now… (1.5)

In corrective action school 1, there has been some tension identified by staff members emanating from the previous year. The strife occurred because the staff explored the possibility of converting to a charter in response to the threat of reconfiguring the small schools on their complex. The staff was divided over this issue and tensions have existed among the staff since. This issue and the possibility of reconfiguring the small schools will be discussed in another section of this chapter. These issues were shared by a few staff members and appeared to influence their opinions, as indicated in these teachers’ comments about the process for identifying problems and solutions:

Well, I think it’s pretty much one of the teachers will be mad about something or the principal will bring something up, like a problem that we’re having, and then a few teachers will argue over it while everyone else just watches them . . . This is like in our PD meetings on Wednesdays … but it’s mostly like certain teachers that try to make all the decisions and run the school. And then nothing is usually ever decided, and it’s pretty confusing. (1.2)

We have a time and it’s at the end of a Wednesday meeting…. And it all comes down to those tenured teachers. The tenured teachers who are vocal and who shoot down other ideas … It seems like there are 4 teachers on campus out of the 16 we have for our school that are the decision makers, just because they’re the tenured teachers. They are the ones who steam roll everybody else’s ideas, and they go with it. (1.4)

The teachers in corrective action school 2 felt that there were informal processes for identifying problems and solutions, as well as, those provided through the more
formal structures at the site. The staff all shared that they felt that they had opportunity for input. The following teacher’s comment represents the mass majority.

We have site counsel that discusses the issues. I think there is enough feedback loops that teachers can initiate discussions with issues that they see within the classrooms and on campus, that may not even pertain to their students, but, in general, we’re all looking out for each other and what happens. I think you know, initiating conversation... whether it’s through an E-mail or just a sidebar conversation could develop into something different, and that we can all discuss. (2.3)

Small School Model in Process

When investigating the processes that these two high schools in corrective action used to identify problems and solutions a reoccurring feature important to understanding the schools’ system surfaced throughout each interview. All interviewed felt that the structure of the small school model played a significant role in these schools’ process for indentifying problems and solutions and the implementation of strategies used throughout the entire school. The value of being part of the small school permeated many responses. In order to give an accurate picture of the schools studied, the teachers’ perceptions about being part of a small school needed to be shared. It would be remiss for this study not to report this finding.

The majority of teachers shared that the small school model supported students’ achievement and teachers’ abilities to address students’ needs. The ability to see each other daily influenced their belief about needing formal processes to make decisions relevant to student achievement. In fairness, teachers did also report some limitations to this structure in their schools. However, the overwhelming belief was that the small school structure really supported student achievement. This section will briefly review the pros and cons of the small school structure at these sites as shared by staff members.
Pros for Small School Structure

Both sites advertized the value and benefits of the small school model in their documents, such as, the School Accountability Report Cards, SPSAs, and websites. The personalized nature of this setting was highlighted as a main reason to attend their schools. The schools cited the model as one of the interventions offered at their schools.

Many teachers felt the small school model allowed them to get to know their students well. This personalized relationship with the students helped the teachers select interventions that met their individual students’ needs. They felt that they could work closely with the children on issues they may have both academically and personally. Many of the teachers at both sites felt very strongly that the small school structure or organization made a difference for students. The following comment is a sample of these sentiments:

…It’s more like a family would respond to another family member than just a teacher and a student type of thing. The teachers are not just interested that the child knows A, B, and C, they also want to make sure that they are emotionally ready to be the classroom ….The personal piece for sure, ….we respect them, and so respect and genuine concern for our students, and our students know that…(1.9)

The teachers also shared that the small school structure allowed for teachers to work together more closely on issues affecting their schools. They had opportunities for more collaboration and for filling leadership roles. The majority of the staffs believed they had dedicated teachers because there were more demands and expectations for teachers due to the limited number of teachers on staff. Many shared that they could make a difference in a small school with all staff working together and this structure
provided for more informal opportunities to work together. It is evidenced in comments such as the following:

You could only say, “Hey, what’s going on.” Because we loop, we share a lot of the same kids. There’s always an ongoing conversation. “Hey, you know, he . . . I know he’s in your class he’s whatever, and in mine . . . .” There’s just always a conversation going on. You might not have that in a larger school. (2.4)

Other teachers shared that they appreciated the chance to be part of leadership roles that they not have had at a comprehensive site with many teachers. They also shared that the smaller number of staff afforded them the opportunity to be involved committee work and have easy access to other staff members and the principal. One teacher expressed this sentiment in the following comment.

Like I have me versus 30 people to, you know, not necessarily fight to do or be the leader of something, but there’s just so many things going on everybody is going to be the leader of something. Whereas if I were in a school of 200 teachers, you know, a lot of people could just get by with not doing anything because there are so many people. So that’s kind of, I don’t know that we have necessarily a certain opportunity that a comprehensive doesn’t have, I just think the teachers have much more of an active role and voice in what happens at this school than a comprehensive has. (2.6)

Cons of Small School Structure

Although all staff at both sites appeared to be strongly in favor of the small school model for supporting teaching and learning, there did surface a few limitations or negative outcomes resulting from this structure. One limitation reported was the lack of opportunities to collaborate with other teachers when single staff taught specific elective subjects. Other teachers shared that it was also hard to collaborate with only two teachers teaching the same subject, especially if they were new to the site, subject, or grade level.
A few staff members shared that in a small school setting there was a lack of sharing of resources and personnel with all the schools on the complex. In budget cut times, this did not seem like a good use of personnel, such as counselors and nurses, who could serve all students on a complex more wisely, if they worked collaboratively. There was little cross-school collaboration occurring, limiting the sharing of expertise and innovation in reform efforts.

Another aspect was the limited offerings of electives to students at each site. This was because of the number of teachers on site and the ratio of required subjects and intervention classes needing to be taught. One teacher added an additional concern about limited staffing. “The disadvantage is if they need something different. What if there’s a personality clash with a teacher? You can’t move the kid because that’s the only math teacher.” (1.1)

A final disadvantage of the small school model was the constant threat to closing the small schools on site, especially during these hard economical times. Last year at both sites there had been some discussion and concern about the continuation of the small school model. Due to budgets cuts, the district deliberated about the possibility of doing away with the small schools on these two campuses or reconfiguring the existing small schools into larger schools, perhaps combining some of the schools into one on each campus. This caused the teachers to react to this situation. One of the sites had a meeting with district personnel the week of the interviews to discuss the “continued threat” of reconfiguration for next year. This appeared to be a major concern for this staff. This issue will be discussed in Question 2 because it seemed to have implications for implementation of reform strategies.
Staffs in both corrective action schools reported that an informal process was the manner in which many problems were identified and solutions were selected to improve their students’ academic performance. They shared that the small school setting afforded them the opportunity to talk regularly with each other and because they shared a small group of common students, they could work together to share information and ideas on how to move individual student’s progress.

What Were the Decisions Made?

*Match of Problems and Solutions Identified*

The formal SPSA documents from both schools were examined to highlight the goals each school selected to move student achievement at their sites. The charge of the SSC’s at both schools was to write goals based on perceived reasons for the school’s underperformance and select solutions to achieve the goals in an effort to move the school out of program improvement.

In individual interviews, staff was asked questions concerning what they believed were the reasons for the schools’ underperformance and the solutions implementing this year to improve student achievement. Both sites reported many reasons for underperformance. They also offered many solutions and interventions that their sites were engaged in, in an effort to improve their schools’ performance.

*Identified Problems: Reasons for Underperformance*

In analyzing the formal document of the SPSA in corrective action 1 school, it clearly lists five goals and associated interventions and budget expenditures to assist in the achievement of the goals. The SPSA academic goals addressed targeted growth for 9th and 10th grade students in ELA and Math on the CST and California High School
Exit Exam (CAHSEE) exams respectively. The document also called out targets for specific groups of students. (See Appendix F) The document contained goals for increasing graduation rate, parent involvement, and configuring their advisory period to provide additional supports for students through AVID program and/or CAHSEE classes during the day for specific targeted groups of students.

When interviewing staff in corrective action school 1, the majority of the staff reported reason for underperformance as lack of student and parent motivation and involvement, poor home lives, and families’ low socioeconomic and immigrant status. Many referred to the new arrivals to our country and the many different languages and cultural differences as challenges to achievement. One of the major reasons for underperformance that every staff member reported was that the English Learner population accounted for poor scores on accountability assessments. Many stated that this population is increasing every year. “Well, English is the number one difficult area in our school because we have so many language learners.” (1.2) “How do we communicate with 27 different languages which are all on our campus?” (1.4)

There are many, many reasons for underperformance. The main reason is our population is English learners, they don't speak English...They come from other countries, so we have cultural problems and differences. A large amount, you know, religious backgrounds are different. So we have really a wonderful diverse population here but that same wonderful diverse population stops the learning process... (1.9)

Some teachers stated additional reasons for underperformance. Lack of funding and budget cuts was mentioned often as a contributing factor to underperformance.” I hate to go back to the money but, you know, you can do a lot with school improvement if you have funding for certain things.“(1.6) Another reason stated was a lack of access to
technology, “…Because many of our students do not have laptops or have their own computers and they have to go elsewhere…” (1.3) And still another reason had to do with not having enough elective classes or programs to attract students to the school. “A lot of the students that score higher on the tests are being scurried away to other schools because they seem to offer more programs.” (1.1) Two teachers also referred to students coming to high school with low skills not acquired in earlier years of schooling. “These kids can’t read when they come to us. “And “middle school is not preparing our students for . . . .” (1.8)

Other teachers offered other competing reasons that may be contributing to underperformance. One suggested that it may have to do with teachers on site not getting along. “Well, last year, it seemed like some of the teachers were against other teachers and against the principal. You know everyone was kind of fighting …” (1.2) And still another explanation offered was the lack of communication from staff. ‘But I think if the school was able to communicate with our students’ parents and get them to get on board …there wouldn’t be that disconnect of going from school to home if we could break that barrier.’ (1.4)

Three teachers challenged the idea that their school was underperforming. They report red that they actually believed the school has made significant growth and was outperforming schools similar to theirs. They shared that it depended on how you analyzed data and how you looked at the disaggregated data. Their sentiments can best be summed up in the following explanation.

And you know what? Look at test scores . . . similar scores. The algebra test scores last year in schools like (school) in the state of (state) . . . Ours were #2 in the state. That somehow gets washed away because they don’t
compare us to like schools. They compare us to everybody… So, it’s so weird when you say, “your low test scores,” “your failing test scores,” . . . I don’t think we’re failing at all… We don’t use their definition, that’s for sure. I don’t. I know how far my students have come… (1.5)

In corrective action school 2, many staff shared challenges as the influences of the neighborhood and family life. “I think the students come from such diverse backgrounds. I think the language barriers are a huge issue.” (2.7) They also reported student and parent buy-in as reasons for underperformance. Attendance and parent and community influences also contributed to the problem. These ideas are represented in the following comment.

If you look at the population of our school we have 98% who are on Title One… there’s the parent factor, there’s the culture factor, there’s the downtown factor, there’s the trolley, just riding the trolley we’ve had students attacked on the trolley. There’s the gang factor, you know, walking through your own neighborhood, it’s the pain factor… (2.1)

Some staff shared other challenges that contributed to underperformance. They reported that the 4 by 4 schedule was limiting and classes were not distributed properly. Others felt that students did not see the value in talking the CST assessment and saw no motivation in doing well on that assessment. Many staff commented on the school’s reputation and recruitment practices as reasons for underachievement. The statement below reflected these ideas.

And a problem is a cycle, and here’s the cycle. We have low scores, and we have a bad reputation. So we’re either the last school or the second-to-last school to fill up… What happens is three weeks into the semester when some family moves here and it’s the fifth time they’ve moved in three years. . .If you have a pocket of 20 or 30 kids or 50 kids that completely bomb those tests…, they pull all your scores down…with those bad test scores. We end up with low enrollment. So we end up being a receptacle for kids who struggle because we’re the last school to fill up… (2.5)
When asked about possible competing reasons for underperformance, one teacher offered that there may be some weak teachers and teachers who do not hold high enough expectations for the school’s students. Another suggested that the competition on the complex for drawing students to the different schools contributed to the underperformance of the school.

...there’s competition throughout our complex. I mean, being at this complex with another school that’s in the Top 12 in the nation is a little hard to compete with that, but . . . And I just don’t think our school is that well-known either. (2.4)

Solutions Selected

The data was examined on the solutions the schools selected to their problems. Both schools’ formal SPSA plans listed selected strategies and interventions. Teachers also shared, through interview responses, the strategies and interventions they were engaged in an effort to improve student achievement.

In corrective action school 1, the SPSA listed strategies for academic/graduation rate improvement to be EL classes, CAHSEE/AVID classes, and after school tutoring. They also stated that they would group students strategically into these extra supports. There was no mention of Saturday School or attendance goals in the plan. The plan also reported additional supports for the achievement of the goals would be regular PD to address differentiation of instruction, release time for teachers to collaborate and plan. The teachers would be allowed to plan and collaborate around essential standards, create pacing guides, common assessments, etc. The plan also addressed strategies to increase parent involvement.
When teachers were interviewed and asked about solutions to identified problems they offered a variety of solutions that addressed academic needs. The majority of responses were about academic programs and supports. All the staff reported that the students were engaged in CAHSEE, ESL, Sheltered or AVID classes based on their needs. Many teachers shared that students attend Saturday School for extra support and to count toward improving attendance. Very few responses addressed the identified problems, or causes for underachievement, mentioned in their interviews.

Only a few teachers reported interventions that had to do with motivating students or engaging parents in school activities that would benefit their students academically, which was one of the majority of issues called out in the interviews. One teacher mentioned the DataDirector, district purchased data storage system, as an intervention that helped staff, students, and parents. It allowed everyone to see current student’s scores, grades, etc. which assisted students, parents, and staff in supporting students’ academic progress and motivation to turn in all work. Three teachers shared the new computer program, Upgrade Learning, as being an intervention to motivate students and improve their skills.

Three teachers mentioned the roll call portion of the advisory period as motivating students. The roll call consisted of motivational/information speakers presenting weekly pep talks to the student body. Another motivational program mentioned was the college-bound program, where everyone on campus wore t-shirts or sweatshirts from different colleges in order to inspire students and make them aware of the different schools available.
Other teachers reported that the Ed-Connect calls to parents was an intervention on campus, as well as, the New Arrival’s Center which helped support parent involvement on campus. The Ed-Connect computer system made automatic calls for missed attendance and allowed staff to send messages in mass to all parents. The principal sent weekly messages to the community.

In corrective action school 2, the formal SPSA strategies were similar to those of corrective action school 1. They listed many strategies to support their four SMART goals on academic improvement, parent involvement, and increasing graduation rate. The strategies called out in the plan included small classes for ESL students, AVID and CAHSEE prep classes, and outreach supports to increase parent involvement. The formal document also reported release time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in peer observations and case conferencing.

In corrective action school 2, staff offered similar solutions to their problems as the staff in corrective action 1 school. They shared strategies to meet their four SMART goals, such as, math and ELA after school support programs, AVID and CASHEE Boot Camps on Saturday, and ESL and AP classes on site. They also shared ways to increase parent involvement.

Two staff reported solutions to increase student motivation in the form of incentives and opportunities to see older students engage in activities related to the school’s focus. Three teachers also shared that the staff collaborated on common curriculum, assessments, and calibration of grading. Some staff talked about the improvement in student recruitment practices as solutions to identified problems. Only
two teachers reported professional development sessions as part of the solutions to meeting their identified problems.

The formal documents for both schools identified areas where students’ were underperforming and listed strategies and interventions to remediate these identified problems. The staffs at both schools did not report the same reasons for underachievement. The majority of staff members at both corrective action schools reported the primary reasons for underachievement were related to students’ poor home environments/motivation and lack of parent involvement. Most of the solutions staff shared did not match their identified problems. Many staff did not mention the formal document or its strategies and interventions as part of the process used in selecting solutions to problems related to student achievement in an effort to move out of program improvement status.

Who Made the Decisions?

The personnel involved in the decision making process related to school improvement were also examined. Both schools formal SPSA’s have a section which clearly designated who was involved in writing the plan and how the members are representative of all stakeholders on site. The Introduction section lists names of committee members, who they represent, dates the committee met, and what committees’ input was received. Decisions, in this formal document at both sites, are espoused to have been made with all stakeholder groups represented in the decision making process and on-going monitoring of the plan.

In both corrective action schools, the majority of staff believed that they had opportunities to share their opinions in the decision making process. “People get the
opportunity to express their opinions on things” (2.9) They commented that the
principals had final say but that they felt there were opportunities to share their opinions.
Both staffs reported that the weekly meeting structure was a common place for this to
occur. Many reported that they have opportunities to talk with staff regularly and felt
comfortable addressing their principal directly. The staffs shared that the small school
setting allowed for ample opportunities to express their opinions and keep informed as to
what is going on at their campuses.

I think that when we identify a need, we discuss it as a staff, and certain
teams of teachers may take it on as a little project… Our staff is very
aware. We’re on the pulse of what’s really going on. There’s no smoke
and mirrors, and we tend to act quickly compared to other places where
I’ve worked. I’ve worked at six other high schools in (city), and I think
we’re doing a lot of pro-active stuff. (2.3)

The Role of Leadership in the Process

The leadership support involved, at both the site and district level, were examined
Interviews were conducted in order to gain understanding of the staff, principal, area
superintendents, and superintendent’s perspective on the leadership provided in the
process of decision making related to program improvement.

The two high schools are nestled in a large urban district that has been in a state
of leadership flux for the past years. There have been four superintendents in the past
five years. The new superintendent was appointed as the permanent leader the month of
the interviews. The area superintendents, known as School Improvement Officers (SIO),
reported to the Chief Deputy of Instruction who was directly under the superintendent’s
direction. The SIO’s responsibilities included regularly meeting with the Superintendent,
Deputy of Instruction, and the principals and directly supporting the site with
improvement efforts. The sites have had different SIOs each year for the past two or three years. Each SIO has served their respective sites this year only, but worked with both sites over the years.

Each school in the small school complex has their own principal. The principal in corrective action 1 school was new to the site this year, although he has a history of working at the site for fourteen years in the capacity of teacher several years before. He was the third principal in three years at this school. The principal in corrective action school 2 has been at the site for six years, since the inception of the small school model on the campus.

The staff at both schools was asked questions about site and district leadership support in the process of identifying problems and solutions. The principals, SIOs, and superintendent were also interviewed about their perceptions of the sites’ processes, plans, and leadership support in program improvement efforts.

Site Leadership

In corrective action school 1, the principal believed that he was making headway in reaching his staff and addressing the four goals he had set for the school. The four goals were to increase attendance, build collaboration, cooperation, and communication between the four schools on campus, increase parent involvement, and increasing student achievement. Two of these goals were not the goals espoused in the SPSA.

The principal believed that he led by his example of hard work and dedication. He shared that he was a transformational leader who distributed leadership responsibilities to his teachers. He seemed very proud of his philosophy that he hired good people and he lets them do their jobs. “I have a very simple but very effective philosophy related to
education, and that is surround myself with quality people and keep the vision, and then with some guidance, LET THEM DO THEIR JOB.” In reality he inherited the staff. There was very little turnover from the year before.

The principal reported that he was turning around the negative press his school has. He invited many dignitaries on site to show off his campus. He believed that he had shared decision making at his site. However, when interviewing him, he seemed to make many of the decision discussed and then shared them with staff. “When I have to . . . and it might seem like top down . . . But when I have to do these things, I explain to them why I do these things”. “I tell my staff that I reserve the right to make students’ and their decisions.” In the principal interview, he explained that he create four SMART goals for the school. He also told of many things he decided to do to help meet the goals he selected. These activities were his idea and he did not credit the staff. Many of the decisions for interventions he reported were made by him during the summer vacation when no staff was working.

The principal espoused to have an open door policy and that staff could talk to him or e-mail him with their concerns. He believed that he was open to suggestions to improving the school’s performance. For example, the principal reported that he had an agenda item at each Wednesday meeting that is entitled, “Roundtable-Concerns, Suggestions, and Solutions.”

Many of the seasoned teachers knew the principal and were friends with him when he was a teacher at the site. The teachers seemed to have mixed opinions about his leadership skills. Many of those interviewed did not mention the principal in any way as
a leader. The majority of staff gave the impression that he was a nice guy, but seemed to talk about the teachers as the main experts and decision makers on site.

A couple of the new teachers shared that they believed that the principal was leading the reform efforts and was very approachable. They saw him as in charge, supportive and felt they could go to him. “The principal and what he shares with us at meetings…And if I had a question about anything or a problem, I have no . . . not even a split second thought about, “I shouldn’t go talk to him.” I just go right in and talk to him”. (1.4) Other teachers seemed to have a negative view of the strength of the leadership on site.

So I guess the lack of a leader who understands that planning is a huge part of creating change… none of our goals or plans actually ever get carried out because you just stick a goal up there and you say, “Let’s see if we can make it,” but we have no means to get there… I’m not saying that my principal doesn’t believe that, but I think he’s more interested in putting on the facade that change occurs… (1.8) Some teachers interviewed felt the principal or district brought the school’s problems around learning forward and the staff worked on solutions at the PD sessions on Wednesdays, in breakout sessions in either departments or grade levels. “Those are more district-mandate problems than they are like individual school-related issues.” (1.5)

“They speak about what needs to get done, and then the principals filter it down into the staff.’ (1.7)

In summary, there appeared to be some dissonance around the principal’s beliefs and his actions in his leadership role. His espoused beliefs did not seem to match his theories in action related to shard decision making, distributed leadership, and support of the schools’ goals as listed in the school plan. He seemed to espouse attributes of strong
leaders; however his actions did not seem to match those espoused beliefs. The staff at the school reported mixed opinions on the site leadership. New teachers reported more favorably about the site leader’s abilities than did the more seasoned staff.

In corrective action school 2, the principal’s responses to interview questions were aligned with his staff’s view of the process used to identify problems and solutions. He shared that the school’s “ILT, which is more dynamic and less formal, met regularly to discuss matters of school improvement. The small school size affords them the opportunity to be nimble when it comes to making adjustments or implementing improvement plans.” He also shared that teacher leaders with ideas generally receive whatever resources they need to begin addressing their identified problems.

The principal in corrective action school 2 shared that his role was to “guide the staff in looking at data and making decisions on how to move groups of students to higher levels of achievement”. He reported that the school was data-driven and he assisted staff in sorting through the data-rich sources and to not get bogged down by a lot of protocol. “I’d say that helping make sense of the ocean of data is the most important role I play.” The principal wants the focus to be on interventions to help students.

In corrective action school 2, the staff all shared respect for their principal’s leadership abilities. They commented on his open door policy and openness to hearing their input. A few staff reported that the principal had the final say on issues at the school. “if you have a good idea…, but (principal’s name)’s always the final word… he’s in charge…” (2.1)

… (principal) has an open door policy…he encourages teachers to be leaders…teachers voices are heard…that gives them the impetus, drive to follow through on important things we have at school… (2.6)
The principal in corrective action school 2 appeared to be aligned with his espoused theory and theory in actions in his leadership role. The staff reported having respect for his leadership abilities.

**District Leadership Role**

School staffs were asked questions related to district support in decision making around the program improvement plan. Both schools’ staff reported very little knowledge of involvement or negative perceptions of district involvement. In corrective action 1 school, the majority of staff did not believe that the district directly supported them in their decision making regarding their specific school plan. “District role in PI plan? I don’t know. How do they help? I don’t really know” (1.7) Some of the staff reported that the district made demands, but did not back them up with much support. “Just a demand to increase the test scores and you come up with a solution on doing that”. (1.3) Several staff shared negative views about district involvement in reform efforts. “I think they let the principals know, “You’ve got to improve the program,” and go for it. I don’t know that there’s really even any funding for a lot of this stuff.” (1.8) “The district makes a decision and shares it with us. It’s shared decision-making.’ (1.5)

In corrective action school 2, many teachers shared similar views. The majority of staff knew the district had something to do with the schoolwide goals and others did not know how they supported program improvement efforts on the site. “I don’t know how they support us.” (2.7) Of the majority who believed that the district supported the school in some way, they shared that it was mostly in giving directives or procedures for meeting requirements and compliance. The following represented some of their
perceptions of district support. “They just told us that we needed the smart goals and these are the areas that we need to address….’ (2.2) This further illustrated in the following teachers comment:

The district has passed down to us, all the schools, to develop a school-wide plan for improvement… So first it came from the district, “Develop this school-wide plan,” and each school-wide plan is going to look the same…Here’s the old one. Here’s the format for the new one. Here’s what . . . Here’s what you’re going to fill in, and . . . . (2.5)

The principal in corrective action school 1 reported that he had a good relationship with all stakeholders on site. The principal shared that he met with the SIO to share improvement strategies and interventions and that the SIO had attended some leadership meetings related to program improvement. The SIO worked with the principal to secure the New Arrival Center on site.

The principal in corrective action school 2 believed that the district had limited capacity to impact/address program improvement needs at schools. He reported that they were generally supportive, “but we haven’t relied on them to shepherd us through the school improvement process.” He did mention that the district provided student information systems which assisted with getting timely results on relevant data for staff to use in decision making.

The SIOs reported that their jobs were to support the schools’ in their efforts to improve student achievement. They shared that they believed their charge was to facilitate the schools in creating their improvement plans and not impose their ideas or any specific strategies or interventions on the staff. They were to guide the principals by asking, as one SIO shared, “What are you doing? How can I help?” (CAS 1 SIO).
The SIOs also reported that they worked to support the new superintendent and board’s vision of the community cluster model. They were just starting to work with all the principals at each complex to write a plan for sharing resources and personnel to maximize strengths and offer students more support. With budget challenges, they reported, this would provide students with more academic opportunities and supports and it would be the only way to survive. As one SIO stated, “This way we can give the kids what they need.” (CAS 2 SIO)

The superintendent shared that he was pleased to be appointed to the position. He reported that being in an interim position places you “somewhere between a lame duck and a babysitter. There’s only so much decision making you can do.” He continued, “When you are permanent or full time, the incumbent can be held accountable to making significant changes.”

The superintendent commented that the constant changes in leadership have impacted the sites’ processes for decision making and the supports that they have received from the district. He admitted that it had been confusing and frustrating for principals and staffs at schools. His direction for program improvement for small high schools was for each school to have individual school plans but also to have a complex-wide program improvement plan. The common plan should reflect the strategic sharing of professional development, course sharing, common standards, equitable distribution of students, and process for working with English language learners. These plans were in transitional stages of sharing with SIOs and site principals.

The superintendent believed that the role of the area superintendents, SIOs, should be the link to the district and accessing all supports. He shared that their job was
to facilitate sites’ processes in designing their program improvement plans and not to dictate the plans. He further claimed that the role of the area superintendents was to mentor and coach principals in leadership abilities and creates and monitor time lines for managing the PI plan. As the links for schools to the district, the area superintendents were charged with “providing resources the sites’ need, creating more efficient processes for training, acquiring extra personnel, and streamline the budget cuts and impacts at sites.”

In summary, the schools reported engaging in formal, semi-formal, and informal processes for identifying problems and solutions. The majority of staff at both schools mentioned knowledge of a formal program improvement plan, but many reported not being sure what role it played in their daily practice. Those interviewed shared that they had opportunity to give input in decision making at their weekly meetings and that the majority of solutions were selected through discussions, suggestions, and consensus. The majority of staff at both schools shared that the small school model was supportive in their ability to share problems and solutions with each other. It seemed that many of the problems and solutions identified by staff were not exactly aligned to those listed in the formal documents.

**QUESTION 2**

_**How do schools in corrective action implement reform and how does the district support these reform efforts?**_

The data collected from question one addressed aspects of organizational learning reflected in the structures and process used in developing reform strategies. Another aspect studied, in the two corrective action schools, was the implementation of the
strategies selected in their efforts to move out of program improvement. The data collected related to implementation will be reported through the key aspects of the culture of the schools; the strategies perceived as effective; professional development programs; how staff collaborated; and the leadership involved in implementation.

Culture of the Schools

Small School Setting

When interviewing staff at both schools, a major overriding theme kept surfacing throughout various questions asked. The small school model setting influenced all decisions, practices, and beliefs. In corrective action school 1, there was a reoccurring undercurrent of stress shared by all. The stress was a result of the district's consideration of whether to continue the small school model at their setting. District personnel visited both schools at the end of last year and shared the budget concerns related to running small schools and the weighted values of keeping this structure versus costs for operating small schools. The district directed the schools to come up with a plan for how to justify their continued operation.

This threat to close the schools influenced decisions made at both sites. This year, the district visited corrective action school 1 the week before the interviews were conducted and again discussed the possibility of reconfiguring their school. This action appeared to be a monumental threat to the staff at this school as evidenced by their many references to this issue during the interviews. “...because we’ve been small schools for six years . . . For five of those six years now, we have been threatened with a closure . . . about this time every year, and it’s been in different forms. But we’re kind of just like tired of it now. “(1.8)
The majority of staff in corrective action school 1 did not look favorably on the district in regards to this situation. This constant threat appeared to have tainted their morale and tarnished the enthusiasm for their work. The following response captured some of this belief.

…the effort I put in is nowhere near what some of these teachers have done, but they’ve been putting all this effort . . . all this time . . . blood, sweat and tears for six years now, and it’s like, “Okay. This isn’t good enough. Now you’re going to have to try this.” I think the wind is just out of a lot of people’s sails. There are some nice talented committed teachers here. Again, it’s just . . . When they do this quality work and they say it’s not good enough; it just really takes the wind… (1.5)

In corrective action school 1, the school also experienced an ordeal last year as the staff tried to transform their school into a charter school as a response to the constant threat of reconfiguration each year. According to staff interviewed, the staff was divided on this concept and camps with allegiances were formed. It was reported that half the staff left when the attempt failed. This unsuccessful coup attempt had influenced the staff’s cohesion.

Well, last year, it seemed like some of the teachers were against other teachers and against the principal. . I don’t know if the teachers are still fighting. I think that half the teachers left because of the . . . disagreements… (1.2)

Many teachers reported that staff put much effort into researching this possibility and were discouraged and less passionate about the struggle around this matter. The failed charter school movement appeared to have left many staff at this school with less than positive feelings toward the district. This sentiment was pervasive throughout the interviews. Many staff reported that this constant threat took them off task and distracted
them from focusing on their students. They shared that some of their weekly meetings have been devoted to this issue. The following comment highlights some of the feelings.

Well, that was one of the things we were going to do last year. We were going to go charter...And that was a very dramatic...That was a huge...That was a huge committed long process...The district really tried to stop us at every turn on that one, but we were trying to preserve the school...there was a lot of planning, a lot of work that actually didn’t even blossom...Maybe that’s why we’re kind of taking a break and letting our principal kind of dictate it...I spent so much time working on the school as a whole...we’re absolutely exhausted. (1.1)

A side note to this threat of closure has been that the schools on the complex are collaborating with each other. Staff shared that this crisis has forced them to work together. Some staff felt this may be a benefit, others feels it defeats the small school model philosophy. ‘Since this crisis, I think it’s been pretty good...We’re having meetings...and so they’re pulling together. (1.3)

In corrective action school 2, two teachers made reference to the district’s actions on reconfiguring the small school model on their campus. They referenced the threat as occurring last year. The threat appeared to influence some staff to leave the school and to have affected some decisions about the continuation of some interventions. It did not appear to be something that had greatly affected the staff in the same way as the other corrective action school.

...we didn’t do the program this year because...last year...we weren’t sure we were going to be a small school...it took a lot of work and...we were not sure we were going to be a small school this year... (1.9)

In summary, both schools believed in the valuable opportunities for students and staff offered by the small school model. They reported how it positively affected the school culture. Both schools shared that the district had threatened to close or
reconfigure the small school model at their complex. This constant threat seemed to tarnish the majority of staff members’ views on the district and the support they provided. Both staffs made decisions influenced by the fact that they were not sure if they would be in existence this year and reported that they did not engage in some interventions as a result of the threat. Corrective action school 1 reported more negative effects due to recent threat of closure and residual effects from a failed attempt to convert to a charter school. These two issues seemed to negatively affect corrective action school 1’s culture. Corrective action school 2’s staff reported having a positive school culture.

Beliefs

The staff in corrective action school 1 shared varying opinions about their abilities to meet expected levels of performance and their morale. They did agree that they were all for their students and their achievement. “The thing is, you need all the parts for it to work. It’s not about the program. It’s about people… We’re here because we love these kids.”(1.5) The majority of staff felt that their school personnel were very qualified and capable of meeting the needs of their students. “They’re wonderful not only in identifying what the students need… they really put themselves out to meet that need…they’re not happy with just identifying the problem, but once the identify a problem they take it to the next level… to start fixing that problem..So they’re wonderful’. (1.3)

The staff’s belief appeared to be that they think that they were working very hard and were capable, but that the expected outcomes were unrealistic and too insurmountable. Many believed that the scores did not properly represent the achievement they had accomplished. Corrective action 1 staff voiced their opinions in the following comment.
Where other kids have their whole life. We have one student who came in. Couldn’t speak English freshman year. Graduated as a valedictorian. I mean, they don’t look at that. They just look at your test scores, your CAHSEE scores. You know I read these . . . some of these tests, and they’re difficult. They’re difficult for an English speaker who has been to college. And these kids are expected to do this when they haven’t been in the country very long. (1.1)

The data from the survey supported the findings from the interviews. Five items dealing with cohesiveness of staff results showed that the staff had a moderately high level of cohesiveness and morale. For example, 86.4% of the respondents agreed that staff at corrective action school 1 typically looked out for each other, represented by code TOC1 ($M = 3, SD = .535$). Table 4.8 displays the results of the survey related to the staff’s morale and cohesion. The total percent of 84.6 indicated that overall the staff had moderately high morale and cohesion at corrective action school 1.

**Table 4.8 Corrective Action School 1 Morale and Cohesion**

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Another indicator of the staff’s connectedness can be seen in the network maps from the extant data taken from the larger study. The map in Figure 4.1 shows relationships at the site by indicating who staff turns to for advice. Each node is a staff member and the lines connecting them indicate a tie, or other staff member. As you can see from the network map there is a good deal of exchange around advice related to program improvement which might suggest moderately high cohesion. The large square
nodes are key members in this network system. The principal is the large square in the lower center position.

![Network Diagram]

**Figure 4.1 Corrective Action School 1 Map of Advice Relationships**

Teachers in corrective action school 2 also felt that their staff was very capable, caring, competent, and supportive. ‘I think that when we want something to happen, we support each other and we help them out. I can’t even count the number of teachers who help get the CAHSEE camp set up for the math…Whether they’re their own students or not.’ (2.4) The staff also felt that the assessment of their progress was not accurately portrayed by the measures the system used for evaluation. It can be seen through comments such as the following.

With school improvement, schools act from a defensive posture rather than we think we’re doing the right thing but if it’s all based on a number going up…the public hears the rhetoric about what schools aren’t doing….they don’t understand the challenges…they don’t get it because they’re not in the environment…where they (kids) are at the beginning of the year and where they are at the end of the year it’s phenomenal…. (2.9)
The results from the survey reported that this school had a very high morale and cohesiveness. All five items assessing morale and cohesiveness indicated high rates in each question. For example, 96.2% of the respondents agreed that staff at corrective school 2 typically look out for each other, whose code was TOC1 ($M=3.19$, $SD=.491$). See Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9 Corrective Action School 2 Morale and Cohesion**

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</table>

The network map below shows who corrective action school 2 staff turn to for advice related to improvement. As you can see in this map the main node is the principal. He is represented by the large square node in the center of the system. As reported by staff, they turn to the principal for leadership in reform efforts. There was a great deal of exchange in this school which supported the staff’s assertion that the staff gets along well and shares information with each other. The lines connecting each node travel back and forth and between many different members. See Figure 4.2 below.
When directly asked about their schools’ ability to move out of program improvement status, many staff members at both sites felt that it would be challenging. The staff in corrective action school 1 had mixed opinions on whether they would be able to exit program improvement this year. ‘On a scale of 1 to 10, I’d give it a 10.’ (1.4) Many believed that they would not exit the sanction this year or any time soon.” Well, I don’t really know. ..exit sanction? I don’t know. I don’t think it will.” (1.7) They attributed this hesitancy to the level of expected results and the challenge of the English language learners, and not necessarily to their staffs’ teaching abilities. One staff member expressed it as follows.

Well as long as we have this population, we’re always going to have students, in this area anyway, that are going to fall short of then students who have been born and raised here… We’re always working with the population of English learners…our staff want to be here and they want to effect change and they want our students to succeed. (1.9)
The extant data results indicated that the entire staff felt the same as those interviewed about the possibility of exiting program improvement. 57.1% of the staff did not believe the school would exit this status and 42.9% believed it was possible.

Table 4.10 Corrective Action School 1 Belief in Ability to Exit PI

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Staff in corrective action school 2 echoed some of the same sentiments when asked about their ability to exit program improvement sanctions. “Given our location, our demographics and everything, I don’t know if we ever will.’ (2.3) Some staff thought that the system worked against schools exiting. ‘My understanding is that it’s a little bit of a moving target, and I think under those circumstances it is going to be extremely difficult for us to get out of the system improvement’. (2.5) Others shared reasons why they thought it would be difficult, such as in the following remark.

I don’t . . . Students have to do better on these tests, and I’ve always thought the state tests that students . . . It’s not high stakes for the students. It’s high stakes for the school. I know that’s not the only issue with determining the school numbers, but it’s a huge part of it, and until the students take those tests seriously, that is what our school is being evaluated on. (1.8)

The extant data corroborated the staff’s beliefs about exiting program improvement. 54.2% believed that they would not exit and 45.8% believed the school would exit PI status.
Table 4.11 Corrective Action School 2 Belief in Ability to Exit PI

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Strategies Implemented

In analyzing implementation of strategies, the following concepts were examined: what strategies staff believed were effective and evidence used in strategy selection. Many strategies were shared and staff reported the ones they felt had gotten traction as the most effective.

Strategies That Have Gotten Traction

In corrective action 1 school, the staff shared many strategies used to affect improvement efforts on site. When asked directly what strategies they thought had traction they reported a few specific strategies. The main strategy mentioned was the implementation of the Saturday School intervention for improving attendance. Six out of nine staff members reported this intervention as the one getting the most traction. Also shared by two staff members was the use of the Upgrade Learning Computer Program during Saturday School as a motivator and academic support for struggling students. The formal plan made no reference to Saturday School as an intervention. Another strategy that has gotten traction shared by three staff members is the alignment of CST questions to what is being taught in the classroom. Some departments, mainly the Math and English Language Arts Departments, had analyzed test questions and were teaching those concepts in their daily lessons. A teacher highlighted that strategy.
There have been several departments who have started to look very closely at CST data and STRAND data, look at the questions that are asked...Teaching to the test in the most specific way. If you asked certain teachers at our school, we are number two in the U.S. History scores because of that reason. We are number one in the state of California in Algebra scores... apparently the data is very good in those certain areas where they’re looking at it from a really micro managed position. (1.3)

Three staff members also shared that the school, in addition to analyzing CST questions and aligning lessons to involve the practice of concepts in CST assessment format, was manipulating the schedule of courses taught in order to have the most advantageous testing schedule. They discussed having students take certain math and sciences courses at select times during the year so that those courses would be the ones tested in the spring. The courses tested were perceived as easier courses than the other science and math courses required. Teachers shared this strategy as follows.

…we realized that part of what was driving our scores down was a certain subject. So we stopped testing students in that subject by stopping that class. Now we offer... We made a lot of decisions based on what holds weight in the CST. So, we made some very structural decisions based on the test which, I guess, we keep doing. I mean we keep... We don’t offer physics for that reason. We always have the students take chemistry in the fall, and then bio in the spring, so that when the CST comes around, they only have to take one science and that’s bio. So, that’s the way they get around it. (1.8)

Other staff commented on the advisory classes, CAHSEE and AVID classes, as strategies with traction and benefiting student achievement, as well as the small school model promoting the personal touch needed to push students’ achievement. One teacher mentioned the New Arrival Center as an intervention that was helping reform efforts.
In corrective action school 1, when asked how these strategies were selected all the staff responded that the staff made the decision to use these strategies. They shared that the decisions were based on teacher and principal suggestions. Many of the strategies selected were based on teachers’ experiences or from outside sources, such as, friends or colleagues at other schools use of the strategy at their sites, or from attendance at outside professional development sessions. No staff referred to research-based strategies or use of research-based evidence in decision making. Some of the strategies the school used may be based on research; however none of the teachers explicitly stated that as a basis or measure for the selection of that strategy. The following comments summed up how the strategies were chosen.

The staff determines that and basically volunteers of teachers who are saying, “I will stay to do this,” and “I will lead this group.” And so . . . I mean I’m sure it’s submitted to the principal first for his opinion on the whole thing, and then it would be brought up in staff development. (1.7)

The majority of staff members felt the strategies selected were beneficial to moving student achievement. There was no evidence of the success of the strategies used as a determining factor for the continuation of any strategy. Two teachers referred to getting the CAHSEE results to see if the CAHSEE classes’ strategy was effective or not. No teacher shared any data to support the strategies selected, other than attendance rate has increased as a result of Saturday School and personal phone calls home. Only three teachers questioned their efforts. “I think the ability to identify is probably, you know, a top sail… I think identifying what we need is not a problem at all. Actually, you know, making those things happen; I feel gets lost a little… (1.7)
In summary, corrective action school 1 staff reported using many strategies to support their school improvement efforts. They offered different classes for remediation, some of which were not listed in the school’s formal plan. The strategies were determined and selected by staff discussions, suggestions, and agreements. There was no report of using research-based evidence as a determining factor in strategy selection and minimum reference to any follow up on effectiveness of strategies selected or adjustments made based on student progress.

In corrective action school 2, staff shared the strategies that they felt had gotten traction and were making a difference in improving student achievement at their site. They mentioned academic programs like the CAHSEE Camp, AVID, and ESL program support offered to students as well as the small school model’s personalization features in tracking and supporting students’ progress. Parent involvement efforts were gaining traction as technology was being used to notify parents of activities on site and their student’s progress.

Different teachers shared that staff supports like peer observation and release time for the English Department to collaborate on common units and assessments as strategies that have gotten traction in reform efforts. Three teachers mentioned the active recruitment practices engaged in resulting in attracting a better clientele and filling the school enrollment from day one of this year.

I think the strongest step we’ve taken in the three years I’ve been here is to do a better job with the articulation at the middle school. I think that’s the single thing that I’ve seen that I can identify, because with us having the luxury of full enrollment before the first day of school, we no longer had to take what I call the “Statue of Liberty approach - Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses . . .you know, yearning to breathe free.” (2.5)
When teachers in corrective action school 2 were asked how these strategies were selected the majority reported that the decisions were made by everyone on the staff. They shared some decisions were made at the ILT and shared with staff. Others reported that staff shared ideas from experience, previous school experience, observations of other sites, and from colleagues in other schools. One teacher stated that the decisions “were made based on students’ needs.” (2.8) A few teachers mentioned the principal and support staff. None reported that the strategies selected were grounded in research. The following comment is reflective of the staff’s responses.

Our principal does, we have teachers on site that came from different schools, that have come to us, that will share some sort of program that they might have had at their school and tell us about it. (2.2)

Research-based Evidence

The NCLB requirements state that research-based evidence should be used in reform efforts. When investigating whether research-based evidence was used in strategy selection for implementation, the following observations were noted. The staff shared their understanding of research-based evidence and what research-based evidence was used in their decision making. Also shared were the staff perceptions of what evidence would be useful to them in decision making around reform strategies.

In corrective action school 1, when staff was asked what is evidence or research-based evidence, they all responded with the answer, “test scores.” “The only thing that comes to mind is test scores.” (1.6) Some shared additional measures such as, attendance rates and API scores. One teacher referred to evidence as “anything you can put a finger on” (1.7) and another as “proof.” (1.4) One teacher shared the following thought.
Evidence ... well I guess that could be test scores and test score results, that’s evidence right there. Progress reports, report cards that ties in with evidence are what come to my mind. (1.3)

When asked what kind of evidence is used in decision making they all responded, “test scores” and other “documented evidence”, such as API, AYP, CST results, CAHSEE results, attendance rate. As one teacher stated, “things you can show me.” (1.1)

When the staff in corrective action 1 school was asked what kinds of evidence they valued in reform efforts they all shared that they believed in or would adopt strategies that have been proven to work on populations similar to theirs and in school structures similar to their school. “…some of the evidence would be, do kids come to that reform effort, would kids take to that, is that … something that works for our kids…” (1.9) Many teachers shared that they valued the kind of qualitative research that looked at how students were progressing and considered student affect as a measure. They stated that they valued research that used surveys for students. Some voiced their negative impressions of using test scores as the only evidence of success. ‘I generally don’t trust data anymore because of all these negative experiences. So numbers don’t really impress me, I guess . . . I guess I would need to see it.’ (1.3)

In corrective action school 2, when asked what the definition of research-based evidence was they responded with data, test scores, statistics. A few teachers referred to additional definitions including grades, analysis of data, cluster scores, and drop-out rate. One teacher responded, “Anything that you can see.”(2.6) ‘I guess looking at student grades, comparing student work, looking at test scores, looking at CAHSEE and SAT’s and Star tests.’ (2.4)
When asked what evidence was used in decision making, the staff shared a variety of types of evidence. They discussed data and test scores and also talked about grades, students’ work, and anecdotal information. ‘We use the teachers’ opinions mostly…’” (2.4) They shared that they knew the test scores were important, but felt other types of evidence were more informative.

I think the thing that’s the, the thing that I think I care about the most is their grades because the test scores to me don’t mean as much. I mean when you’re having English learners take a test that is so wordy I kind of, I mean I try to help them succeed on those tests but I know them better than that test does and I know what their success looks like and so the thing that overall tells me how my class is doing is looking at their current grades I think. (2.6)

The staff shared that they valued evidence that worked on students like theirs and in similar settings to their sites. “Show me a school like mine that’s made progress, and I’ll listen. I’ll listen anyway, but I’m just saying.” (2.5) ‘Just personal experiences with it. If . . . Yeah, if they told me that something has worked and they tried it, and then they’ve got me. I’m in.” (2.2)

Two teachers at corrective action school 2 shared concerns about the effectiveness of their choices and that there needed to be some sort of measure and follow up procedure designed to see if the strategies are truly working.

There needs to be a measure…some sort of data…just sometimes making sure people do what they say they’re going to do …the follow through piece… (2.6)

In both schools, staff shared that there were a couple of teachers that led the staff in using research to help influence decisions. They reported that these teachers read research on their own and shared different strategies that resulted from their studies. The
staffs also reported that the principal might receive research information at their principal meetings. These findings are discussed in question 3 in the section on centrality.

In summary, staffs at both schools reported many strategies they believed to be effective in moving the schools’ achievement. Not all strategies discussed were aligned to the strategies listed in their schoolwide improvement plans. The staffs shared that the strategies were selected based on suggestions made by peers and principals. There was little reference to follow up or adjustments made to strategies based on student progress. The staff reported little use of research-based strategies in decision making around strategy selection and implementation. They reported valuing strategies used at other sites with similar populations. Although the strategies selected may be grounded in research-based evidence and teacher practitioner research, no mention was made of these sources directly or referenced as a basis for their selections.

**Professional Development**

Formal plans reported that professional development was one of the strategies to be implemented in reform. Both staffs reported that there had been very little professional development on site this year. Staff had the opportunity to go off campus for professional development. Many staff members at both sites shared that they had previous professional development and that future sessions addressing specific topics were supposed to happen this year.

*On-site Professional Development*

In corrective action school 1, the SPSA listed weekly professional development sessions focused on differentiation of instruction as a support. It stated that the staff would analyze data and spend 90 minutes per week on instructional strategies. These
professional development strategies were listed under both the ELA and Math goals. The school staff have all shared that one of the most challenging issues facing their achievement was that associated with having an increase in English Learners on site and needing support in meeting their needs. No staff reported any on-site professional development on this topic this year.

When interviewing staff at corrective action school 1, the majority of staff reported varied interpretation of professional development on site. Many thought that there was little on-site professional development. The weekly meeting is entitled, ‘Weekly PD,’” but everyone shared that many different things occurred during the weekly meeting. They all shared that their weekly meetings are a time to make schoolwide decisions, discuss issues brought up and share data, and sometimes meet in grade level, department, or advisory groups, if time permits. They reported that the weekly meetings were scheduled for one and a half hours. ‘Professional development. I mean what we have . . . We have professional development each Wednesday if you’re on campus… What that offers us is a time to work as a department and work as a school, in general… (1.4)

Some staff reported that the whole staff attended professional development on the DataDirector computer program as well as ways to grade their students. Many staff did not report any whole staff professional development. Other staff members reported that they believed there was too much emphasis on test scores and that there was not necessarily any discussion on how to address increasing the test scores. The new teachers all shared this concern, as well as some seasoned staff. “When we get in our professional development, it’s all about test scores… not on how…” (1.2)
Some staff believed that the professional development meetings were not productive and needed to be more focused. They shared that there was no new learning involved and that there was no consistency in what was being discussed at the meetings. “We call them “PD.”... But I don’t think they are, and they haven’t been for a couple of years...” (1.3) Several staff felt that there was a need for quality professional development on site. “But honestly, once we get into the small groups, I think there’s so much need for good . . . what I call “good professional development.”... I’ve been to very few” (1.7) One teacher only shared that there was one valuable professional development session on site where the staff went to one of the math teacher’s room and he presented how he taught math using the concepts as tested on the CST. He used technology in the form of the Promethean Board. The teacher was impressed and that was the only teacher to share a meaningful professional development session. She reported it was the only PD session like that this year. (1.7) “So, really staff development is the time for that, and it’s always focused on something different...” (1.3)

Some teachers reported that the crisis of the possible reconfiguration and the budget cuts has distracted the staff development on site. They reported that much of the time at their weekly meetings recently had been spent on this issue. They expressed that academics had been pushed aside to address these whole complex and district issues. “We’re dealing a lot right now with the budget crisis and trying to save our school and things like that...” and “So as far as I know, and this is one thing (threat to close school) that has been kind of hogging our professional development . . .” (1.3)

Some seasoned teacher felt that the professional development sessions on site had been less effective over the past few years. They shared reasons such as leadership, low
staff morale as a result of the charter stress last year, and recent budget cuts and threat of closing the school as some of the contributing factors. ‘The last couple of years have been the slowest in professional development. I had a lot when I was younger. We haven’t had a whole lot of time for professional development this year to talk about strategies that we’re going to do as a school…” (1.5)

In corrective action school 2 the formal SPSA also listed professional development and release time for teachers to plan as interventions to support academic achievement. When interviewing the staff there was no report of any professional development (PD) this year. ‘Not this year yet. Last year, we had . . . We had professional development like a month I think.” (2.2) Staff mentioned previous year’s professional development, off-site PD, and future professional development sessions, but no PD this year. “I guess it was last year or the year before he brought out this consultant who did a Cornell notes for us and showed us how to do it where it’s helped the ESL kids…” (2.1)

I think we are supposed to get some district support through QTEL for our English language learner population . . . We have yet to see that. I know it’s coming down. It’s supposed to be for second semester where teachers are given professional training on how to better meet the needs of our second language learners… (2.3)

*Off-site Professional Development*

In corrective action school 1, the majority of staff reported that they engaged in off-site professional development or reading educational literature on their own time. Approximately half the staff interviewed was new to the site and shared that they received professional development from their previous
experiences. The new teachers discussed their higher education classes and training as their most recent professional development.

A few staff members shared that staff go to off-site conferences and bring back information to share with the staff. “They attend workshops and then they bring back what they learn during our professional developments and they share it with the rest of the staff.” (1.1) When asked about these sessions the staff shared experiences done in other years. None of the professional development session they referred to were attended this year.

Other staff shared how they got information from their colleagues at other schools or observe other campuses. Again when asked clarifying questions many of the observations were not conducted this year. Some staff was referring to going to New York, six years ago, when the campus was investigating the small school model for adoptions. Others discussed the observations last year of charter school. Other outside sources were shared as ways to get professional development. Three teachers discussed reading books and research articles to help improve their instruction. They reported that they shared their new learning with their grade level and department peers. ‘I know everybody else read their research too and research is constantly being shown by the principal or maybe some staff member has something that they have read and they want to share, so’ (1.1)

In corrective action school 1, two teachers reported that they attended off campus meetings with other job-alike teachers. They taught elective classes that supported the focus of the small school. The teachers shared that sometimes they went off campus and
other times their off campus support personnel and job-alike teachers came on campus. The teachers valued the learning they received from hearing others share about their programs and experiences and seeing other campuses in action.

In corrective action school 2 some staff shared that they attended off-site trainings. They appeared to be attended in previous years. No one shared outside professional development, except for two science teachers who attended a professional learning community of teachers on the complex sponsored by a federal grant. This outside group is referred to in the centrality section in question 3. Some teachers referred to attending district sponsored professional development for their specific fields. ‘I think we’d like to start doing the professional development to get . . . when we have monies to do that. We don’t have that right now, so it’s hard.” (2.2)

Collaboration

Another aspect analyzed in implementation efforts was how the staff collaborated together on improving instruction. In some responses, it was not clear whether collaboration involved more than talk and was actually focused on specific topics and outcomes.

In corrective action school 1, the SPSA listed specific expenditures set aside for release time for teachers on site to collaborate and plan. Money had been set aside in the plan to secure release time for teachers to plan and collaborate together in both ELA and math. No staff member reported any use of release time for collaborating or planning.

Staff members shared that they felt they had opportunities to talk with other teachers because of the weekly meeting schedule and small school structure. However, they shared mix ideas about collaboration on campus. Some staff members felt they had
ample opportunities to collaborate and others felt there was little collaboration occurring on site. The following comment highlighted one opinion.

This year, I’m not really sure… I think that the teachers don’t talk to each other much. Well, I think it’s because we don’t really have strong departments and I know when we’re given the opportunity to do that, it’s more of like, “Well, if you want to talk to your department or other teachers, and then just go do that on your own time.” It’s not like a set professional development where we have to . . . we’re made to talk to each other. (1.2)

In corrective action school 2, the formal SPSA made reference to release time for teachers to collaborate, plan lessons, common units and assessments. Monies had been set aside in the budgets for this expenditure. Teachers reported various versions of collaboration on site.” They do collaborate a lot; the teachers do collaborate a lot together. They know what the other teacher is teaching and they’re very good at doing that…” (2.6) Some said that they collaborated daily with fellow department staff; others seemed to think they had very little collaboration with peers. Some teachers reported that the principal tried to keep teachers who teach the same subject close in classroom configurations to help promote regular, consistent collaboration. “Well our classrooms are right across from each other so we kind of daily go over things and create lessons together. “ (2.2)

In summary, the staffs at both site shared that there appeared to be little systematic, schoolwide professional development or collaboration occurring on site. Both reported that teachers had opportunities and were encouraged to attend professional development off site. There seemed to be informal collaboration among staff, but limited structured collaboration among peers. Both schoolwide improvement plans listed regular
on-site professional development and collaboration sessions as supports for staff in improvement efforts.

Leadership

Another aspect analyzed when studying the implementation of strategies in the two corrective action schools was the leadership involved in the reform efforts. The interviews examined the staff, principals, area superintendent, and superintendent’s perspectives on the roles of leadership provided at sites.

Site Leadership

The staff at the two corrective action schools appeared to have different perceptions of their site leaders and their abilities to support the implementation of reform strategies in order to improve academic performance at their sites. Corrective action school 1 staff had mixed opinions on their site leader’s abilities. In corrective action school 2 the staff seemed to have favorable opinions on their leader’s abilities to lead reform efforts.

In corrective action 1 school, the majority of staff appears to like the principal. They report he was hard working and seems to want what was best for students. Some teachers commented that the principal was knowledgeable about the improvement plan and they looked to his expertise in those areas. However many shared that they did not think he had strong academic skills. ‘He’s a great guy. I think (principal) is making the best decisions he can considering his limited knowledge of instructional practice. He wouldn’t know if good or bad teaching it if hit him in the face. He doesn’t get in the way of…’ (1.6)
Some staff shared that the principal was not supportive of them in the work they do. Many staff shared that the principal was all about test scores and improving test scores, but did not offer any support on how to improve them. "Test scores. From the principal all the time. Pretty much all the time. That’s all I ever hear come out of his mouth." (1.2) Other staff shared about how the principal had a history at the school and that influenced staff’s impression of him and perhaps his ability to do the work. The majority of staff liked the principal but had concerns about his ability to lead reform efforts on site.

Our problem here at (school name) right now is we have a principal who taught here 14 years ago. So, the ability for him to hand out punishment or hand out strong-armed suggestions is nonexistent, because he’s buddy-buddy with them…So that’s our main problem right now… (1.4)

In corrective action school 2, the staff reported that the principal was supportive of their efforts in implementing strategies to improve instruction. They mentioned that the principal allowed them to go off site to professional development opportunities, encouraged collaboration among staff, and encouraged the staff to try different strategies in order to meet their students’ needs. Many of these beliefs had been documented in other sections of the findings. The following comments reflected some of these perceptions not mentioned in other sections.

I think going in the office and walking into (principal)’s office, the principal, and sitting down and throwing an idea at him is a huge way to communicate and you may come up with something and he’ll say great, bring it up at the staff meeting and let’s roll with it….Oh completely…The thing you have to be careful is if you come up with an idea then you better be ready to lead it. (2.6)

Both principals reported that their role was to facilitate the school staff in identifying problems and solutions in order to improve student achievement. They
shared that they led their staffs in selecting strategies that focused on the 9th and 10th graders and the skills that they needed to perform at higher levels on the state and federal measures. They also agreed that the staffs had opportunities to share effective strategies or ideas for interventions at their weekly meetings, through emails, or by talking to them in person. One principal discussed how he had a roundtable item listed on every agenda for the weekly meetings where staff could share anything relevant ideas, strategies, or information to help support the school’s program. (CAS 1) The principals responded that they used a combination of wrap-around services for 9th graders who required additional levels of support, and sheltered instructional practices for English Learners, based on “CST results, CAHSEE results, WASC self-study process, grade analysis, and CELDT scores (CAS2) They used a variety of other measures to support other factors that contributed to their schools’ underperformance such as attendance, behavioral issues, etc.

**District**

When analyzing district support in implementing the schools’ reform efforts, both schools shared similar views. The staffs reported that the district was not actively involved in the implementation of strategies. Both staffs were aware that they had an SIO on campus, but were not sure of how much support was offered. ‘District involvement? I don’t really know. I know that there’s one person. . . “(1.7) Some teachers shared that the district had supported the site with PD opportunities, materials, and with technology in the form of DataDirector and Promethean boards in classrooms.

The principals were not asked direct questions about the district's support for implementation of the reform strategies. As mentioned in the previous question each principal acknowledged some support from the district. They both had SIOs assigned to
their sites and they referred to them in answering other questions. They also mentioned that the district providing DataDirector system for accessing relevant schoolwide and individual student data in a timely manner.

The SIOs reported that they visited the sites on regular bases and met with the principal and on occasion with the leadership teams on sites. They shared many of the same responses as staff and administrators about implementing reform efforts. They both believed that factors that supported or hindered implementation had to do with system failures and adult issues as opposed to any mention of children and parents. One SIO reported that the district focused too much on “compliance and policy and less focus on student achievement” (CAS 1 SIO).

Both SOIs reported that the constant change in leadership at the district level led to a real disservice to the sites. As a result there was “no continuity or road map plan for supporting change (CAS 2 SIO). No strategies could get any traction because every new leader came with a new design and model. Both reported that there was “no common professional development plan to guide change while allowing for the autonomy of each site to adjust and create plan that fit their sites based on districtwide vision” (CAS 2 SIO).

Both SIOs shared that the new superintendent’s new plan was to have the small schools on complexes work together to share resources and personnel to provide more options for students and share expertise and innovations for the entire complex. Their roles would be to ‘collect resources, mobilize resources, and reduce fractionalized parts of the complexes” (CAS 1 SIO). One SIO believed that their role would also involve supporting the principals and helping “change their mindsets to doing things differently
and more effectively based on new things that have been proven to work in settings like theirs” (CAS 2 SIO).

The superintendent shared many of the same beliefs as the staffs, principal, and SIOs about the challenges to schools and passion for finding ways to improve the schools’ student achievement. He reported that the small school model needed to be revamped. He shared how the schools were created to be independent and separate of each other and isolationist. He now believed that the small schools on a complex needed to work together and share resources, expertise, and innovation. The superintendent commented on the powerful role politics played in this big district. He stated, “I had no idea how politicized this district is…everybody has gone to school and everybody thinks they know … let’s let the professionals do their work...” He believed that the district needed to work on building trust.

In regards to program improvement at these two corrective action high schools, the superintendent thought that they faced complicated challenges. He shared that the district and school sites in planning improvement should avoid doing the “Heinz 57” approach of trying many different strategies and interventions and hoping for the best. He believed that it would be better to have “a couple of core missions and do them well.” He thought that the schools just rehashed the same old interventions.

The superintendent also shared how he thought students going to school today are part of the lost generation cycle of time due to the budget cuts crisis. The district has had to cut millions of dollars from the budget over the past few years. The superintendent commented on how students in school during this time period will not have had the same
In summary, the staff at both schools reported that they implemented many strategies and interventions in an effort to improve their students’ performance. There appeared to be little tracking of the effectiveness of strategies tried. Some of the solutions staff shared were not aligned with the strategies listed in the formal plan. Even though the majority of staffs at both sites reported that they have hard working peers, many did not believe that they would be able to exit program improvement status. Staff reported that there has been little professional development on site so far this year and little organized collaboration. The leaders on site appeared to encourage staff to engage in professional development and collaboration. There was little evidence that they were directly involved in planning or monitoring of professional development or collaboration sessions. All on site claimed that there was little district support in implementation of reform strategies.

**QUESTION 3**

*In what ways do the social networks in corrective action schools promote organizational learning?*

**Site Networks**

The social networks in the corrective action schools were analyzed for density of ties, centrality of people in the networks, and the schools’ sources of information. Also investigated were the district’s networks as they support school sites’ efforts.
Density of Site Networks

In studying the social networks at these two corrective action schools, the density of the ties was examined. The interview responses revealed information on the types and quality of the social networks in these two organizations. Staffs at both sites shared various connections in their networks and had different perspectives on the quality of the ties in the social networks.

Types of Site Ties

There is common agreement among staff at both schools in regards to the communication patterns at their sites. Both schools reported their weekly meetings as the more formal way to communicate and emails as the most prevalent form of communication. Many teachers reported that face-to-face meetings occurred daily, especially supported by the small school model. “Yeah email and face to face, lots of face to face talk, you know people just pop in and talk about things…. So every Wednesday that’s the formal piece otherwise informally you all can set up meetings or orchestrate stuff.” (1.9) Other teachers shared that some teachers communicate at lunch and others share ideas at social events. The majority of staffs at both schools reported tight connections. ‘I think the pattern is going to your colleagues first and then heading to the front office and talking to anyone who is there.” (2.2) ‘I would say they were good, we’ve got e-mail, we have one-on-ones, we have phones, we have cell phones…’ (2.1)

Quality of Site Ties

Many staff members at each school shared varying interpretations of the quality of the networks. In corrective action school 1, the staff reported mixed perceptions of the quality of ties at the site. Some staff believed that everybody shared ideas and
information with all on site. ’ I think we’re pretty good on communicating because like
family we could all do, we could all have totally different viewpoints on things but we
can talk… We could just be ourselves.” (1.9)

Others shared that there was little quality in the connections on site. ‘I think that the
teachers don’t talk to each other much… I kind of feel isolated.” (1.2) This staff had a
high turnover last year due to the charter school conversion controversy. The divergence
of opinions can be seen from comments such as the following. “What’s the easiest way to
say it without being mean? The way other people take your advice is very judgmental...
The tenured teachers who are vocal and shoot down other ideas…” (1.4)

A few of the seasoned teachers on site felt that the social networks have changed
from the past. They shared that there seemed to be less effective networks in place. ‘The
bottom line is there’s not a lot of importance placed on discussion. That’s the feeling that
everybody’s getting…” (1.8) ‘The six years the small schools have been here, it’s gone
from a formal to an informal… I think you need both.” (1.5)

In corrective action school 2, the staff felt that the communications patterns in
their school were very good. Teachers talked at weekly meetings, emailed often, and had
lunchtime communications. The staff shared that they had respect for each other and the
principal. A couple of teachers shared that they had closer ties to staff in their own
departments and subject areas, but that overall everyone got along.

We exchange information. We all have a vested interest in working
together, looking for better ideas…Our departments work well together.
We get together on curriculum…worked together on common
assessments, analyzing results… we collaborate…” (2.9)
In summary, both staffs reported having dense networks for sharing communication, information, and innovation. They shared that the weekly meeting was a forum supporting communication. Many discussed daily communications and emails as other forms supporting dense networks. The staff in corrective action school 2 also reported having good quality ties. They stated that they had respect for each other and the principal on site. Corrective action school 1 had mixed opinions about the quality of the ties on site. There were reports that the quality of communication was effective. However, some staff reported feeling isolated while others shared that discussion was not valued. Still others believed that communication was too informal.

Centrality in Site Networks

Part of the research involved examination of which staff members were perceived to bring expertise to the site and innovative ideas. The majority of staff in both schools felt that the principal and teachers were the ones who brought the expertise and new ideas on site.

Expertise

In corrective action school 1, the majority of staff believed that the teachers on campus had the expertise. A few teachers shared that specific department staff had expertise and that experienced teachers were knowledgeable as campus resources. “I know that the math department is really good…” (1.5) A few teachers also shared that the principal had expertise. “The principal and what he shares with us at meetings.”(1.9) The extant data confirmed the staff’s belief about expertise on staff. The network map below, Figure 4.3, shows nodes representing staff that was perceived as sharing expertise. The size and location of the nodes are significant. The larger and more central nodes are
the members the staff looked to for expertise. The map shows that at corrective action 1 school, there is many staff that members turn to for expertise. The principal is the mid-size square in the center of the map. This web displays distributed expertise as it is dense with many key players sharing expertise and many staff sharing this expertise with each other. The principal had a lesser role in sharing expertise than other staff members on site.

![Figure 4.3 Corrective Action School 1 Map of Expertise](image)

In corrective action school 2, the staff shared that they thought the principal had expertise. “The principal brings ideas to the staff.” (1.9) Staff also shared that various teachers lend expertise to the staff. Some teachers named specific teachers; others spoke about department teachers having expertise. ‘I have a lot of expertise…The first people I would share it with is my department but we have every second Tuesday of every month.’ (2.3) Some teachers named the support staff as having expertise on site. The following teacher shared his thoughts.
Well, there are a lot of experienced and really successful teachers here. For instance, our AP Spanish teacher has a passing grade of 90%. Why would I have to go to Los Angeles for two days to go to an AP workshop when I have a teacher who’s got the same students I have and my pass rate is 8% and hers is 90%? (2.5)

The network map below, Figure 4.4 is taken from the extant survey data and shows that the principal is perceived as an expert on site. His node is large square in the center of the network. Staff perceived him to be the main source of expertise. The arrows indicate the flow of expertise. This corroborates what was shared by staff in the interviews. The school had central expertise, with the principal being the main source of expertise, and staff members sharing this information with each other.

![Network Map](image)

**Figure 4.4 Corrective Action School 2 Map of Expertise**

*I Innovation*

In corrective action school 1, the majority of staff shared that they believed that teachers brought innovative ideas to the campus. Some staff felt certain departments or
members of certain departments contributed greatly to the campus. “Knowledge and innovative ideas? That would be the teachers…” (1.7)

The staff had mix perceptions about whether the principal contributed innovative ideas to the campus. Half the teachers shared that the principal was innovative and the other half did not feel he contributed innovative ideas to their school. “It’s definitely not coming from the current administration. I’ll say that. Those aren’t innovative techniques. Everything comes from the teachers, but in the past, depending on the leadership, it did come from the leader.” (1.8)

In corrective action school 2, the staff shared that they believed everyone on site had expertise depending on the situation. Some teachers named the principal, other named the support staff and teachers on site. The majority shared positive comments about the staff’s innovative thinking. No one was singled out as the sole innovator on this campus. “Anybody who has an innovative idea goes with it; I mean there’s not like one set person who’s in charge of everything I guess.” (2.6)

Boundary Spanners in Site Networks

Data was gathered about where staff went for sources of new information. Questions were asked during interviews at both sites to ascertain whether new information came from inside or outside sources. No staff reported any formal, systematic, or purposeful plan for new learning on campus. There was no mention of a plan or accountability for new learning. The formal SPSA documents stated that professional development on differentiated instruction would occur weekly in corrective action school 1. There was no specific focus for corrective action school 2 listed in their SPSA, but it did state that professional development would occur on and off-site. Monies
were set aside to assist in teachers’ abilities to get inside and outside sources for new learning.

**Inside Sources**

As covered in the professional development section of question 2, little new information was shared at professional development sessions at either site. Teachers reported that very little professional development occurred this year at their schools. When staffs did meet at their weekly professional development sessions staff shared ideas that they thought would work for any problem brought up. Little new learning was reported this year, except for sharing out at the weekly staff meetings.

So I feel I would have a lot to give back and share. Some of us really like research. Some of us really want to improve . . . That’s why we’re still in it. It’s not for the money, but the passion and the whole art and craft of teaching. For us, it’s a reward. So we want to just be the best. So, we’re constantly striving to improve. (2.3)

**Outside Sources**

The teachers at both sites did not share any formal way that new information was brought to them. They stated that the information came from staff members’ experience, experiences at other sites, outside reading and workshop attendance. The majority of new information appeared to come from random outside sources. Teachers attended workshops and in-services and brought back information to share with staff; most information was reported from workshops that occurred over the past years. There were little experiences from this year. ‘Last year I did teach at (another school), and I did get a lot of professional development there inside the classroom.’ (1.4)

The survey data corroborated the information shared by staff in the interviews. In corrective action school 1, the primary source of new ideas for the survey respondents
was from people outside of the school (59.1%), and the secondary source of new ideas was from people inside this school (40.9%). In corrective action school 2, the primary source of new ideas for the survey respondents was from people outside of the school (54.5%), and the secondary source of new ideas was from people inside this school (45.5%).

Table 4.12 Corrective Action School 1 New Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid 2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>59.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>84.6</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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Table 4.13 Corrective Action School 2 New Ideas

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<td>Valid 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid 2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both schools did comment that they had advisory boards from outside sources supporting their focus for their small schools. The teachers who were responsible for teaching these courses were the only staff, for the most part, who attended these meetings.

Well, again, I always have to go back to the advisory board because I consult them.... But it would be great to have other teachers there to understand more of what this pathway program is supposed to look like... (1.2)

In corrective action school 2, there was a Professional Learning Community (PLC) group at the complex that science teachers attended with other science teachers at
the complex and other schools. A teacher at one of the other schools received a federal grant that afforded them this outside source of information sharing.

I have to say we go more outside of the four walls to professional development opportunities, like I mentioned the (name of) grant that I’m part of or AP stuff, or we have a business club called (name of club). So there’s a national academy that disseminates information and helps with programs and things. (2.5)

In summary, the networks at the sites are reported to be dense. The quality of the ties appeared to be stronger in corrective action school 2 compared to corrective action schools 1 as shared by staff. The majority of the staff stated that the there was distributed expertise and innovation on site at corrective action school 1 and principal directed expertise and innovation sharing at corrective action school 2. Staffs at both sites relied more on informal on-site communication networks and outside sources for new learning than on planned schoolwide new learning. The formal improvement plan listed on-site professional development and structured collaboration sessions as way staff would be supported in acquiring new learning.

District Networks

In attempting to understand how communication, information, and innovation flows through these two corrective action schools, analyzing the social network supports from the district provided a comprehensive examination of the network systems used on sites. The district networks were analyzed through the staff’s and central office’s perspectives using the lens of density of ties, centrality, and boundary spanners.
Density of District Networks

*Types of District Ties*

When analyzing the types of connections between sites and the district both sites’ staff shared that there was very little connection. “I really believe that as far as the district is concerned it’s more of hands off, it’s like okay you solve the problem and then we’ll be happy once you solve it.” (1.3) Both staffs did not perceive the district as providing much support. The majority of staff shared that they had no support from the district. ‘The district level… From what I know of, zero.”(1.4)

Both staffs believed that there was a supervisor on site, SIO, and that some district personnel supported individual teachers and the programs associated with their small school focus. Many were not sure of how the SIO supported their work. A couple of teachers at this site believed that the SIO was the district’s only connection to the site. ‘I know that there is a gentleman, (SIO). I believe he’s a doctor, and I know that. .. I don’t really know what his role is in the school, but I know he is way up in the district level... (2.7) Some teachers referred to individual relationships with people at the district. The principals at both sites referred to the SIO as being a district contact on site. They reported that the SIOs occasionally attend leadership meetings. The principal at corrective action 2 stated that the district provided “email, student information systems, and DataDirector. All of these tools are essential components in the flow of information”.

The SIOs both reported that the communication patterns are “OK.” They shared that the district was a large organization and it was hard to communicate and coordinate efficiently. One SIO stated that the “lack of consistency in the organization had presented some unique challenges in communication.” (CAS 2 SIO). The superintendent
also reported that the communication patterns were “OK, but were nowhere near efficient.” He stated that in the small school complexes there was a degree of fragmentation which effected communication. He asked, “Who’s in charge of the complex, for example, who would you contact in case of emergency?”

*Quality of District Ties*

The staff at both corrective action schools did not perceive the district’s social networks to be connected or very supportive. A staff summed up the quality of the relationship with the district as follows.

In general, I don’t think we have much of a relationship with central office. I don’t think anybody would disagree with me. I mean the central office is referred to as “the pink palace,” and you go up there and you talk with people ONLY when you absolutely, positively have to, and you automatically assume it’s going to be a nightmare. (2.5)

Only one staff member had something positive to say about the district’s support of the school. She referred to all district personnel at the central office.

I haven’t heard anything negative. I mean I don’t know how much they (Staff) actually communicate with central office to be honest with you, but my communication was, I love them, I mean never, ever had anyone who was less than, you know, friendly and helpful with me, to me… The counselor for sure (has had a relationship with the central office), she’s always at the district because she does the testing and things like that…. (1.9)

Teachers at both sites, in specific programs that supported the schools’ foci, reported support from central office. A few of teachers on this site mentioned the financial support from the district and that the district provided their school with two ESL teachers. Also mentioned was money for professional development.

In my course in particular, since I follow under an ROP instructor, we have a career and technical services department as part of the district. So they would be, you know, up there. They’re not on the campus. So with
them, I have a program specialist, and I don’t know all the formal titles, but there’s probably a good two or three people that are support.... supporting my class only, and that helps (1.7)

The principals were not asked direct questions about the district’s network support for them or on the sites. They did share through other responses to other questions that the SIO was their connection to the district. They did not share their opinions about the quality of these relationships.

The SIO reported that the quality of ties was affected by the size of the district. There was a lack of consistency in sharing information throughout the system. They both shared the challenges in the change in leadership over the years and the constant budget cut challenges over the past few years. They reported these factors led to challenges in consistency and equity in differentiating supports. One SIO shared that this “contributed to the quality of trust throughout the system” (CAS 1 SIO). Both SIOs claimed to have good working relationships with the other SIOs, Instructional Officer, and superintendent. They met regularly to share information, although it was always shared chaotically from the board based on their decisions.

At the site level the SIOs shared that the small school structure was a challenge to communication. There was no figurehead to report common sources information, knowledge, or innovation. Before budget cuts there was one administrator and administrative assistant assigned to each complex to handle communication of this type. One SIO reported that without those two roles there was a “lack of continuity and breakdown in communication” (CAS 2 SIO) Both SIOs claimed to have good working relationships with the principals.
The superintendent shared the same opinion on the quality of communication from the district to the sites. The superintendent believed that the area superintendents, the name used of the site’s district support personnel under his leadership should be the hub connection for the schools. He stated that they “should buffer the schools from issues that interfere with their focus on student achievement”. They needed to provide resources and support to the principal at the sites.

Centrality in District Networks

Expertise and Innovation

Both schools shared little district support in the areas of expertise and innovation coming from the district. Staff members reported the School Improvement Officer as contact personnel from the district. However, most were not sure of his expertise or role in the school. Other staff reported there were a few contacts at the central office that provided expertise or innovation to them. The support personnel were from specific programs offered through the district, such as Beginning Teacher Support Teachers and ROTC programs that supported the schools’ small school focus.

The SIOs reported that they looked to each other, the Instructional Deputy of Instruction, and superintendent for expertise and innovation. At the site level one SIO thought that the principal was the one who shared expertise and innovative ideas and the other SIO thought it depended on who the principal was at the site. They did claim that some staff at the sites were very knowledgeable and should be credited with adding to the expertise and innovation on site. The superintendent reported that the SIOs were the experts and innovators for these high schools. However, the superintendent felt the educators at the varying levels had expertise and innovative ideas to share as well.
In response to other questions asked, some staff at both sites mentioned the district supplied DataDirector computer data system and Ed-Connect for parent outreach as being innovative and supportive to them. A couple of teachers also commented on the Promethean boards provided to certain grade level and subject teachers on campus as innovative. However they did not mention any district staff as having expertise or innovation related to these innovative resources.

…those promethean boards are just fantastic. They just installed the microphones up in the ceilings now so it’s wonderful; it’s like boom, like college. (2.1)

One SIO reported that he got innovative ideas “from the other SIOs and district leaders” (CAS 2 SIO). The other SIO did not feel the district was innovative and that the constant flux in leadership and changeover of personnel at their level with each new superintendent kept people from trying new things. Both SIOs shared that the politics inhibited innovative ideas or practice to be implemented in trying to meet the needs of these two diverse, low performing schools. People were playing it safe and even though “they knew what was good for kids, they were afraid to get their hands slapped” (CAS 1 SIO).

Boundary Spanners in District Networks

There was little evidence of staff’s perception of district support in the form of boundary spanning. Most staff at both corrective action schools did not report much communication, information, or innovation provided to them by the district from inside or outside sources.
Inside and Outside Sources

The following comment was the only one made by a teacher about inside sources. “I think we go by the published research that our district supports, the programs that our district has adopted.” (2.3) The SIOs shared that they received new learning from inside sources from other SIOs that disseminated information and new ideas they acquired from attending conferences and workshops. The SIOs had regular meetings with their peers and they shared new learning regularly.

In response to outside sources, the following remark was shared by a teacher at corrective action school 2.

I think we are supposed to get some district support through QTEL for our English language learner population . . . We have yet to see that. I know it’s coming down. It’s supposed to be for second semester where teachers are given professional training on how to better meet the needs of our second language learners… Okay. QTEL is an outside group . . . (2.3)

One SIO reported that he received new learning “from observing other schools and attending conferences and workshops” (CAS 2 SIO). The other SIO claimed that he learns much from article written in a “monthly newsletter that the district purchased for each SIO in the district” (CAS 1 SIO). He also attended classes at universities regularly.

The superintendent reported that he read a lot, learned from inside and outside sources and from the many experiences he has had in other leadership positions. He stated that he knows how an organization should run, “I may not have come from an education background but I do know what successful organizations look like.” He also talked about the need to keep up with and use technology efficiently in the district’s networks and how proficient the children in our schools are today and need to be in using technological tools for their futures.
In sum, the district networks of communication, information, innovation did not appear to strongly support reform efforts at any level. The staff at both schools reported that the district’s social networks provided very little support in density, centrality, or boundary spanning in their efforts to improve academic performance. They stated they received little direct expertise or innovation from any sources at the district level, except from specific personnel supporting specific programs, such as their schools’ small school foci. They also reported receiving a few innovative resources with no support from district personnel. The principals shared that they received limited support from their SIOs. The SIOs and superintendent stated that the district needed to support schools better in their improvement efforts. The SIOs and superintendent also shared that, due to the flux in leadership in recent years, there was little organizational efforts to provide any level with consistent, systematic innovation or expertise in reform efforts.

Chapter Summary

The analysis revealed much data on how these schools in corrective action status functioned in the processes they used for identifying problems and solution, and implementation of the solutions in their reform efforts. The schools engaged in formal and informal processes for identifying problems and solutions. Not all the problems and solutions identified in the formal process appeared to match those implemented in daily practice. The solutions selected were chosen by staff members in their weekly meetings and were determined through discussion and suggestions. Leaders, both at the site and district level, did not appear to take a direct role in improving instructional practice. The networks in both schools were tight and seemed to diffuse information from inside sources as opposed to outside sources. Table 4.14 summarizes discrepancies in
perceptions among the stakeholders related to the process used for problem identification, solution selection, and social networks associated with schoolwide reform.
**Table 4.14  Summary of Discrepancies in Process, Implementation, and Social Networks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Formal Plan</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Administrators</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Formal Goals based on formal assessments; formal committees</td>
<td>Informal Goals based on teachers’ perceptions; weekly meetings; little connection to formal PI plan or committees</td>
<td>Informal Goals based on principal’s perception; weekly meetings; little connection to formal plan</td>
<td>Formal plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Problem</td>
<td>Areas of need based on formal assessments</td>
<td>Lack in students’ motivation, home life; subject/grade level teacher decisions</td>
<td>Lack in students; teacher and principal input</td>
<td>System failures; formal assessments; school input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Solutions</td>
<td>Student and teacher supports based on test scores; no deliberate use of RBE</td>
<td>Student supports based on teachers’ opinions and willingness to implement, no RBE</td>
<td>Teacher prompted</td>
<td>Formal plan; administrator directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of Strategies/ Interventions</td>
<td>Formal, on-going PD and collaboration sessions</td>
<td>Little formal or systematic PD or collaboration; outside PD; little follow-up or adjustments</td>
<td>Promotes outside PD and informal collaboration; no follow-up or adjustments</td>
<td>Formal plan; administrator directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs/Culture</td>
<td>Target growths; exit PI</td>
<td>No exit PI; informal measures/examples of achievement</td>
<td>Exit PI; informal examples of achievement</td>
<td>No exit PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networks</td>
<td>Systems for communication and creating plans built into system</td>
<td>Informal, tight SN; informal organized system; heavily reliant on principal and inside sources; perception- little district support</td>
<td>Informal, tight SN; reliant on inside personnel; perception-little district support</td>
<td>Poor SN; perception-supports staff and principals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the results, discusses the implications of those results, and implications for policy, practice, and future research.

Summary of Findings

The responses from the ten staff interviewed and the three central office personnel revealed some interesting findings about the process these corrective actions schools used in identifying problems and solutions and the implementation of the strategies they selected to address the issues interfering with their student’s performance. The data also highlighted how these schools and the district utilized their social networks in the exchange information, innovation, and communication. The quantitative data from the survey corroborated the information shared during the interviews. Table 5.1 reflects the overall findings from this study.

Table 5.1 Overview of the Findings

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Schools engaged in formal, semi-formal, and informal processes for identifying problem and solutions</td>
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<td>• Problems and solutions identified in formal documents are not the same as those reported by staff</td>
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<td>• Solutions are selected by discussions, suggestions, and consensus, not based on research evidence; little follow up or adjustment of solutions based on student progress; solutions implemented do not align to formal documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Little professional development or collaboration reported</td>
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<td>• Staff attribute underperformance to student issues; district reports system issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tight social networks, little systematic innovation or outside sources diffused through network</td>
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<td>• Disconnect between leaders and instruction; and district and school sites</td>
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Process Findings

The data revealed that each school had formal documents that contained their schoolwide plan for achievement. The plans listed goals, strategies, interventions, and the related expenditures that the school felt would help improve student achievement. The decisions for the plans were based on students’ performances on required statewide assessments and were written and approved by representatives from every group on campus. The plan was created to be comprehensive and the driving force for improvement. The intent of the state required plans was to be fluid and revisited often by staff so adjustments could be made as the students progressed towards achievement of their goals. There were formal committees at each site associated with the overseeing of the plan and its implementation. The committees were responsible for sharing decisions with staff and there was supposed to be an iterative relationship between staff and committees for constant communication of progress of goals. This process should be well known to all on a campus.

The interviews revealed that this formal process was not well known at either site. The plans and associated goals, strategies, and interventions were also not well known by staff. Although many staff members at both sites referred to the committees, many were not clear about the purpose and role they played in the process of school improvement. Staff at both sites indicated that these committees decided the number of points for growth on the statewide API and federal APY measures for their schools. The majority of staff seemed to know of the committees and that a plan existed, but did not seem to understand how these structures fit into the process of reform. There appeared to be a
disconnect between the decisions made in the formal process and what the teachers did on a daily basis and the decisions they made for improved student performance.

The results indicated that the staffs at both schools believed the process for making decisions about how to improve student performance occurred at their weekly meetings or breakout grade level and department meetings. Many shared that teachers in grade levels and departments made decisions for their students based on what they thought was best for their students. They did acknowledge that they needed principal approval for what was decided. The staffs shared that the process for identifying problems and solutions occurred at the weekly meetings simply by someone bringing up a problem and staff sharing possible resolutions and then coming to consensus on a solution. Others reported that problems and solutions were identified and selected in informal settings among select staff members or with the principal. The majority of staff at both sites did not refer to a schoolwide plan or any continuous process for revisiting identified problems or solutions to remediate them.

The results from the interviews revealed that the staff believed that they had input in the decision making process. The majority reported that they had opportunities to share concerns and ideas at weekly, grade, and department meetings. They also indicated that they could talk freely with their administrators to share their concerns and suggestions. The small school setting allowed for information to flow quickly to staff. Many of the problems that they discussed in the interviews were related to behavioral and operational kinds of issues and not deeply discussed problems interfering with student achievement on their sites.
The findings showed that the staffs at both sites made decisions about strategies and interventions to be used for improving student performance based on suggestions from staff members. They shared that strategies and interventions were selected from suggestions made by staff members based on what they have done in the past, their previous experiences, or from ideas from colleagues at other sites. A few interviewees reported that some staff shared ideas learned from conferences attended or individual research conducted. Data showed that decisions for solutions to identified problems were not grounded in research or evaluated for the success of strategies and interventions selected.

The findings disclosed that the site leadership varied from the two campuses. In the corrective action school 1, not all staff perceived the administrator as playing a strong role in leading the process in reform efforts. The staff appeared to want more leadership from the principal and wavered in their belief about his abilities to move the school’s academic achievement. This data was corroborated in the findings from the surveys conducted in the larger study. Corrective action school 2’s staff appeared to have respect for their principal’s abilities to lead the school. They did not mention his instructional leadership abilities, but had faith his leadership abilities in general. The extant data findings again support this conclusion.

The staffs at both sites did not seem to believe that the district played a leadership role in assisting the sites in identifying problems and solutions for reform. The principals also felt the district did not provide much support in their efforts. They shared that the district personnel did not offer suggestions or ideas to help them move their students’ academic achievement and to move out of program improvement status. The district
personnel reported that they believed their roles were to support the schools in their efforts but not provide answers for the sites. They shared that they wanted the sites to problem solve their own sites’ issues. This suggested a disconnect between site and district personnel’s understanding of their roles.

The staffs at both sites reported that the small school setting afforded them many opportunities to share problems and solutions involved in their students’ academic progress. They felt this model allowed for a more informal process for identifying problems and solutions and making decisions related to improved teaching and learning. Some staff at corrective action school 2 believed that the enrollment process and recruitment procedures for the small schools on their complex needed to be fair and more equitable. The district personnel reported concerns about the benefits of the small school model. They felt it was limiting the students’ opportunities and not effective in utilizing resources and personnel throughout the complex. The superintendent thought this model limited the process for effective implementation of strategies and interventions to improve the program improvement status of some of the small schools on site.

Implementation Findings

The data showed that both sites used a variety of interventions in their attempts to help improve their students’ academic performance. The strategies and interventions shared were not necessarily the ones called out in their schoolwide plan. The staff at both sites selected strategies that they thought might work based on ideas from their past experiences or extrapolated from colleagues at other sites. Any research-based strategies selected were not necessarily chosen because of their research-based evidence value. The strategies were selected from random options offered by anyone on site. The staff at both
sites reported reasons for underperformance mostly had to do with student and family issues. The strategies selected did not match the problems identified. Interestingly, the district personnel reported that the issues related to poor performance had to do with system failures, rather than student issues.

The majority of staff at both sites did not believe that they would be able to exit program improvement status. Many did share that they thought their fellow staff members were capable and caring, but that the targets for exiting the status were unattainable. Many staff reported that they saw much growth in their students but that this progress would not be reflected in their students’ formal assessment scores, which are used as the measure for program improvement status. Corrective action school 1 staff had less belief in their staff’s commitment than staff in corrective action school 2.

*Network Findings*

The staffs at both schools reported having close ties in their communication networks. There were key players at each site that were the hub for information sharing. At corrective action 1 school, there was no one clear source for sharing ideas throughout the school, but a few staff that appeared to diffuse information at this site. In corrective action school 2 the principal was identified as the major source for sharing learning and information. Although the schools had dense ties, the quality of what was shared through the networks may be a contributing factor in the schools’ poor reform efforts. The schools had a fair balance between using inside and outside sources. However, they relied more often on outside random sources for new information. The district was not perceived to be a valuable source of new learning by the majority of both staffs. The extant data results clearly confirmed what was shared in the interviews.
Through the analysis of the findings some overarching themes emerged related to the reform efforts in these two corrective action high schools. These themes will guide the discussion of the results in the next section. The five themes are displayed in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2 Emergent Themes**

<table>
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<th>Themes</th>
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<td>1. School’s Culture and Beliefs Play a Role in Reform</td>
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<td>2. Formal School Plans Played Minor Role in Improvement Efforts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Staff Engaged in Single-loop Learning, Limiting Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Social Networks Structures in Place, Weak Quality, Limiting Improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Leaders in Formal Positions Had Direct Influence on Reform</td>
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**Discussion of Results**

The findings from the two high schools in corrective action status provided valuable insights into the operations of this district’s most vulnerable schools and the organizational learning occurring in each and the social networks that supported or hindered the flow of communication, innovation, and information sharing. Reflecting on the theoretical frameworks found in the literature on organizational learning and social network analysis helped shape the discussion of the schools strengths and weaknesses in their reform efforts and highlighted implications as to why these schools did not exit program improvement status.

The basic premise of organizational learning maintains that organizational learning is the process in which members of an organization identify and use information
in a way that leads them to action which results in achievement of the groups’ goals (Honig, 2004; Mulford, 1998). Research states that district and school cultures play a role in schools’ abilities to make effective decisions in reform efforts. No reform decisions will take hold unless a positive culture is present, where staff is open to the work involved. Even when a positive culture is in place, the members of the organization have to be working on the right strategies for improvement and aligning their espoused beliefs to their every day actions. For true reform to occur the organization has to be open to change on a fundamental level and to look for a balance of blending old and new ideas that result in measurable positive change. These two schools demonstrated a misalignment of espoused theories and their theories in action resulting in less than effective reform results as measured by continued program improvement status.

**School’s Culture and Beliefs Play a Role in Reform**

Much research has been conducted on the role school/district culture plays in the overall educational process. John Almond (2011) maintains that school culture is the shared beliefs and attitudes that characterize the districtwide organization and establish boundaries for its constituents. While an individual school can develop a climate independently of the district, changes in culture at the district level can positively or negatively affect school climate at the building level.

It is clear from the study’s data that the district in which these two high schools belong was struggling to establish and maintain a positive culture which would drive the schools in the district as a whole. The constant turnover of superintendent and school support personnel for the past five years appeared to have taken its toll on the school sites involved. The district had not provided a clear vision, mission, or a common belief
system or direction for the schools to anchor their efforts. Research on successful districts conclude that they need to provide coherence in leadership, belief systems, and systems for supporting instructional and operational programs in order for schools in the district to achieve positive reform results (Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). This district did not seem to be providing this kind of leadership or support. High schools in corrective action status must be a priority in every district. These schools represent their most at-risk students. The apparent lack of focus and support that this district has provided to these two most vulnerable schools may reflect the state of flux and possible lack of organizational learning occurring in this district. The sites reflected their feelings of this lack of coherence and support from the district in their comments.

Research further indicates that school culture forms the foundation for all that transpires in schools. It sets the necessary foundation for effective decision making in order to make continuous improvements in the educational process (Almond, 2011). The culture of a school consists primarily of the underlying values and beliefs that teachers and administrators hold about teaching and learning. In the words of Dr. Kent Peterson, a professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin, “school culture is the set of norms, values, and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the persona of the school” (Peterson, 2009).

Research further contends that depending upon a variety of factors, school cultures can become positive, negative, or something in between (Peterson, 2009). When a school culture is positive, then positive connections are created among and between
staff and other stakeholders. Schools with positive cultures experience far greater levels of staff contentment and higher morale, which greatly influences student achievement (Almond, 2011). Research points out that there are key behaviors that leaders can adopt in order to create a positive culture at the district and school levels (Almond, 2011).

In addition to the perceived lack of district culture, one of the corrective action schools seemed to have suffered from a slight dip in their morale due to the constant threat of closure and the failed charter attempt the previous year. These issues appeared to have tarnished the school’s morale and have distracted staff from their focus on improving student achievement. Both schools, although they believed they have committed staff, did not believe that they could exit program improvement status. Neither school exited program improvement as a result of their year’s efforts. School and district culture, beliefs, attitudes, and values, may have an influence when staff are trying to move schools out of program improvement status. While under sanctions for program improvement, these staffs appeared to have become discouraged or frustrated, as shared by personnel in these corrective action schools, and this may have affected their ability as an organization to experiment, try new innovations, or focus on double-loop learning that play a role in reform efforts. The underachievement of these schools based on NCLB expectations over the years, coupled with the staffs’ lack of belief about their abilities to exit PI this year, may have contributed to what appeared to be an overall sense of hopelessness on the part of the staffs in relation to meeting the formal plans’ objectives.

*Formal School Plans Played Minor Role in Improvement Efforts*

Organizational learning involves the process of identifying and remedying problems in an attempt to improve an organization’s effectiveness (Argyris & Schon,
1996.). It is predicated on the idea that learning is a social experience and requires the investment of social capital in an organization’s learning. Organizational learning results in staff changing both norms and behaviors (Collinson & Cook, 2007). At the school level, this type of learning needs to occur at a deep level, affecting beliefs and practices in teaching and learning. However, change in practice can occur at either of two levels, guided by a leading theory in organizational learning. There is the Espoused Theory which is the explicit description of the way in which an organization intends to make decisions and act. The other theory is the Theory in Use which is the implicit process the organization uses to actually guide its decision making and actions (Arygris & Schon, 1996). There can be a misalignment of these two theories resulting in an organization not learning at a deep level, resulting in little true reform. This appeared to be the case for the two corrective action schools.

There appeared to be a disconnect between the schools espoused theory in the process they used for identifying problems and solutions and in implementing the selected solutions and their daily practice. The schools have formal structures in place and have elaborate committees formed to ensure that decision making around school improvement is shared throughout the school. However, the school site staffs made very little reference to the plans, overseeing committees, or processes they have espoused to have in place for school improvement. They did not implement all of the strategies and interventions listed in their schoolwide plan to inform instruction or remediate the problems associated with poor student performance. It appeared that the schools may be going through the formal processes as a compliance exercise rather than in service of schoolwide reform. The schools have put in place structures to support decision making
for improvement, but they did not seem to apply those decisions into action in their daily program. Organization learning theory suggests that organization’s take on effective learning for positive results when they align what they believe to be needed for change and act on those beliefs. (Arygris & Schon, 1996)

The schools also espoused to have some plans for implementation of reform strategies, yet they did not seem to use what they professed to improve teaching and learning in their daily routine. The formal schoolwide plan espoused to have professional development and collaboration occurring weekly. Staff was supposed to be engaging in professional development sessions weekly and collaborating on common units of study, assessments, etc. in an effort to have a guaranteed and viable curriculum and coherence in vertical and horizontal articulation.

The school staffs reported that there was no consistent, focused professional development and collaboration occurring. The schools both identified the English Learner population as one of their concerns and reasons for not meeting state and federal targets, yet no staff mentioned any work in improving teaching in order to address these students’ learning needs. One teacher did mention that there were plans to bring a Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) professional development session to their site in the near future.

The district and schools espoused to have an organizational system that supported teaching and learning, especially focused on improving schools in program improvement. Additional expenditures have been set aside to increase supports at these campuses. There appeared to be little support from the district to the sites. They had supported the New Arrival Center on one site and additional ESL teachers to the other site. The district
had offered professional development in a variety of areas to all schools in the district, not focused on these “most in need” schools, and made some investments into upgrading technology throughout the district.

Other than those supports there appeared to be little support directly given to the administrators or staff on site. The site principals reported that they had not received support or guidance from their supervisors and were left to their own devices in trying to lead reform efforts at their schools. There was a mismatch in the district's espoused theory and theories of action. It seemed that formal school and district plans played a minor role in these two schools’ improvement efforts.

Staff Engaged in Single-loop Learning, Limiting Improvement

According to research, there are two levels of learning that school staffs engage in throughout the year while executing the many responsibilities of conducting business in an active school setting. Some decisions involve single-loop learning; others require double-loop learning. Single-loop learning involves learning that stays within the current organizational beliefs system and does not change the status quo. Single-loop learning deals with how an organization achieves existing objectives and goals within the existing norms (Argyris & Schon, 1996). It does not attempt to rectify gaps between Espoused Theory and Theory in Use.

Double-loop learning, on the other hand, involves examining underlying beliefs, norms, and values and results in major changes in an organization that effect their theories in use (Arygris & Schon 1978). This type of learning would address differences between Espoused Theories versus Theory in Use. Double –loop learning may also involve the assessment of underlying values or assumptions that have worked in the past.
for achieving the organization’s goals, but currently may impede the organization’s ability take on new learning. The findings in these two corrective action schools revealed that the schools appeared to engage in single-loop learning activities far more than double-loop learning which is required for true reform to occur. For example, staff at both sites mentioned, when reporting on the process used for identifying problems and solutions, discussions at their weekly meetings included issues such as students gathering in the halls between bells, having excessive graffiti on the lunch tables and who would teach the traditional after-school programs offered every year.

Research concludes that one of the key features of effective schools was that they have effective teachers (Teddlie, Kirby, & Stringfield 1989). These schools provided ongoing, quality professional development to teachers. Teachers at effective sites worked collegially and collaboratively on a regular basis to improve teaching strategies and instruction (Loeb, 2003; Hansel & Martinez, 2002; Hannaway & Talbert, 1993) The Professional Learning Community Model is lauded as playing a key role in effective schools. The literature concludes that these schools’ staffs engage in meaningful work that aligns their strategies and interventions with their identified needs and the learning occurs at a schoolwide level. Some of the leading experts in PLC work make clear the importance of staffs working on the “right things” and the distinct difference between collaboration and “co-blab-or-ation” (DuFour & DuFour, 2010). Staff collaborate when they use their time to problem solve teaching and learning issues to improve student performance as opposed to just talking about routine issues such as field trips and other school or grade level related issues.
The school sites appeared to engage in limited on-going professional development or collaboration sessions on site. The staff reported that there had been little professional development or regularly scheduled, formal collaboration meetings occurring so far in their school year. They claimed that the only staff development attended appeared to be off-site and one time sessions in nature. The staffs, not all in corrective action school 1, reported getting along very well and sharing ideas, but the sharing of ideas and reported collaboration did not appear to be meaningfully focused on solutions to identified problems. The weekly ‘professional development’ sessions were an hour and a half in duration and covered many agenda items. When staff members did breakout into grade level or department groups, there did not appear to be an instructional focus and any accountability or guidance for collaboration among the grade level or department personnel. There was no consistent on-going work that built knowledge or capacity in staff’s improved teaching reported. This would imply that the staffs may have engaged in more single-loop learning than double-loop learning.

The professional development and collaboration would be better organized if the schools acted as professional learning communities. These schools would benefit from engaging in work suggested by Little (1993) that involved teachers in the construction of knowledge rather than the consumption of knowledge. Their school reform efforts would profit from providing staff with time to investigate, experiment, consult, or evaluate learning that was embedded in the routine organization of teachers’ workday and work year. These types of on-going collaboration and professional learning sessions would provide a challenge to the staff’s intellect and collegial exchange of ideas and help avoid passivity in problem solving and implementation of selected strategies.
Interview data from the staffs’ selection of strategies and interventions suggested that those reforms were not explicitly based in research. The staffs shared that they made decisions around solutions at their weekly meeting and they were selected by anyone who wanted to volunteer to do an intervention. Document review revealed that many of the same interventions were used as in the years past and there was no reported difference in performance. Decisions for strategies implemented appeared to be not based on researched evidence, as the NCLB Act clearly calls out, but rather on teacher experience or suggestions from staff members of interventions seen at other places. Some of the interventions used at these two sites may have been based on research, but the decisions to use them were not. The staffs, although they may be hard working, may be working on reform strategies that do not necessarily matched their identified problems, in isolation, or in less than effective PLC’s. The staffs would profit from researching their practice as a professional learning community.

As researchers purport, these schools, like many other unsuccessful schools, lie somewhere in the “knowing-doing gap” (Nutley & Davies, 2008; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). This suggests that educators often know what the problems are that impede learning, but do not act on solutions to resolve them. The staffs at these sites seem to be able to more easily identify problems interfering with student progress and may be struggling with effective execution of solutions to address these problems. It appeared that the schools may be regularly engaged in single-loop learning as opposed to double-loop learning, falling back into their well-established routines and practices. Their theory in use in reform efforts, particularly in selection of solutions, seemed to be heavy
reliance on individual experience or the experiences of others which may be limiting their opportunities to take on new learning in a systematic way.

Another aspect to consider when studying the organizational learning in the two corrective action schools involved analyzing the way in which practices or ideas developed and flowed into these organizations. Scholars suggest that organizations need to work a balance between exploration and exploitation (Levitt & March, 1988). As stated in Chapter 2, exploration involves experimenting or exploring with new knowledge or ideas and exploitation involves the refinement of use of existing knowledge (March, 1991; Levitt & March, 1988). The search or exploration process might involve searching the external environment for new practices or ideas or bringing in experts into the organization (Levitt & March, 1988; Honig, 2008). Research indicates that struggling organizations engage in limited search, choosing strategies that result in only surface level improvements (Honig, 2008; O’Day, 2002).

The two corrective action high schools not only engaged in single-loop learning for the most part, they also appeared to recycle many of their same strategies and interventions used in past years. The staff was open to new learning; however, there did not appear to be conscious decisions to use new learning in attempting to match identified problems with solutions selected. Any changes in instruction or interventions based on new learning appeared to be made from suggestions by staff members. Their decision making did not seem to be driven by literature, theory, or considered approach, but rather by suggestions on interventions that were successfully implemented at other sites. Many new ideas were brought in by new staff sharing what they had tried at their previous sites.
and used by select individuals or grade/department levels. There appeared to be no strategic schoolwide decisions directed at schoolwide improvement.

The extant data reported that the staff relied slightly more on outside sources, little evidence of new learning translating into practice. The superintendent reported that he feared the majority of strategies and interventions selected may be a ‘rehash of the same old stuff”. Interview data suggested that district personnel were not the primary or secondary source of ideas or support for systematically bringing in new learning to the sites.

The small school setting, lauded as being a very effective structure for struggling urban high schools (Bloom, Thompson, & Unterman, 2010), may inadvertently be limiting the schools’ abilities to promote organizational learning. The sites acted as individual agents, although they shared a campus with at least three other sites. The schools were created to be separate entities but this isolationist mentality may be limiting the flow of information, innovation, and communication. Some staff members shared that the schools were not capitalizing on their common resources. The set up of these small schools may be limiting the professional development and collaboration opportunities for staffs at all sites. This may constrain the exchange of expertise, innovation, or common resources for the benefit of students or staffs’ learning throughout the entire complex. The social networks appeared to be under-tapped and may have been limiting the sites abilities to maximize on their full potential.

**Social Networks Structures in Place, Weak Quality, Limiting Improvement**

Researchers have concluded that social capital is a necessary aspect of organizational learning. Experts suggest that understanding network structures may be
helpful in promoting social capital throughout an organization in reform efforts (Honig, 2008; Daly, 2008). Change occurs through the interaction of people and the study of an organization’s network ties, key personnel, and sources of information and innovation in the networks are ways to assess the organization’s ability to meet their goals. These concepts are measured in the density of the ties, centrality of personnel, and the boundary spanners in an organization’s social networks. Research suggests that the depth, speed, and sustainability of reform are connected to the informal social networks in an organization (Stringfield, Reynolds, & Schaffer, 2008; Datnow, 2000; Tsai, 2000).

In the corrective action high schools the social networks appeared to have dense ties. Staff reported, for the most part, that there were good communication patterns at their sites. There were key players in each school’s network. In corrective action school 1, there were several key players central to the sharing of information, innovation, and communication. In corrective action school 2, the principal seemed to be the hub in the network. The structures seemed to be in place and key personnel recognized in the network, however it appeared that the schools were not be diffusing information, communications, and innovation that would have positively affected the teaching and learning through their established networks.

The area superintendents were the major hub in the district’s network support to schools. Again, the schools’ perceptions were that there was little relevant information being effectively sent through this network. The staffs at both sites shared that they valued research, new ideas, and reform efforts that involved the successful implementation of strategies in schools similar to their own. None was offered. There
were apparent holes in the network because it seemed that little quality knowledge was being shared through the organization that might have influenced positive reform results.

*Leaders in Formal Positions Have Direct Influence on Reform*

There is much research on the role of leadership in reform strategies. One essential finding is that leaders need to be instructional leaders (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). They are pivotal in promoting and moving new learning forward in their organizations. The findings from the interviews indicated that the leaders at both sites promoted new learning. The staffs shared that both principals encouraged staff members to attend conferences and workshops. They even approved monies for this purpose. However, it was reported that neither principal planned any staff development sessions on site so far that year. The leaders provided opportunities for staff to collaborate. There was no evidence that collaboration occurred at regular intervals and there was no mention of any systems in place to monitor the content or results of collaboration meetings on site. Both staffs did not appear to view their leaders as strong instructional leaders, with strong instructional background knowledge.

Research states that the district culture sets the tone for schools to develop their cultures and how the schools will work to improve their students’ achievement (Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006; Almond, 2011). There appeared to be limited district leadership to the sites. This may have been due to the constant change in leadership at the district level. The staffs and principals from both sites did not perceive the district as contributing to their learning or reform efforts. They reported receiving little support from the superintendent or area superintendents. In fact, the majority of staff members at both schools viewed district office involvement as limited and interfering in their
improvement efforts. The evidence suggested that there may have been untapped potential for leaders to work together in support of reform.

Conclusions

After careful analysis of data collected in this study and knowledge gained from a review of the literature, there are several conclusions that can be drawn about these two high schools in corrective action status. They are embedded in the themes derived from the study.

The cultures of the district and sites may have played a role in the schools’ lack of implementation of reform. The small school setting appeared to provide many positive features and supported the development of a positive culture at the schools. It may be beneficial for the district to guide the schools in using their common assets more effectively to maximize the complexes’ resources, personnel, professional development sessions, collaboration, sharing of expertise and innovation, and student learning opportunities. This networking may contribute, along with strong instructional practices, to improved future student performance which could lead to a more positive school culture.

It would be beneficial for the district and school sites to work on establishing positive cultures before embarking on the grueling work of figuring out what steps to take in reform. The more positive the culture, the more willing their personnel and stakeholders would be to work at school improvement. Many shared that they had some level of frustration and discouragement. The schools perceived the state required growth targets for their schools to be unattainable and this appeared to dampen their beliefs about their schools’ abilities to exit program improvement. The unachievable state expectations
may have the effect of removing the staffs’ relativity to the formal processes in decision making and accountability in improvement. To remediate these feelings, the school sites would profit from setting attainable goals and targets to measure achievement of these goals. They would benefit from establishing systems for accountability and follow up on measured growth targets. Establishing long and short term goals may reinforce the need for a schoolwide fluid plan that staff would refer to regularly. These efforts may help alleviate the disconnect between formal plans and daily work.

Another conclusion that may be able to be drawn from the data is that the quality of the organization’s systems and structures matter as much as the existence of an organization’s systems and structures. Both schools had formal organizational structures and systems in place; however the content of these structures and systems did not seem to be effective in moving the schools out of program improvement status. They had formal committees, plans, and structures for implementing decisions around improvement, shared by all stakeholders, but may have had inconsistencies in executing them to an effective level based on student results.

Giving attention to the systems and structures put in place and the quality of the work conducted in the systems and structures may promote effective reform efforts. Strong social networks, with dense ties, strategically placed personnel, and balanced sources of information, can support the flow of innovation, information, and communication throughout an organization. These networks would further benefit schools if the information diffused was timely and of quality promoting effective reform.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the findings is that these schools had less than effective results in their implementation of effective instructional strategies and
interventions. Both schools proclaimed to have active PLC-like communities, but there appeared to be inconsistencies in these communities’ outcomes, resulting in little significant difference in student performance. The staffs believed that they engaged in professional development and collaboration on site, however taking a closer look revealed that these elements were not occurring on a regular basis and there was little evidence of noteworthy change in the staffs’ practices. The schools did not appear to intentionally use research-based evidence or match their problems and solutions effectively to produce measurable change in their reform endeavors.

It can be concluded that schools would profit by conducting systematic, strategic, and purposeful on-going professional development and quality collaboration to plan meaningful interventions and strategies to improve teaching and learning. School would benefit from spending time selecting strategies and interventions that match the problems identified as interfering with their students’ academic achievement, if true reform is to occur. Logic would imply that staff at school sites, especially those in “in needs of improvement” status, would not gain by continuing to recycle the same old interventions and expecting to acquire different results. A staff can be hard working, have their hearts in the right place, but it appears that does not equate to improved student progress, especially if they are working on the strategies and interventions that are not aligned to the problems interfering with achievement.

A final conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that leadership and context matters. At both corrective action schools, there appeared to be little professional development or collaboration sessions on site to date. The leaders encouraged learning, but there was no mention of a plan or monitoring system for professional development,
collaboration, or instruction on site. Site leaders would benefit from being well informed on instructional practices, as well as, operational and management issues associated with running a school, if they are to be perceived as the instructional leader on site. It may be advantageous for site leaders to be explicit about what needs to be done and supportive in decision making around how the goals can best be achieved.

Site leaders would do well to develop teacher leaders and work with staff on planning time in their schedules to regularly meet for the construction of knowledge and the sharing of knowledge for improvement throughout the organization. Teacher leaders could assist in bringing new learning and research on campus and balancing experience with new learning related to site’s students’ needs. It may be profitable for the site leader to access research-based strategies and innovation in order to lead staff in improved teaching and learning. Site leaders may play a powerful role in reform by leading the work by example if the espoused beliefs are to be enacted in daily practice.

The district is this study appeared to struggle with providing consistent support to their school sites. With the constant change in leadership there seemed to be some uncertainty about the vision and networks in place for moving information and innovation. There was little evidence of the district providing any research or districtwide on-going, focused, professional development to support their schools. In this time of high accountability, it would seem beneficial for high schools in corrective action status to receive assistance from district personnel. The instability of leadership at the district level may be the reason for limited support to the corrective action high schools in this study.
The district in this study was a very large urban district and would benefit, as well as all districts, from researching the components of the successful districts and schools offered in the High Reliability Organization (HRO) literature. These districts and schools focused on a finite set of goals, used high quality data systems to gather data to drive instruction, and provided schools with on-going professional development trainings on best practices. It can be concluded that leadership matters in schools working on improving student achievement; especially those facing sanctions and trying to exit program improvement status.

The model drawn in Chapter 2 suggests that school reform occurs in schools at the intersection of organizational learning and social networks in a supportive district setting. The findings in this study reinforce that reform at this intersection is contingent upon the quality of the organizational learning and social networks promoting new learning. The organizational learning must occur in a strategic, consistent manner, with all staff members spending adequate time on co-constructing learning that will influence teacher and student performance resulting in improved academic achievement. In successful reform, this organizational leaning, which would consist of a balance between new leaning and experience, would be promoted throughout the organization by effective and efficient social networks.

Implications for Policy

The findings of this research study suggested implications for policy reform at the federal, state, and local levels. At the federal and state level, it may be profitable to revisit the process for identifying schools’ performances and progress towards meeting the regulations of NCLB and sanctions applied to schools not meeting those
requirements. In addition, it may also be beneficial to re-examine the process and purpose of the improvement plans required for reporting the progress in an effort to bring teachers daily work and reporting systems into more alignment. A possible revamping of the NCLB requirements and process and clear articulation of the significance of the process may assist in teacher buy-in at local levels and promote the understanding of the connection between formal plans and daily work at a school site.

At the local, district level there appears to be many implications for district leaders. District leaders could lead effective reform efforts by providing a districtwide vision and setting up tight social networks for the flow of communication, innovation, and information between schools and the district. District leaders, especially in large districts such as the one in this study, would benefit from researching the components of the successful districts and schools offered in the High Reliability Organization (HRO) literature. The reform incorporated 12 characteristics found in HRO and how the districts integrated them into their implementation plan. This research may provide districts with a model for increasing organizational learning throughout their systems.

Having strong networks in place may increase the flow of knowledge, communication, and innovation throughout an entire district for improved organizational learning. The social network analysis tools, which can be attained by districts, would be beneficial for creating strong network structures throughout the district. The information gathered from this assessment would provide valuable information for creating and correcting holes in a district’s system increasing the effectiveness of the exchange of information. The district could provide the sites with these tools, as well, to assess their networks so they can modify any holes in their support systems.
In addition to providing districtwide vision, goals, and effective social networks, it would be powerful for districts to provide professional development to achieve the goals set out for reform. Sites should be able to modify the learning according to their school’s needs. This connection supplies direction for schools, but still allows them to retain their autonomy. In budget cut times, the districts should look for ways to maximize the use of technology in improvement efforts. Districts could make one time investments in technology which could bring more information to more sites efficiently and effectively. Sites could have access to on-line professional development sessions. Districts could perhaps look into technology that would allow for broadcast of live conferences, etc. to all staff in their districts rather than pay individual registrations for select few personnel at each site.

It is recommended that districts act as institutional actors in bringing about organizational learning that will directly affect a way a school approaches problem solving learning issues in order for all students to achieve desired levels of performance. Districts may benefit from exploring recent research conducted in districts and schools using characteristics found in high reliability organizations. It is suggested that districts create and support networks that capitalize on relationship of communication and exchange of knowledge between district central office and school site administrators/staffs in influencing the determination and direction of change.

Implications for Practice

The study results have provided an example of schools missing out on the execution of best practices. Implications for practice would entail recommending that school sites take the time and energy to evaluate their sites’ reasons for
underachievement and to problem solve strategies and interventions that match the problems. Schools would benefit from creating a “whatever it takes” culture and looking to research to help solve problems interfering with student achievement. It would be strategic for staff to focus on problems and solutions within their sphere of influence and maximize on implementing strategies and interventions to improve student performance. This would involve studying the standards on which students are being assessed and providing a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Staff at school sites would benefit from time to collaborate and engage in quality, on-going professional development. It is recommended that school staffs work as PLC’s and endeavor to find innovative solutions to problems, helping to eliminate the need to recycle the same old strategies and interventions used year after year. Research indicates that collaboration encourages the sharing of expertise and innovation. It also promotes vertical and horizontal planning for coherence in curriculum across a school. This provides strong continuity for their learners. When sharing in PLC’s there should be a balance between outside and inside sources of information. It is also recommended that staff use technology tools to support their planning, teaching, and learning. This promotes innovation, experimentation, and may help staff access new information and save time.

In addition to building in time for collaboration and common planning based on student needs, school leaders and staffs would benefit from time spent on reading research on current and effective strategies for improving instructional practice. Staff would profit from time spent sifting through literature on studies with effective results in student achievement conducted with similar demographics and structures to their schools.
This time set aside for professional reading would assist in bringing research evidence into daily practice. Schools would do well to create systems for regularly scheduled follow up and adjusts of strategies based on student performance and progress related to their selected solutions to identified problems interfering with their students’ achievement.

It may be valuable for site leaders to study the type of leadership they could provide in reform efforts. It is suggested that they promote shared decision making and distributed leadership as well as having strong knowledge about effective pedagogy, strategies, and programs that meet modern students’ learning needs in order to support their staff in effectively reaching every student in their rooms. Staff and students would benefit from site leaders being explicit about reform efforts and supporting quality teaching and learning on site. It is further suggested that site leaders take the responsibility for ensuring that quality professional development and collaboration occur regularly on site. This would help ensure that quality teaching occurs and that teachers are developing lessons based on standards and effective pedagogy.

Leaders may consider setting up quality social networks on site that encourage sharing of quality knowledge, innovation, and communication. The principal could be the hub in the social network but have strong dense ties with staff to help move communication, innovation, and information in an efficient and effective manner throughout a school. The site leader could structure the social network with key people and be a critical contact for accessing and receiving inside and outside flow of sources, provided by staff members and the district and aligned with site needs. Having strong network structures, exchanging quality information, would support schoolwide reform.
The site administrator could be the point of contact for district business and buffer teachers from the politics and any negative business that may interfere with their staff’s focus on quality teaching and learning. Site leaders would do well to distribute leadership to teacher leaders on site who could assist in planning and supporting each other’s professional development. These teacher leaders could also assist in organizing ways to balance inside and outside expertise and innovation in reform efforts, thus capitalizing on the social capital in the organization.

Leaders and staff would do well to regularly check the alignment of their espoused theories with their theories in use. Scheduling regular meetings to monitor the implementation and success of the strategies, interventions, student and teacher supports, and budget expenditures called out in schoolwide improvement plans would allow for adjustments in order for continuous improvement to occur. Any adjustments could then be written into fluid improvement plans. This would assist in keeping the formal plans and daily practice aligned, connected, focused, and reflective of student progress. It may be helpful for school sites to revisit the above suggestions in an effort to improvement student achievement.

Implications for Future Research

The results of this study may suggest some implications for future research. It may be beneficial to conduct studies in comprehensive high school settings to ascertain whether similar results would occur in regards to the organizational learning and social networks supporting reform efforts. Research could also take place in a smaller district or in a district with stable leadership unlike the district in this study which was very large, complicated, and had inconsistent leadership at both the district and school level. It
might be profitable to conduct a similar study in a successful high school to assess whether its staff engages in different processes for identifying problems and solutions or have distinct differences in their social networks. Conducting research in these various settings may shed light on some qualitative differences in school performance which may further inform policy and practice.

Closing Remarks

This study’s results showed the importance of the link between organizational learning and social networks in school reform. To affect change in schools, learning must occur at an organizational level. Schools are beginning to recognize the role of organizational learning in reform. This research suggested that organizational learning needs to occur in a systematic, strategic, and purposeful manner in order for schools to grow and adapt in an effort to move out of corrective action status. The district should play a key role in brokering information, communication, and innovation to schools through dense social networks, which support schools’ efforts to promote organizational learning to improve student achievement. Hopefully the conclusions shared have a positive impact on improvement efforts in urban schools, helping reduce the number of schools facing sanctions as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act.

As a practitioner, this research study has influenced the researcher’s skills and the work conducted at the researcher’s site. As the site instructional leader, this researcher has shared the results of this study with the school site staff at regularly scheduled meetings. As a result of this sharing, a renewed effort has been made to build a culture that embraces on-going learning and the sharing of knowledge across the school. There is a new awareness of the importance of planning strategic, systematic, and purposeful
learning based on an alignment of identified problems and solutions to remediate issues interfering with students’ achievement.

The staff has developed an understanding that learning must occur on a continuous bases and at an organizational level with the promotion of teacher leaders to carry on and share the learning throughout the school site. There has been a focus on involving everyone in the process of utilizing research-based evidence to help improve student achievement. This has assisted in stimulating innovation, balanced with experience, in selecting interventions and strategies that address incremental growth targets for moving different populations of students to improved levels of performance. At the regularly scheduled meetings, there are continuous adjustments made to the formal schoolwide plan as the students achievement incremental growth targets. This has increased staff’s understanding of the connection between formal plans and daily practice. There has also been more attention paid to how the site measures improvement and the alignment of measures with identified problems and solutions. The staff appears to be renewed and empowered as a result of sharing the results of this research study. This researcher is confident that the results of this new learning will be reflected in improved student performance as measured by the state assessments administered in spring and a continuous cycle of on-going learning.
APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol: Corrective Action

Personal Background
What is your role in the school/district (e.g. teacher)?
How long have you been in the school/district?
What types of professional development/education have you in the last two years?

Identifying Problems/Causes
What is the process for identifying issues facing your school?
What do you think are the reasons for your school’s underperformance?
Are there competing explanations for underperformance? What are these and which staff has the various views?
Has your school identified solutions to address any of these issues?
How were these solutions identified/selected?
Was this the typical decision-making process of your school?
What was the involvement of the district in identifying the problems and searching for solutions?

Developing Improvement Plans
What are the requirements of program improvement?
To what degree has your school met those requirements?
What was the district’s role in developing your school’s plan?
Did intermediary organizations or consultants play a role?

Implementation of Improvement Strategies under INI
How does the district support program improvement at the school?
What factors do you think facilitate school improvement?
Which constrain school improvement?
How would you describe your staff’s ability to identify and implement improvement efforts?
What have been the results of recent improvement efforts (e.g., changes in practice, structures, outcomes)?
To what extent will your school be able to exit sanctions?

Research Evidence (Definition, Acquisition, Use)
What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘evidence’ related to school improvement?
How is evidence typically defined by your teaching colleagues/site administrators/district office?
Do you have a different understanding of the term ‘research evidence’?
What types of evidence does your school use in decision-making related to reform?
If someone was going to persuade you about a schoolwide reform effort, what would you consider the most convincing evidence they could share?
Where does your staff go for expertise related to schoolwide improvement or reform?
What types of expertise do you have in your school that will help you move off corrective action?
What types of schoolwide reform strategies have gotten ‘traction’ within the school since your school went on Program Improvement?
Can you provide an example of a recent reform your school adopted, where that came from, and what evidence was used to support its adoption?
Are certain people more likely to share evidence relating to particular schoolwide strategies? What are their sources?
APPENDIX B

Document Review Protocol

Through review of selected documents, such as:

- School Site Plans
- School Improvement Plans
- District/Site Improvement Memorandums
- District and Site Staff /Department/Coaching Meeting Agendas
- District and Site Staff /Department/Coaching Meeting Minutes
- District Research and Evaluation Agendas/Meetings
- School Accountability Report Cards
- District Advisory Committee Reports
- School Site Council and School Board Reports/Minutes

We will code for:

- problem identification/root causes
- methods in which district/site administrators, school staff introduce reforms into discussions
- definitions of evidence
- forms of evidence district/site administrators, school staff consider
- forms of evidence district/site administrators, school staff choose
- methods through which evidence used in decision process
- forms of improvement efforts district/site administrators, school staff enact
- district/site administrators, school staff interactions regarding evidence
- district/site administrators, school staff patterns of evidence use
- district/site administrators, school staff evaluation/refinement of evidence
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

This study by Joan M. Nelson, principal investigator and doctoral student, through the University of California, San Diego, is being conducted to better understand Program Improvement under No Child Left Behind. You have been asked to participate in this study because you have experience in a program improvement school/district. Two high schools will be included in this study, and approximately 20 individuals will be interviewed from each site. The contents of the interview will center on the processes your school uses to identify problems and solutions and the evidence used to support decision making towards improvement.

Your voluntary participation involves an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes that will be audio taped. Participant responses will be kept in a confidential manner. All data collected in hard copy form will be kept secured in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic files will be kept secure through password-protection on the investigator’s computer. Neither hard copy nor electronic documents will contain names or identifiers. Names will be identified by random numbers and kept under lock and key. Only summarized and non-identifiable data will be presented at professional meetings or in any publications.

While every effort is made to reduce risk, there exists a possibility of a loss of confidentiality in this study and feelings of discomfort. In addition, there may be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable. You will be informed of any significant new findings should they arise in the course of the study.

Although there are no immediate benefits to you for participating, this study may potentially benefit educators enacting better improvement strategies and legislators in creating more responsive educational policy. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to not participate or withdraw at any time, for whatever reason without penalty.

You should know that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may inspect study records as part of its auditing program, but these reviews only focus on the researchers and the study, not on your responses or involvement. The IRB is a committee that reviews research studies to make sure that they are safe and that the rights of the participants are protected.

By signing below you indicate that the researcher has explained this study, answered your questions, and that you voluntarily grant your revocable consent for participation in the study. If you have additional questions or need to report research-related problems you may contact Joan M. Nelson at 619.981.0890 or my faculty advisor, Dr Alan Daily (858) 622-8472. You may also call the Human Research Protections Program at (858) 455-
5050 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research related problems.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.

_________________________________________                     ____________________
Participant’s Name       Date

________________________________________
Participant’s Signature

________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature
APPENDIX D

University of California, San Diego Audiotape Recording Release Consent Form

As part of this project, an audiotape recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project. Please indicate below the uses of these audiotape recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audiotapes, your name or affiliation will not be identified. You may request to stop the taping at any time or to erase any portion of your taped recording.

1. The audiotapes can be studied by the research team for use in the research project.
   
   __________________________________________________________________________
   
   Initials

2. The audiotapes can be used for scientific publications.

   __________________________________________________________________________

   Initials

3. The audiotapes can be reviewed at meetings of scientists interested in the study of Program Improvement under No Child Left Behind.

   __________________________________________________________________________

   Initials

You have the right to request that the tape be stopped or erased during the recording.

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of audiotapes as indicated above.

____________________________________________________________________________

Signature          Date

____________________________________________________________________________

Witness           Date
APPENDIX E

Relevant Portions of Schools’ School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA)

Corrective Action School 1

**English/Language Arts SMART Goal:**

By June 2010, 31% of 9th grade students will score advanced or proficient on the ELA CST Exam.

By June 2010, 25% of 10th grade students will score advanced or proficient (380 or higher) on the ELA CAHSEE (March/May administration).

**Support for Students**

Universal Access to Strong Core Instructional Program (Tier 1)

- All ELA classes will use, on a daily basis, the state adopted textbook (McDougal Littell-Language of Literature) and supplemental materials while using the site adopted pacing guide that considers the district pacing calendar.
- All classes will implement SHIP/SMART strategies that support Reading Comprehension, including building background knowledge and academic vocabulary.
- All 9th grade classes use year-long blocks (4 semesters) to provide more learning opportunities and prepare students for CAHSEE.
- All 10th grade classes are year-long A/B (2 semesters) to provide parallel instructional support with World History and to prepare students for the CAHSEE.
- All students have access to after-school tutoring everyday through the IRC.

Strategic Support (Tier 2)

- All 9th and 10th grade English classes will use year-long blocks (4 semesters—8 credits) to provide extended learning time and opportunities to achieve proficiency at grade level standards work.
- We will provide tutoring support during Advisory for students struggling in English. These classes will implement supplementary materials and lessons to enhance regular curriculum.
- We will instruct the ESL classes to reinforce instructional practices that support English learners, and to improve reading proficiency by providing year-long block ESL classes (4 semesters) using a standardized ESL curriculum, data driven student placements in ESL courses, and using benchmark assessments.
- We will use data (CELDT scores, formative assessments, CST scores) to place students in appropriate classes based on Numeracy Fluency, English Language Fluency and Reading Proficiency.

Intensive Intervention (Tier 3)

- All 11th and 12th grade students who did not pass the ELA CAHSEE will be placed in an additional ELA (CAHSEE) prep course through the advisory period. After students take the test (October, November, or February), students will prepare to take the SAT exam in Spring 2010.
- All newcomer students will be placed in a New Arrivals Center on campus where they will receive support language acquisition, math, science, and social studies.
- An intensive instruction ELA teacher will support the students who are reading furthest below grade level and those students who are most at-risk of falling as measured by the benchmark assessments and unit exams.

**Support for Staff**

Professional Development Plan

- We will facilitate weekly professional development time. We will focus on reviewing data to monitor student performance, use of benchmark assessments, and implementing effective instructional strategies, especially as they relate to differentiation of instruction.
- We will use release time to attend workshops and to collaborate in grade level or content area teams.
- We will allocate planning time to identify essential standards, create pacing guides, create benchmark and end-of-unit assessments, and monitor student performance.

**Mathematics SMART Goal:**

By June 2010, 37% of 9th grade students will score advanced or proficient on the Algebra CST Exam.

By June 2010, 38% of 10th grade students will score advanced or proficient (380 or higher) on the math CAHSEE (March/May administration).
Corrective Action School 2

**ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS SMART GOAL:**
5% more students will pass the CAHSEE ELA section at the first administration of the exam.

**Closing the Gap SMART Goal:**
10% more in the English Language Learners subgroup will pass the CAHSEE ELA section at the first administration of the exam.

**SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

Universal Access to Strong Core Instructional Program (Tier 1)
- All students in 9th and 10th grade will have year-long block Algebra and/or Geometry with CAHSEE and SAT preparation embedded in the curriculum and instruction.
- All math teachers will use a common state adopted standards-based curriculum and instructional materials.
- All math teachers will use site and district developed benchmark assessments to inform instruction.
- All math teachers will use site and district developed benchmark assessments to inform instruction.
- All students will have access to after-school tutoring in the Math Center.
- All students will have access to extra credit sessions after school.

Strategic Support (Tier 2)
- All students will be encouraged to attend after-school tutoring to make-up work or retake quizzes and tests.
- We will use data (CAHSEE scores, performance assessments, SAT scores) to place students in appropriate classes based on Transparency Plans, English Language Arts, and Reading Proficiency.

Intensive Intervention (Tier 3)
- All 9th and 10th grade students who did not pass the Mathematics CAHSEE will be placed in an additional Mathematics (CAHSEE) prep course through the advisory period. After students take the test (October, November, or February), students will prepare to take the SAT exam in Spring 2016.
- All non-core students will be placed in a Language class on campus where they will receive support for language acquisition, math, science, and social studies.
- All students can repeat course in high school diploma and extended day which are offered on the campus every day after school. Students will be strongly encouraged to make up missing credits using the on-site recovery program.

**SUPPORT FOR STAFF**

Professional Development Plan
- We will use exam results of weekly professional development to focus on reviewing data to monitor student performance and implementing effective instructional strategies, especially as they relate to differentiation of instruction.
- Release time will be used to attend workshops and to collaborate in grade level or content area teams.
- We will use planning time to identify essential standards, create pacing guides, create benchmark and end-of-unit assessments, and monitor student performance.
Mathematics SMART Goal:
3% more students will perform Proficient or better on the Algebra I portion of the CST.

Closing the Gap SMART Goal:
5% more students in the Special Education subgroup will perform proficient or better on the Algebra I portion of the CST.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS
Universal Access to Strong Core Instructional Program (Tier 1)
- Year-long Algebra course in 9th grade
- Developed formative assessments
- Common academic vocabulary instruction in all Algebra I courses
- School-wide PDP Cornell note-taking strategies
- Access to advanced sections of Algebra I

Strategic Support (Tier 2)
- Special Education co-teaching and small group pull-out instruction
- Free after school tutoring in the Student Center
- Saturday School Sessions

Intensive Intervention (Tier 3)
- 5th period Advisory for students failing Algebra
- Student Study Team
- Case conferencing and parent conference with Pupil Advocate

SUPPORT FOR STAFF
Professional Development Plan
- Substitute release time for math department course alignment planning time
- Substitute release time for professional development training
- Substitute release time for developing, administering, and analyzing district benchmark assessments in Algebra I
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