IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM: AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

FACULTY'S EXPERIENCES OF THE HILLSIDE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT-

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH-HILLSIDE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FOR

COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

by

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(Under the Direction of Kathleen deMarrais)

ABSTRACT

Beginning in spring 2002, a Partnership established between The University of the

South[1], The Hillside County School District, and the greater Hillside community represented the

first time a university, its surrounding community, and a local school district partnered to

develop and implement a model for comprehensive school change. Through an ethnographic

case study, the researcher investigated how faculty and staff in one elementary school interpreted

their experiences as stakeholders in this comprehensive reform initiative, and how such changes

influenced teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices.

Findings indicated a complex array of factors influenced low implementation levels

during the reform's first two years. The Partnership Design Team conducted an initial planning

process during the 2001-2002 school-year, which excluded Creekside faculty, led to high faculty

attrition rates, and influenced diverse interpretations of the Partnership vision and mission. The

Hillside School District initiated a School Improvement Process beginning in fall 2002, which Creekside used to integrate Partnership initiatives and a federally funded literacy program into one coherent school improvement plan. Major themes illuminate the barriers to reform implementation during the 2002-2003 school year, which include the following: (1) inconsistent state and district mandates, (2) district and school-level leadership and decision-making practices, (3) the faculty's conflicting pedagogical beliefs, (4) unclear expectations for reform implementation, (5) the school's limited capacity to implement reforms, and (5) diverse teacher-student communication styles.

While Partnership and grant related initiatives did impact all teachers at some level during 2003-2004, the kinds of reforms teachers implemented and the extent to which it changed their classroom practices varied. Interviews conducted with ten teachers during the fall 2003 indicated that few teachers utilized Partnership resources or bought into federally funded literacy changes. A few who bought into reforms and utilized resources at high levels commented that they experienced a pedagogical shift, which led them to implement programs and initiatives at high levels. Reform barriers influenced other teachers to either resist reform implementation, or isolate themselves and adapt various instructional components to fit their traditional practices.

INDEX WORDS: Comprehensive School Reform, Whole School Change, Educational Change, Qualitative Evaluation, Program Implementation, Elementary Education

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[1] All names of institutions and stakeholders involved in this study have been replaced with pseudonyms.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

PACT (Parents and Children Together): PACT is a reading program, originally funded through the school's GA READS grant, that is designed to promote reading and language development in the home. As part of the Schoolwide Improvement Plan, Creekside teachers must provide 16 hours/month of PACT activities for parents and students at each grade level. PACT activities occur both during school hours and in the evenings

HCSD: Hillside Community School District

EIP: Early Intervention Program. The Early Intervention Program (EIP) is designed to serve students who are at risk of not reaching or maintaining academic grade level. The purpose of the Early Intervention Program is to provide additional instructional resources, such as instructors and materials, to help students who are performing below grade level obtain the necessary academic skills to reach grade level performance in the shortest possible time. The Early Intervention Program is a federal program, funded through Title I funds.

SILC: School Improvement Leadership Committee. SILC is the major school-level decision making body at Creekside Elementary School.

U of S: University of the South.

HC: Hillside Community.

CSR: Comprehensive School Reform

SST: Student Support Team. The Student Support Team (SST) is a school-based team made up of the Principal, school counselor, regular education teachers, and special education support staff. It is designed to support students experiencing significant academic, behavioral, or emotional difficulties.

SFA: Success for All. Success for All is a comprehensive school reform model that was implemented and later dropped at Creekside Elementary School.

AC: America's Choice. America's Choice is a comprehensive school reform model that Creekside Elementary School adopted after experimenting with the Success for All CSR model. Although Creekside decided to drop the AC model at the end of the 2001-2002 school year, the school continues to implement select AC model components.

GA READS: Georgia Reading Act Demonstration Site. The Georgia Reading Excellence Program is a reading initiative that includes phonological awareness, explicit, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension. In 2001, the state of Georgia proposed the Georgia

Reading Excellence Act Demonstration Sites (GA READS), a comprehensive three-year plan that includes reading improvement, tutorial assistance, and family literacy. The first year was designed for planning and disseminating best practices in scientific based reading research followed by two years of implementation for grantees. The GA READS Grant proposal outlines specific procedures for advancing literacy in the school and community. Creekside was awarded approximately $800,000 over two years to implement components specified in their grant proposal. Implementation began at the start of the 2002-2003 school year and will continue through the 2003-2004 school year.

QCC: Quality Core Curriculum. The Georgia QCC benchmarks represent the state of Georgia's curriculum standards.

FLC: Family Literacy Center. The FLC supports the advancement of literacy among parents and families in the school. At Creekside, a family literacy coordinator organizes activities and recruits families to participate in FLC programs throughout the year. The family literacy coordinator also coordinates and supervises grade-level and school-wide literacy activities.

FRC: Family Resource Center. The FRC works with all families in the school community, providing a range of services for families that extend beyond literacy. One or more FRC coordinators are typically responsible for coordinating the efforts of parents and community organizations to provide resources for parents and families in a school. For instance, the FRC coordinator might help a family by assisting them with their basic survival needs, or by putting them in touch with the appropriate community member when parents have legal, medical, psychological, or other questions. The coordinator might also offer GED, ESOL, and parenting, and other literacy courses for parents and families, similar to the FLC.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, changes in federal and state policy have prompted a shift in the way schools attempt reforms. Set in motion by the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), two integrative and overlapping waves of reform attempted to intensify the U.S. educational system through the 1980's and early 90's. Despite these two waves of reform, not much changed in school organization or classroom teaching (Cuban, 1984; Tyack and Tobin, 1994). Through the first two waves of reforms, it became clear that the basic culture of the organization must be considered alongside curriculum and school organization (Fullan, 1993; Seller, 2001), including the traditional power relationships among principals, teachers, students, and parents (Hargreaves, 1994). As a result, a third wave of reform began, which exercised a more comprehensive approach to reform by addressing components of change as a whole (Sarason, 1990). Comprehensive school reform (also referred to as "whole school" or "systemic" reform) embraces a diverse set of programs and strategies that often require changing all parts of school life, including curriculum and instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, school management, and culture (McChesney and Hertling, 2000; Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002a). While it is still uncertain whether comprehensive school reform can produce large scale improvement across schools, few would disagree that the nature and demands these reforms have placed upon teachers has profoundly intensified their work (Hargreaves, 1994; Helsby, 1999; Troman and Woods, 2001).

Comprehensive school reform and the two reform waves that preceded it have significant implications for teachers working lives (Dale, 1989; Datnow and Castellano, 2000). Policy changes over the past two decades have pushed teachers to shift to a new collaborative culture of teaching (Hargreaves et al., 2001), which has been found to be critical for implementing and sustaining school improvements (Fullan, 2001; Sarason, 1990). Research on school culture provides evidence that successful school change occurs when teachers develop shared beliefs about how their school should operate, focus their efforts on improving teaching and learning (Macmillan, 2000), become involved in collaborative decision-making (Hargreaves, 1994), and develop processes for dealing with issues that arise (Darling-Hammond, 1995). Furthermore, the literature on school reform suggest that change occurs best with a top-down, bottom-up approach to change, which involves both practitioner and external knowledge sources (Cuban, 1984; Fullan, 2000). In this case, the larger system provides direction and support, but leaves the actual change process to schools through school-based decision making and school development planning (Fink and Stoll, 1998).

While whole school change can potentially improve schooling for all children, this process often creates unintended consequences for those involved in the change process at the ground level. Hargreaves (1994) points out that practical solutions to existing problems come with their own set of challenges, which don't always result in improvements and sometimes turn into the source of further problems.

Reform is often guided by the belief that every problem has a solution. Perhaps the real challenge of reform as a continuous process, though, is acknowledging that every solution has a problem. What we can perhaps most hope for is not the achievement of

perfect, utopian solutions, but elevation to a better class of problems (Hargreaves, 1994: 138).

The process of school reform is extremely complex, requiring educators to have the foresight to recognize and address problems that will inevitably emerge with change (Hargreaves, 1994). When the impact of school change on teachers is overlooked, and when the consequences of these changes for teachers and students are left unaddressed, the results overwhelmingly indicate that attempts to implement improvements will ultimately be unsuccessful (Fullan, 1991; Muncey and McQuillan, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994).

The Impact of First Wave Initiatives on Teachers

Literature on school reform suggests that first wave reform initiatives implemented in the 1980's did little to improve schools because they employed "top-down" approaches to change (Cuban, 1984; Hawley, 1988). This first wave was defined by and criticized for the prescriptive policies and performance measurements that were implemented. State initiatives centralized authority and increased regulations and incentives for schools through standardized curricula, competency tests for both students and teachers, increased standardized testing, and infused accountability measures for teachers. New reform policies told teachers what to do and pushed them to work harder, but prompted little real improvements in teaching practices and student learning (Hawley, 1988).

The first wave of reforms were driven by the assumption that schools are much more alike than different and can be improved with "one size fits all" policies (Metz, 1988, p. 447). While the temporal, physical, and social structures of schools make them appear similar on the surface, the cultural meanings of these structures create gaps between policies and individual schools that prevent real change from occurring. For instance, Metz (1988), in her study of the

impact of reforms on teachers' work in eight high schools, found that teacher-student relationships, classroom discourse, and academic learning varied tremendously across schools. Teachers in schools that varied in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic characteristics sent their students very different messages about how they, as learners and citizens, related to the public institution of the school (Metz, 1988).

School culture will inevitably impact prescriptive and centralized reforms and influence the success that can be realized through these types of reforms. The shared beliefs, attitudes, and practices that are tied to these reforms and ultimately interpreted by teachers, may not connect with their students' learning needs. Teachers' expectations of their students, their perceptions about their students' interests and engagement in school, the impact of the surrounding community, the influence of social policy, and the impact of technology on the qualifications needed for employment must all be considered when anticipating how schools will respond to particular reforms. Thus, even schools and teachers who implemented first wave reforms at high levels often did not see significant improvements on students' standardized test scores or differences in school structure (Fink and Stoll, 1998).

The first wave emphasis on accountability, through competency tests and standardized curriculum and testing, also lead to other unintended consequences for teachers, such as intensification and deskilling (Apple, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994). Such reforms intensified teachers' work by requiring them to implement externally produced in-class assessments, accountability instruments, and classroom management technologies (Apple, 1989). For instance, teachers' administrative and assessment tasks were greatly increased through first wave reforms, which lengthened their work-day and eliminated opportunities for more creative work. Teachers' work became more routinized and prescriptive, and reforms stripped teachers of some

of their power to adjust their classroom practices as they saw fit (Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore, 1988; Apple, 1989). In addition, accountability measures were tied to mandated curriculum and assessments, which placed more pressure on teachers to comply with these mandates. First wave reforms prevented teachers from using their extensive knowledge of students and community to solve problems and improve student outcomes. These reforms also deprofessionalized teachers' work by controlling how they taught and how they assessed student learning (Apple, 1989). Changes were driven by state initiatives that ignored teachers' expertise and led teachers to distrust policy mandates and reform initiatives (Metz, 1988).

<div align="center">The Impact of Second Wave Reforms on Teachers</div>

A second wave of reforms responded to the criticisms of top-down initiatives by shifting control from the states to local school districts, which would presumably give more control to teachers in regard to meeting their students' needs (Carnegie Corporation, 1986). These reforms pushed for higher standards for teachers, more incentives linked to student achievement, restructuring schools to give teachers a greater role in decision-making, deepening the relationship between parents, teachers, and students, and addressing students' special needs (Carnegie Corporation, 1986, Hawley, 1988). Second wave policies attempted to make teachers' roles more professional by increasing teacher education requirements and standards, providing more control over school governance, and decreasing their ties to the classroom (Metz, 1988).

Consequences of second wave reforms for teachers again resulted in new standards and expectations that did little to affect real change for students. The increased requirements for teacher educators did not address the disconnect between schools and their surrounding communities, particularly in schools with high minority populations and poverty levels (Metz,

1988; Hawley, 1988). In addition, policies to improve teacher quality (mainly through salary increases and screening devices) did not change the way that teachers taught (Hawley, 1988).

Teacher Intensification and Deprofessionalization

Decentralization continued through the second wave, as centralized decision-making was distributed across individual schools and accompanied by accountability systems (Bryk et al., 1994). Teachers became responsible for achieving certain pre-specified goals or meeting particular standards, and schools were given power to make decisions regarding their budget, physical resources, staffing, recruitment, and curriculum (Helsby, 1999). Centralized control was maintained through accountability measures, such as financial rewards for schools that demonstrated improvements on standardized tests and sanctions that included shutting schools down when they failed to show results. Teachers' work was again affected through their extra duties, such as resource allocation, budget management, and curriculum planning. Heavy demands were also placed on teachers to keep careful account of their work through record keeping and other forms of data collection (Helsby, 1999). Decentralization in the Chicago schools occasionally resulted in principals taking control over decision-making and subjecting teachers to mandated school-level policies (Sebring and Bryk, 2000); a practice that resulted in contrived collegiality in schools (see below, p. 7) and further deprofessionalization of teachers (Hargreaves, 1994). Such authoritarian practices led teachers at some Chicago schools to distrust administration and resist reform efforts (Sebring and Bryk, 2000).

Second wave reforms also pushed schools to transform traditional individualistic cultures of teaching (Lortie, 1975) into collaborative and collegial cultures (Little and McLaughlin, 1993). These new reforms were driven by the belief that improving education for all students could only happen by empowering teachers to work more effectively with their students through

increased teacher control over their work (Murphy, 1992). These changes also came with costs

for teachers. Similar to the effects of decentralization on teachers, more control over school

structure and programs prompted teachers to accept additional responsibilities such as mentoring,

curriculum planning, and other school-level decisions (Helsby, 1999). More responsibilities in

many cases intensified and overloaded teachers' working lives. As a result, what was intended

to professionalize the teaching profession ultimately deprofessionalized it, as teachers began to

rely more on external technologies and services to provide them with pre-packaged school

programs, curriculum and assessments. No time was left for teachers to develop their own

programs by utilizing their own expertise and creative energies (Hargreaves, 1994).

Contrived Collegiality

Hargreaves (1992) also points out that the effects of collaboration and increased teacher

control at times took the form of "contrived collegiality," in which school administrators

controlled and discouraged the often spontaneous and unpredictable nature of genuine teacher

collaboration through "compulsory cooperation, required collaborative planning, stage-managed

mission statements, and processes of collaboration to implement non-negotiable programs and

curricula" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 80). These types of processes resulted in a lack of teacher

ownership and ultimately impacted the success of the reforms (Desimone, 2002).

A Culture of Isolation

Cultures of collaboration may provide a critical form of support for teachers during times

of intense change and uncertainty (Helsby, 1999; Hargreaves et al., 2001). Exposure to different

perspectives and participation throughout the planning and development reform phase can

challenge traditional ways of doing things and expand professional knowledge. While

collaboration that pervades the school can bring about real and lasting change, the inevitable

time restraints that come with collaborative reform efforts often keep teachers confined to their classrooms. The teaching profession is traditionally marked by a deep-seated tradition of isolation (Lortie, 1975), which impacts teachers' responses to change. While teachers must develop and maintain a shared consensus about the goals and organization of their work to successfully implement school change, the traditional culture of teaching often prevents teachers from achieving these shared beliefs (Lortie, 1975; Fullan, 1991). The day to day realities and immediacy associated with classroom teaching (Fullan, 1991), the endemic uncertainties of teachers- their preference for isolation and apprehension for being evaluated and criticized, which stems from the diffuse goals and unreliable feedback that result from the uncertainties of their work (Lortie, 1975), the traditional "egg-crate" structure of schools (Lortie, 1975), and desire to protect the scarce time and energy needed to meet their students' immediate instructional demands (Flinders, 1988), combine to create a culture of teaching that is defined by isolation and individualistic work habits. This traditional culture of teaching often prevents the kind of learning community that makes change possible. Hargreaves et al. (2001) found that the intensification associated with collaborative school change efforts tends to confine teachers to their classrooms. Many teachers avoided collaborating with their colleagues to protect themselves from scrutiny and evaluation of their own teaching practices. In addition, isolation protected teachers' rights to professional independence, giving them freedom to teach as they wished. Often, these practices divided school faculty and made it difficult for teachers to reach common agreement about major innovations (Hargreaves, 1994). When small groups of teachers and administrators collaborated to reform their schools, teachers not involved in these collaborative efforts criticized their colleagues for creating an exclusive group and alienating the rest of the staff (Hargreaves et al., 2001. p. 167; Muncey and McQuillan, 1996). In addition,

teachers who isolated themselves from collaborative changes accused administration of favoring teachers who participated in the change efforts (Hargreaves et al., 2001; Muncey and McQuillan, 1996). Teachers who did collaborate experienced isolation from other teachers when they stepped outside their traditional roles (Collinson, 1994).

Isolation also occurred when resistant teachers experienced increased influences of the reforms on their working lives. Muncey and McQuillan (1996) found that teachers who were skeptical of or opposed the Coalition of Essential Schools Reform intensified their resistance when new school programs expanded. When Coalition teachers received public praise for their "new and innovative" work, resistant faculty who felt that they had taught well for years without formal recognition became alienated. In addition, resistant teachers sensed an implicit criticism of their own teaching and distanced themselves even further from the reform effort.

Decrease in Psychic Rewards of Teaching

Reforms aimed at creating higher standards for teachers, such as those which prescribed more professional development and involvement in collaborative cultures of professional growth, decreased the time that teachers had to spend in the classroom with students (Hargreaves, 1994). As several researchers have pointed out, ensuring the success and well-being of children is of vital importance to teachers (Lortie, 1975; Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994). Lortie (1975) described these values as the psychic rewards of teaching. The core rewards for teachers are tied to the importance they place on "reaching" their students (Lortie, 1975), and obtaining these psychic rewards requires that teachers are in the classroom and have direct contact with their students. As teachers' outside commitments increase, less time is available for them to receive the psychic rewards that come from their direct interactions with students. Hargreaves (1994) found that despite having more time out of class for collaborative

professional development, teachers perceived a reduction in their quality of service provided to students. As teachers were drawn away from their own classes into other areas of work involving professional development and school governance, they worried that time away sacrificed the relationship they felt they needed with their students to meet their intellectual and emotional needs.

<div align="center">Third Wave Comprehensive School Reforms</div>

Beginning in the early 90's, reform efforts began to exercise a more comprehensive approach by addressing components of change as a whole (Sarason, 1990). Through the first two waves of reforms, it became clear that the basic culture of the organization must be considered alongside curriculum and school organization (Fullan, 1993; Seller, 2001), including the traditional power relationships among principals, teachers, students, and parents (Hargreaves, 1994). Responses to reculturing and restructuring schools through top-down, bottom-up, and inside-out (Fullan, 1993) whole-school, or "third wave," reforms (Miles and Elkholm, 1991; Desimone, 2002) overlapped the first and second wave reforms that continue to impact reform initiatives today (Desimone, 2002). These whole-school efforts at change attempted to activate the proper mechanisms to affect what teachers do in the classroom and how students learn (Cohen and Ball, 1990; Tyack and Tobin, 1994) by changing several school program components and processes at once (Fullan, 1991; Hatch, 1998).

Despite the success that some schools have experienced implementing comprehensive school reforms (CSR) to scale and improving student achievement, CSR implementation and outcomes tend to vary considerably across sites. The ability to assess the success of the CSR movement is limited by the quality of the research on school wide reform models. Research on the outcomes of large-scale comprehensive school wide programs is in its initial stages

(Desimone, 2000). Although many case studies have provided information regarding the restructuring of schools, there have been very few comprehensive, well-designed empirical studies that designate the factors affecting successful implementation (Desimone, 2002).

Little is known about the teachers' perspectives of comprehensive school reform initiatives at all phases, from planning and development, to implementation and scale-up. Furthermore, only a small portion of studies on CSR implementation have been qualitative, and most of these present qualitative data as only one component of larger mixed-methods studies (Datnow and Castellano, 2000; Stringfield et al., 1997). Muncey and McQuillan's (1996) ethnographic case studies of eight high schools involved in the Coalition of Essential Schools project represents one of the most comprehensive and detailed qualitative investigations of comprehensive school reform implementation to date. Muncey and McQuillan (1996) collected data over a five-year period (1986-1991) through multiple interviews with teachers, administrators, and students; observations of classrooms and various school events, including faculty and administrative planning meetings, and other school-based activities; extensive document analyses of school newspaper articles, yearbooks, faculty memos, and correspondences between schools and Coalition central staff; and a survey of fifteen hundred students in Coalition schools. Case studies focused on how participants' (students, teachers, administrators) interpreted Coalition principles and how Coalition principles were implemented (or not) in schools.

Datnow and Castellano (2000) completed one of the first purely qualitative studies on the implementation of the Success for All school reform program when they used a collective case study approach to examine what happened when teachers implemented the Success for All program in three schools. Other studies have included qualitative components, such as RAND's

evaluation of the NAS initiatives (Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002), Stringfield et al.'s (1997) study on the implementation and effectiveness of various comprehensive school reform models and Cooper, Slavin, and Madden's (1998) study of the dimensions of change in Success for All schools. However, as Datnow and Castellano (2000) pointed out, these studies presented qualitative data as only one portion of larger mixed-methods studies with broader goals.

Desimone's (2002) review of research on successful school reform implementation calls for more studies that document how contextual factors impact comprehensive reform efforts, particularly through the social, institutional, and personal interactions that take place during comprehensive reform development and implementation. In addition, school specific context such as mobility rates, teacher characteristics, school size and level, and power structures would all contribute to our understanding of how context influences implementation (Desimone, 2002). Datnow and Stringfield (2000) also identified major gaps in our knowledge of how, where, and why some comprehensive reforms succeed at school improvement and others do not. They also called for more research that looks at the possibilities and boundaries of reform-partner relationships and the institutional and social factors that facilitate or hinder reform efforts.

The way in which teachers approach reforms are heavily influenced by the professional and work cultures within which they operate (Helsby, 1999). The educational system is reliant upon teachers to balance the conflicting demands that come from policies mandated outside the classroom, with the conflicting demands of students within their classrooms (Helsby, 1999). Teachers' practical choices in relation to such demands shape the way in which reforms impact student achievement. It is critical to understand teachers' experiences of and responses to comprehensive school reform and the impact that such reforms have on teachers' work in various contexts. Doing so will help us better understand how teachers, as well as the context and

culture in which teachers work, shape reform implementation. Such research will contribute to developing successful reform programs that will respond more appropriately to teachers' practical classroom needs and ultimately improve real student learning.

Summary

Federal and state policy changes over the last two decades have shifted the way in which schools attempt reform. The first wave of policy changes centralized authority and employed top-down processes to standardize curriculum and testing. These reforms deprofessionalized teachers work by controlling how they must teach and by using standardized assessments that ignored teachers' expertise. A second wave of reforms responded to these issues by attempting to professionalize the teaching profession through increased teacher education requirements, more control over school governance, and decreased teacher ties to the classroom. These reforms also did little to affect real change for students, as increased requirements did not address the disconnect between schools and their surrounding communities and did little to change the way teachers taught. Currently, a third reform wave of reform attempts to address school culture and structure by involving the school community in shared decision-making and comprehensive school change.

While much is known about the components necessary to successfully implement comprehensive reform models and improve student achievement, CSR implementation and outcomes tend to vary drastically across sites. There have been very few comprehensive, well-designed empirical studies that designate the factors associated with successful CSR implementation, and only a small portion of these studies have qualitatively examined what happens when teachers implement comprehensive reform initiatives. Much remains to be learned about how contextual factors impact comprehensive reform initiatives both within and

across schools. Even less is known about how teachers' experience comprehensive school reform initiatives and how such experiences influence their classroom practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to understand how teachers interpret their experiences as stakeholders in a comprehensive reform initiative and how such changes influence teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices. Currently, the Partnership for Community Learning Centers (Partnership) established between The University of the South, The Hillside County School District, and the greater Hillside community represents the first time a university, its surrounding community, and a local school district have partnered to develop and implement a model for comprehensive school change. This study takes the first step toward understanding how school context and culture influences teachers' experiences as stakeholders in a comprehensive school reform initiative. This study was constructed with the following questions guiding the investigation:

1. How do teachers at one elementary school describe their experiences with the Partnership and the comprehensive reform initiatives that it supports?

2. How do teachers interpret the comprehensive changes that have occurred since the Partnership's inception?

3. How do the Partnership's comprehensive reforms influence teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Comprehensive School Reform

Current economic, social, and political forces have placed tremendous pressure on schools to change (Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002). The recurring efforts at school reform during the latter half of the 21st century often moved from one innovation to another without an infrastructure capable of promoting lasting and beneficial educational changes (Slavin, 1989). The public has expressed growing concern over the past two decades that our nation's public schools are failing, citing the incapacity of U.S. schools to develop, incorporate, and extend new ideas about teaching and learning into more than a small fraction of classrooms (Elmore, 1996). In addition, academic achievement among African-American and Hispanic students has been consistently lower on standardized tests at all levels. They have lower attendance rates, lower passing rates, and higher drop-out rates than white students (Haycock, 2001). As the proportion of racial and ethnic minorities continues to grow in America's public schools, so to does the threat of minority underachievement.

Recent national reform and policy movements provide hope in stopping the previous cycle of ineffective reforms, as Congress and other educational policymakers are making funding sources available to only those schools that implement educational reforms demonstrating high-quality evidence for improving academic achievement for all students. Specifically, the federal government invested a substantial amount of resources in the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program, enacted by Congress in 1997 to improve student achievement

through reorganizing and revitalizing entire schools, rather than implementing isolated programs. According to the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (NCCSR), comprehensive school reform (CSR) programs consist of the following[2]:

1. A systematic approach to schoolwide improvement that incorporates every aspect of a school — from curriculum and instruction to school management.

2. A program and a process that is designed to enable all students to meet challenging academic content and performance goals.

3. A framework for using research to move from multiple, fragmented educational programs to a unified plan with a single focus — academic achievement.

4. A product of the long-term, collaborative efforts of school staff, parents and district staff.

A key feature of this program is that it provides incentives for schools to develop comprehensive reform programs based upon scientifically based research and effective practices. Schools receiving federal funds to implement CSR models may use a nationally available approach or develop their program locally, provided they coherently integrate the eleven components of reform outlined in the Title I legislation (part of the Elementary and Secondary Act- part F), which was signed into law on January 8, 2002. According to this law, schools must integrate the following eleven initiatives:

1. Use research-based methods and strategies based on scientifically based research;

2. Implement a comprehensive design with aligned components;

3. Provide ongoing, high-quality professional development for teachers and staff;

4. Include measurable goals and benchmarks for student achievement;

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[2] For more information, visit the National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (NCCSR) website at http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/about_csr/index.html

5. Maintain faculty, administrative, and staff support;

6. Provide professional development and support for teachers, administrators and staff;

7. Provide meaningful parent and community involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating school improvement activities;

8. Use high-quality external technical support and assistance from an external partner with experience and expertise in schoolwide reform and improvement;

9. Plan for the evaluation of strategies for the implementation of school reforms and for student results achieved, annually;

10. Identify resources to support and sustain the school's comprehensive reform effort; and

11. Implement an improvement plan that has been found to significantly improve the academic achievement of students or demonstrates strong evidence that it will improve the academic achievement of students.

While some schools develop internal reforms that have these characteristics, many educators are turning to external groups, such as universities and educational centers, for assistance in designing whole school models (See above- Initiative #8).

Over the past two decades, the United States made several attempts to reform its schools. Although these reforms have been integrative, they are often described as constituting three separate "waves" (Desimone, 2002). The first wave of reforms was ushered in after the 1983 report entitled, *A Nation at Risk.* In this report, the National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded that education in the United States suffered from lack of rigor and allowed insufficient time for children to learn adequately. In addition, the panel concluded that teachers were both "poorly prepared" and underpaid. Based on its data, the commission made a number of

recommendations, which included strengthening content standards, raising standards and expectations for academic performance and student conduct, lengthening the school day and school year and concentrating more on basic skills, and improving teacher preparation programs. A number of reforms followed that stressed standardization of curriculum and centralized testing of both students and teachers (Metz, 1988). Despite these changes, the first wave of reforms were criticized for centralizing educational policymaking authority through increased rules and regulations, which reinforced the climate of distrust that initially motivated these reforms. In addition to this "top-down" approach to reform, initiatives were also criticized for not adding new capacity to the system, as they failed to address school reorganization or the streamlining of existing programs (Cuban, 1984; Hawley, 1988).

As a response to these criticisms, the second wave called for a shift in control from the states to local school districts, which would presumably give more control to teachers in regard to meeting their students' needs (Carnegie Corporation, 1986). These reforms pushed for higher standards for teachers, more incentives linked to student achievement, restructuring schools to give teachers a greater role in decision-making, deepening the relationship between parents, teachers, and students, and addressing students' special needs (Carnegie Corporation, 1986, Hawley, 1988). Changes from this second wave were also criticized, as teachers' classroom practices did not experience significant changes (Tyack and Tobin, 1994). Beginning in the early 90's, reform efforts began to exercise a more comprehensive approach by addressing components of change as a whole (Sarason, 1990). Through the first two waves of reforms, it became clear that the basic culture of the organization must be considered alongside curriculum and school organization (Fullan, 1993; Seller, 2001), including the traditional power relationships among principals, teachers, students, and parents (Hargreaves, 1994).

A third wave of reforms began to place emphasis upon both restructuring and reculturing schools through various reform initiatives. Several researchers and practitioners had already begun developing whole school models by investigating school culture and teaching practices in the mid 1980's. The Accelerated Schools project (Levin, 1996), the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1984), Comer's School Development Program (1980), and Success for All (Slavin et al., 1992) were all aimed at altering the "core of schooling," which Elmore (1996) defines as the following:

> How teachers relate to students around knowledge, how teachers relate to other teachers in the course of their daily work, how students are grouped for purposes of instruction, how content is allocated to time, and how students' work is assessed (p. 2).

These whole-school efforts at change attempted to activate the proper mechanisms to affect what teachers do in the classroom and how students learn (Cohen and Ball, 1990; Tyack and Tobin, 1994). In addition, the initial whole-school reforms integrated first and second wave reforms, which continue to impact reform initiatives today (Desimone, 2002). Although these models varied in their unique approaches to solving specific problems in U.S. education, they all attempted to help schools address the majority of the 11 components that define comprehensive school reform, and all have since established development and dissemination structures to replicate and support implementation across a number of schools (Borman, et al., 2002).

In 1991, recognizing the momentum of policy and support for CSR, President George Bush, Sr. announced the creation of a private-sector organization called the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC), which was established to promote "break the mold" whole-school restructuring models to help schools and districts significantly raise the achievement of large numbers of students (Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, Berends, and Naftel,

2002a). Using a business model, NASDC requested proposals for new models of American

schools that would enable all students to achieve world-class standards in core academic

subjects, operate at costs comparable to current schools after start-up financing, and address all

aspects of a school's operation. After receiving over 700 proposals in February 1992, NASDC

chose eleven[3] and provided funds for a three-year program of development and testing. By

providing over $150 million over the past decade in financial assistance to reform developers,

NASDC (currently known as NAS) helped to fuel the market for CSR models, scale up the CSR

movement, and lobby for federal changes that continue to promote the development

comprehensive school reform models today (Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, Berends, and Naftel,

2002a; Borman, et al., 2002).

Legislation in the mid to late 90's continued to promote whole-school reform efforts,

after evaluations of CSR models (particularly those affiliated with the New American Schools

(NAS) project) began showing promising results (Slavin, 2001; Educational Research Service,

1998). In fiscal year 2003, Congress appropriated $233.5 million in CSRD funding to support

comprehensive reforms in schools eligible for Title I funds. While this may appear modest in

comparison to other federal programs, both CSRD funding and Title I funds can be used to

support CSR initiatives. In addition, the 1994 Title I legislation decreased the poverty-level

requirement of eligible schools from 75% to 50 % of children living in poverty, providing more

incentives for schools to implement comprehensive school reform models. The more recent No

Child Left Behind Act (2001) also maintains a focus on whole-school reform. As a result of

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[3] NASDC eventually dropped four of the original eleven models and then later added two additional models. The nine comprehensive school reform models that currently make up the New American Schools (NAS) include the Accelerated Schools Project (AS); Audrey Cohen College (currently renamed Purpose-Centered Education); Authentic Teaching, Learning, and Assessment for All Students (ATLAS); Co-NECT Schools (CON); Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB); Modern Red Schoolhouse (MRSH); National Alliance for Restructuring Education (NARE- currently renamed America's Choice Design Network); Urban Learning Centers; and Success For All/Roots and Wings (SFA/RW).

these federal changes, the number of new schools receiving state funds to implement

comprehensive school reform models has increased dramatically over the past five years.

According to 2003 data from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, the number of

new schools receiving funds for CSR models increased from 445 in 1998 to 1,316 in 2002. In

total, over $770 million has been provided to approximately 3,000 schools across the nation

implementing comprehensive school reform (Evans and McCray, 2002). The increase in federal

funding as a result of changes in the 1994 Title I legislation and development of the CSRD

program provides evidence that educators and policymakers are turning to comprehensive school

reform as a potential answer to the failed "piecemeal" reforms of the past (Tyack and Tobin,

1994; Cuban, 1993).

To summarize, four major factors led to the substantial increase in the number of schools

implementing comprehensive school reform, including the lack of positive results from programs

initiated in the first and second waves of reform, the development of the NAS project, the initial

positive achievement gains that resulted from whole-school models in several pilot schools, and

new federal funding that encouraged schools to implement whole-school reform models

(Educational Research Service, 1998).

Factors Leading to Successful Comprehensive School Reform Implementation

Desimone (2002) used the Policy Attributes Theory (Porter et al., 1988; Clune, 1998) as a

framework for presenting an extensive literature review on CSR. The Policy Attributes Theory

suggests that educational policies such as CSR are likely to influence teachers and students to the

extent to which they are specific, powerful, authoritative, consistent, and stable. Policymakers

can use these dimensions to think critically about comprehensive school reform and whether the

conditions exist for it to flourish (See also Berends, et. al., 2002). A brief description of each

dimension is described, followed by a discussion of its related categories that support successful comprehensive school reform implementation. It should be noted that these dimensions are not exclusive of one another, but are interrelated.

<div align="center">*Specificity*</div>

Specificity is the extent to which the CSR provides detailed guidance or materials to help schools and teachers understand what they are supposed to do (e.g., materials describing the stages of design implementation; ongoing, clear assistance strategies to further promote implementation).

According to Desimone (2002), three main factors are relevant to the specificity of CSR models, including the following:

1. Locus of development: whether the model is designed internally by the school or district, or is externally developed by a design team.

2. Professional development: varies from very structured curriculum-based professional development that provides lesson plans and other teaching materials, to philosophically based professional development that provides very general guidelines.

3. Information and monitoring: level provided by design teams and districts.

Locus of Development

Nunnery (1998) analyzed results of six large-scale studies of educational innovation and found that both internal and external development can be successful. However, Nunnery (1998) concluded that local development is often riskier and costlier than implementation of external models because they are more likely to have clearly defined development and operation plans.

Through separate case study analyses, an evaluation conducted by RAND tracked nine design teams' implementation efforts in a total of 36 schools (Bodilly, 1996). Bodilly (1996) found that designs having very concrete models for new behaviors and specific materials to be used in the classroom experienced higher levels of implementation than less prescriptive models with loosely defined and vague ideas about curricular goals. In the latter cases, teachers expressed that they did not have concrete models upon which to develop curriculum and made slow and very inconsistent curriculum development efforts. NAS project implementations in Memphis City Schools found that teachers implementing designs requiring more local development (e.g., increasing the school's internal planning and development time required for less specific designs) experienced more frustration and anxiety. Teachers experienced more success when they were provided with concrete and usable materials and specific training that focused on the model's practical applications in the classroom.

Professional Development

Related to the issue of internal vs. external designs are the added professional development benefits that external models appear to provide. Lytle (2002) discussed the benefits that external design teams provide in terms of already established networks for teachers and principals. Through these networks, practitioners were able to share interests and concerns about various models, which left them more open to change. Cooper, Slavin, and Madden, (1998) collected and analyzed data from surveys, individual interviews, focus groups interviews, and school-site observations from a sample of more than 225 schools across the country and found that participation in national and local network activities can affect the quality of implementation of whole-school change. Specifically, the Success for All (SFA) design's national conferences served as the primary vehicle to disseminate research-based information regarding SFA

development. In addition, conferences often led school communities to reconfirm their commitments to whole-school change and enhance practical knowledge about applying the model in the classroom. Other studies involving school reform initiatives found that principals and teachers expanded their leadership skills and professional networks as a result of their involvement with external reform designs (Muncey and McQuillan, 1996; Brunner and LeTendre, 1996; Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002a). However, in order for these experiences to yield lasting change, principals and teachers both reported that training and involvement in these networks must continue on a frequent and ongoing basis (Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Geijsel, van den Berg, and Sleegers, 1999). Schools implementing innovations benefit significantly from involvement in a national network of "like-minded" schools and need high levels of faculty involvement to sustain changes of superintendents, principals, teachers, and district policies (Slavin and Madden, 2001, p. 219).

After over a decade studying the Comer School Development Program, Haynes (1998) concluded that training is the critical component of any whole-school design and must focus on the internalization and transfer of the attitudes, skills, and knowledge called for through the design's implementation. As part of a longitudinal evaluation of NAS designs, Berends (2000) found that greater resource availability in terms of professional development and materials to support instruction was positively related to greater teacher support of the designs and higher levels of implementation. After several years of studying SFA implementation, Slavin and Madden (2001) concluded that professional development must extend beyond national networks and provide on-site trainers to facilitate ongoing professional learning related to implementing various CSR model components (Slavin and Madden, 2001; Slavin, 2001b).

More recent studies of teachers and professional development have stressed the importance of combining outside opportunities for professional development with internal teacher collaboration for implementing new school programs and instructional strategies (Darling Hammond, 1997). Many of the NAS and independent CSR designs incorporate these components (Kearns and Anderson, 1996). Several CSR models feature some type of teacher collaboration in their models, including study groups, peer observations, and communities of learners (Bol et al., 1998). To explore teachers' perceptions of the support in CSR designs, Bol et al. (1998) administered 980 questionaires to teachers who were implementing a variety of CSR designs in the Memphis City Schools and followed these up with focus groups in 34 different schools. Findings revealed that enhanced internal collaboration among staff was viewed as a positive aspect of implementing CSR models. Analyses of focus groups revealed that increased collaboration among teachers at the school site emerged as the most positive variable, in terms of learning about the designs, planning instruction, developing curriculum, and providing social support.   Bol et al. (1998) also found that teachers expressed a need for more externally provided professional development during their second year of restructuring. Teachers wanted training that provided concrete guidelines for applying the specific design components in the classroom. Smith et al. (1998) found that internal training by the district's internal staff was usually better received than training provided by an outside trainer. However, this outcome was strongly dependent on both CSR design characteristics and the personality and skills of the trainer working with each design (Smith et al., 1998).

Stringfield et al. (1998) found that low levels of implementation are often associated with confusion and uncertainty that comes with trying to do too much at once. For instance, one school adopted the Core Knowledge Sequence and Paidea reform programs and intended to use

these programs to implement the Coalition of Essential Schools reform program. Each program had separate goals and different action steps for implementing their designs and no professional development was offered to assist teachers with design integration. As a result, some teachers attempted to integrate the designs, while others opted to resist implementation altogether. The confusion and lack of support led to very low implementation levels across the school.

Information and Monitoring

Design teams provide different levels and types of information, materials, evaluation, and feedback, beyond professional development. The design team's effectiveness in communicating their ideas to schools impacts what happens when a school begins implementing the model (Bodilly, 1996). Schools that did not fully understand the design when they chose it tended not to reach high levels of implementation. Schools that were confused or surprised about what they would have to do to implement a CSR design often spent their time arguing over what they were going to implement or whether they wanted to discontinue implementing the design altogether (Bodilly, 1996). Conversely, designs that were initially well-communicated through academic journals and the media (e.g., Success for All), used school-level personnel from existing design-based schools to explain their designs, and marketed extensive materials to schools were able to implement their designs faster and with more lasting success (Bodilly, 1998).

Berends (2000) found that clear communication by design teams to schools was positively related to teacher support and implementation of the design, as well as teacher judgments about the design's effects on professional growth and student achievement. In fact, schools that reported high levels of implementation in all cases were associated with clear communication and strong assistance by their design team (Berends, 2000; Bodilly, 1998). Low levels of implementation were related to design teams' poor communication regarding the nature

of their changes (Berends, 2000). Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (2001) reported that 12 out of 30 schools claimed that one factor contributing to their dropping a NAS design resulted from the design not being what the school originally expected. Other schools reported dropping the design because there was "not enough direction given to teachers" (Kirby, Berends, and Naftel, 2001, p. 68). Geisel, van den Berg, and Sleeger's (1999) investigation of ten primary schools implementing reforms with various levels of success reported a clear difference in regard to the availability of information. In schools with high levels of implementation success, the teachers clearly knew about available materials and indicated knowledge of a clear policy for schooling and training, particularly in the types of courses that were of importance to the school in the future. Schools with low implementation levels did not feel they had access to materials and paid less attention to policy implications for the types of courses that may be important in the future. Teachers at schools with low implementation levels also indicated much less need for schooling and training.

Studies exploring design teams' formative evaluations of and feedback to schools regarding implementation success show mixed results. In two studies of CSR designs, teachers reported that the feedback was useful as a checkpoint to reassure that they were correctly implementing model components (Datnow and Castellano, 2000; Ross, et al., 1997). Also, Brunner and LeTendre (1996) found that statewide evaluations of the original Accelerated Schools motivated these schools to use a rubric of indicators to give members of the pioneer schools a clear picture of the current expectations for Accelerated Schools (AS). These evaluations had a direct and positive impact on the speed and level of implementation in AS schools.

Datnow and Castellano (2000) found less favorable outcomes associated with evaluations and feedback. The researchers explored the implementation process of Success For All in a two-year qualitative study involving three elementary schools. Despite regular implementation visits from two trainers who monitored SFA implementation and provided coaching and feeback to the schools, principals, SFA facilitators (working in the schools), and teachers all experienced anxiety with these visits. Principals and facilitators indicated feeling uncomfortable having to communicate less favorable feedback to the staff and occasionally did not discuss negative information or waited a long time to share it.

Schools that experience high levels of CSR model implementation tend to partner with external developers who support implementation through clearly defined curricular goals and implementation processes. Design teams clearly communicate design components by offering schools specific resources and curricular materials, continously modeling design components, providing ongoing feedback to school faculty, and linking schools to broader professional networks. High implementation schools also combine continuous professional development with internal teacher collaboration, which focuses on implementing specific programs and instructional strategies.

Consistency

Consistency refers to the extent to which the set of whole-school interventions and strategies are aligned with a common mission and vision within the school, district, and state. Policy implementation is more successful when the policy is consistent with other reform efforts at the school, district, and state levels (Desimone, 2002). Consistency also lessens tensions of teachers who may have to choose among reforms (Porter, et al., 1988).

Consistency at the School Level

Successful comprehensive change in schools is achieved through a cultural transition; from the bottom-up, top-down, and inside-out (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Sarason, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Fullan, 2000; Hopkins, 2001). There are several ways that schools can be structured to improve student learning (Glickman, 2003). However, consistent changes in school culture and school structures must occur together for reforms to work (Fullan, 1991), and reform designs will only achieve full implementation "when educators, design teams, and policy makers work together to 'co-construct reform'" (Datnow and Stringfield, 2000). Smylie, Wenzel, and Fendt (2003) found in their study of several Chicago Public School reform efforts that there was no single program or initiative that provided many of the sample schools with everything they needed to develop. Smylie, Wenzel, and Fendt (2003) concluded that school development requires long, steady work that is not focused solely on the implementation of specific programs and policies, but on the broader coherent development of school organization and practices (see also Fullan, 2001). Similarly, Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) argue that conditions in local contexts (i.e., the schools themselves) caused educators to modify reform models to better fit their needs. For instance, some schools implementing the Coalition of Essential Schools design found it difficult to schedule critical meeting times during the school day to focus on curricular changes. Other schools did not have the resources available to make changes essential to specific types of designs (Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan 2002). Datnow and Stringfield's (2000) review of major findings from diverse, multiyear studies on reform efforts found that educators often adopted reform models without thinking through whether the model would fit the school culture, or with students' and teachers' needs and goals.

To maintain consistency at the school level, while identifying and implementing a major reform initiative, the following key areas must be addressed: alignment of school and reform philosophies, allotment of time, faculty and principal turnover, and levels of expertise among teachers.

Conflict occurs when the school's philosophies about teaching and learning do not match the design's philosophies (Hopkins, 2000). Darling-Hammond (2002), in a study of the Coalition of Campus Schools Project, found that successful school practice requires continuity of policy and practice. Conversely, discontinuity undermines the practitioner's commitment to change. Experienced staff perceiving discontinuity often commented, "Been there, done that," or "we tried that and it didn't work" (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Similarly, Bodilly (1996) concluded that compatibility between design features and current school efforts for reform are important, and designs that do not match with a school's current vision for change seriously hampers implementation.

Time is a critical factor when implementing designs. Finnan et al. (1996) found that the number one complaint of the original 24 Accelerated School Project pilot schools was that there was not enough time to meet and plan. After finding that the school's capacity to train their own staff was inadequate, the Accelerated Schools Project later recruited and trained 20 people as coaches for the 24 original Accelerated Schools (Finnan et al., 1996). Datnow and Stringfield (2000) found that lack of time for locating and examining options was an issue that resulted in schools feeling pressured to choose a design without knowing enough about them. In these cases, schools felt pressured to adopt a model quickly either because funding was available or an administrator was in favor of the reform (Datnow and Stringfield, 2000). Berends et al. (2002) found that when CSR designs were being implemented along with other district reform efforts,

teachers became overloaded with change efforts and were unable to implement designs on schedule.

High faculty and principal turnover is another deterrent to effective design implementation. Finnan et al. (1996) found that high turnover led to confusion about the schools' overall vision for change because new staff was not systematically inducted into the knowledge of the Accelerated Schools philosophy and process. Thus, as the years passed, fewer and fewer people in the school community shared a common understanding and language about Accelerated Schools (Finnan, et al., 1996). Berends (2002) found that teachers tended to prefer designs that required the least amount of change. Teachers who experienced multiple reforms often became skeptical about whether change could really happen because many had seen multiple reform efforts come and go without changing anything (St. John, 1996).

Berends et al. (2002), after evaluating NAS project development, demonstration, implementation, and scale up phases (1992-1998), concluded that different levels of teacher expertise led to differences in implementation and involvement within schools. Writing curriculum and delivering content were two areas in which teachers demonstrated variant levels of implementation (designs such as ELOB, MRSH, and CoNECT required teachers to design curriculum in teams). Aspects of designs such as ELOB, MRSH, and CoNECT overwhelmed many teachers. In particular, writing curriculum in these designs was not readily undertaken or easily accomplished by many teachers, given their time and experience. The district also handed down specific guidance to schools for how teachers were to deliver and pace their lessons and how time was to be allocated throughout the school day. Particularly in terms of reading, language arts, and math, the district mandated specific non-design related curriculum (everyday

math, Advantage Math, etc.) and guidance that made it overly challenging for teachers to implement their school's design (Berends et al., 2002).

Berends et al. (2002) also found that the central office played an active role in initiating change across the district as did design teams in their select schools. The actions of the central office made it difficult for NAS teachers to view design implementation as a district priority. The reason was that district standards and district mandated curriculum and professional development activities were not aligned with CSR designs. Consequently, teachers were not able to fully commit to the ideas described in their respective designs' literature. Some teachers feared that the NAS initiative, like many others that had been introduced over the years, would fade away in time.

Rand studies of NAS designs reported stronger commitment to implementing a design and to the school's subsequent transformation process when (a) the school was able to choose the design; (b) the school was clear about where critical implementation resources came from and who was responsible for implementing them; (c) the school was forced to make choices about existing programs so the design did not become an "add-on activity;" and (d) The NAS effort was viewed as a major and permanent district initiative (Glennan, 1998).

Consistency at the State and District Level

State policies must directly support student achievement and learning to have any affect on student outcomes. However, higher-level policies often ignore what is known about CSR implementation and other successful school improvement efforts (Hopkins, 2001). After studying the San Antonio School District's long-term partnership with NAS developers, Berends et al. (2002) concluded that federal and state policymakers need to think critically about their current stance of simultaneously promoting high-stakes testing, the implementation of

comprehensive school reforms that promote innovative curriculum and instructional strategies, and the implementation of multiple other concurrent reforms. Implementation of high-stakes testing regimes often precluded the adoption of rich and varied curricula that challenged students and motivated them toward more in-depth learning experiences. On one hand, high stakes tests motivated the schools to increase performance and often to seek out new curricula and instructional strategies associated with comprehensive school reforms. On the other hand, those very same tests provided disincentives to adopting richer, more in-depth curricula (Berends et al., 2002; Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002b). Other studies of externally developed reforms have documented that in schools with high state accountability demands, teachers abandoned reform strategies to concentrate on test preparation (Datnow, Borman, and Stringfield, 2000). Desimone (2000) found that design teams try to obtain buy-in for their models by suggesting that design implementation will help improve test scores. In many cases this is a misnomer, as reforms may not align with standardized tests. Standardized tests have become the primary measure of school reform and reform success, and district and school administrators are increasingly making decisions about whether to continue reforms on the basis of this single indicator (Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002).

Districts must develop policies that align with state and federal policies and build schools' capacities to successfully implement reforms (Fullan, 2000). Districts must emphasize CSR design components by supporting policies that connect to these reforms and reversing policies that stand in their way (Bryk, et al., 1998). For instance, Glennan (1998) discovered that most districts used fairly traditional standards and assessments for accountability purposes. However, most of the designs included curriculum and instruction intended to promote student learning that wasn't captured by traditional assessments. As a result, school level staff and

district leadership expressed concerns that the NAS designs, even when well implemented, would not perform well on existing district assessments. Hatch (2000) found that training and development for other district-related reform efforts interfered with the time was otherwise spent toward professional development for the ATLAS CSR model. Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (2001) found that districts experiencing high levels of implementation in their schools encouraged design team support to schools and supported schools in making CSR designs either central to improvement efforts or a coherent piece in school improvement strategies. These districts also provided a consistent and coherent funding stream to schools. Bodilly (1998) also found that centrality of the NAS initiative to the district's agenda positively impacted individual schools' successes in implementing designs and improving achievement.

Berends (2002) concluded that district demands and NAS designs must be merged to achieve successful implementation. In San Antonio, schools involved in partnerships with NAS developers were exposed to many ideas and required to implement them at once, resulting in some confusion and resistance on the part of school staff. Many teachers reportedly coped with the multiple demands on their time by putting aside other activities to focus almost exclusively on the TAAS (Texas State Test) as the test dates grew closer. Designs were left by the wayside when this occurred, and many of the skills being taught were test taking and basic skills, as opposed to the higher level critical thinking skills upon which designs were focused. In addition, teachers did not have time to plan how they would integrate the designs into the curriculum once they began preparing for the TAAS. The district was also not supportive of schools using these designs once the TAAS drew near, as district officials pushed schools to concentrate on the TAAS and not to be concerned about implementing designs (Berends et al., 2002). Other case studies revealed that many other reforms tended to occur while NAS was underway, causing

teacher overload and reducing the capacity of teachers to implement the design. Teacher

overload in regard to professional development and training led to heightened frustration

(Berends et al., 2002). Teachers became frustrated and confused about how to prioritize reform

efforts when multiple reforms were underway. In these cases, aspects of the design became

overwhelming (Berends, 2002). Clearly, when state and district policies are not aligned with

reform initiatives, the implementation will likely dissolve.

Authority

Authority refers to the degree to which the reform policy is seen as legitimate and as

having the support of those who are responsible for implementation. If policymakers have

strong positive views about whole-school reform and teachers support its implementation, the

design is more likely to change teaching and learning (Clune, 1998). Desimone identified seven

categories of authority for successful implementation of CSR designs (Desimone, 2002),

including:

1. Teacher investment and participation in decision making

2. Norms related to race, ethnicity, and income

3. Principal leadership

4. Site based autonomy

5. District leadership

6. Resources

7. Parent and community involvement

Teacher Investment and Participation

It is widely recognized that teachers are the key component of the success of any change

effort instituted at the school level (Sizer, 1984; Cuban, 1984; Goodlad, 1984; Hargreaves,

1994). CSR designs tend to work best when they are well-supported by teachers (Datnow and Stringfield, 2000), and most CSR designs require that their schools obtain an 80% or higher agreement among school staff to adopt the design before implementing the reform (Slavin, 2001b). Smith et al. (1998) found that the quality and rate of design implementation were related to teacher support for the design at the school level, and lack of teacher support at the front end appeared to be a significantly damaging factor. Further research has found that schools with high teacher support tend to have relatively strong implementations (Smith et al., 1998; Kirby, Berends, and Naftel, 2001).

Power and politics often influence teachers' voting behavior and affect later support for CSR efforts. Berends (2002) found that teachers who perceived pressure from other faculty to choose specific designs led to later resistance toward implementation later on (see also Datnow, 2000). Conversely, when teachers and principals were involved in the choice process, given substantial information and time to consider reforms, and given the opportunity to discuss and later vote on the design, teacher commitment to the design increased and the schools reached higher implementation levels (Stringfield et al., 1997).

Active and ongoing participation from all staff is also important to sustain reform efforts, and steps must be taken to secure faculty involvement and ownership of change efforts across the school (St. John et al., 1996; Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002). Steps for ensuring involvement and collective support must begin with a shared vision for change and continue with ongoing support from an overwhelming majority of teachers at the school (Desimone, 2002). In the Accelerated Schools Project, St John et al. (1996) found that when CSR implementation remained an activity of a few in the school, it had little chance of taking hold in a meaningful way. In some schools, only a few teachers had been trained in the principles and processes for

implementing the Accelerated Schools design. These few teachers were given responsibility to execute the process and train others. Many of the remaining teachers did not accept the new processes well, and the atmosphere became conducive to failure. Those with limited exposure and training did not internalize Accelerated Schools concepts and questioned whether design principles could be implemented in their school (St. John et al., 1996). Similarly, Muncey and McQuillan's (1996) 5-year study of schools adopting the Coalition of Essential Schools design concluded that implementation is severely hampered when teachers do not collectively agree with changes regarding school structure and classroom instructional practices. Divisions among faculty occurred after teachers perceived that only a few teachers or the principal acted as reform leaders. Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that reforms were more likely to take hold in classrooms where the design's ideologies matched classroom teachers' pedagogical beliefs. By giving teachers more power and involvement in the decision making process, such a match is more likely to be made.

Norms Related to Race, Ethnicity, and Income

Perceptions, expectations, and stereotypes that occur as a result of race, socioeconomic status, and gender also impact the relative success of CSR design implementation. Lipman (1998) concluded that teachers' attributions for the lack of student success are linked to beliefs about race, class, opportunity and future success. In addition, these beliefs also influence teachers' beliefs about themselves, their students, and the relative effectiveness of various reforms. For instance, teachers who attributed school failure to students' social and economic condition pushed for reforms that made family and school counseling a priority.

Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (2002) found that schools with higher income and higher non-minority populations achieved higher implementation levels than schools serving populations

with both high minority levels and high poverty levels. In a study of six CSR designs in 13

multicultural multilingual elementary schools, Yonezawa and Datnow (1999) found that

educators' and policy makers' ideologies about race, social class, and gender impacted

implementation. Specifically, the district's community members and school board's priorities

for ensuring equitable access to education for non-English speaking students led to district

mandates requiring teachers to complete extensive ESOL training. Consequently, the majority of

the district's energy and resources were focused on achieving this objective, leaving little time

for more curricular-based reforms. Stringfield et al. (1998) discovered that schools experiencing

considerable demographic changes found it difficult to implement CSR designs. Substantial

demographic shifts in some neighborhoods required schools to integrate new teaching staff to

accommodate students coming to school speaking languages other than English. In addition,

principals and teachers had to start from scratch in building new relationships with families.

Growth in student enrollment after the beginning of the school year often prompted changes in

scheduling plans, such as a common planning time for teachers or team teaching, which are key

components of many CSR designs.

Principal Leadership

According to Smylie, Wenzel and Fendt (2003), principal leadership is at the heart of

school development, and principals increase the authority of CSR efforts through teachers'

perceptions of them as experts (Haynes, 1998; Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002; Desimone,

2000). Studies of Chicago Public School reforms found that principals of schools that were

successful in implementing CSR initiatives shared power with teachers, school staff, and parents.

They acted as the overall leader to ensure that each reform leadership function was operating in

alignment with others to achieve a common vision (Sebring and Bryk, 2000; Smylie, Wenzel,

and Fendt, 2003). Research also indicates that effective principals obtained external resources to support reform development and established strong, productive relationships with external partners and central administrative staff (Smylie, Wenzel and Fendt, 2003). They were able to effectively protect their schools from external distractions and interference. Given their position of authority in the school and between the school and its environment, effective principals could bring coherence among school development goals, strategies, and internal and external resources (Smylie, Wenzel, and Fendt, 2003).

Studies of the Accelerated Schools project found that principals who were able to achieve high implementation recognized the connection between the Accelerated Schools Project and state mandates and prevented themselves from becoming bogged down in day-to-day administration responsibilities. Conversely, principals at low-implementing schools found little time to implement and support the efforts in the Accelerated Schools Project. Principals were much more successful when they saw the Accelerated Schools Framework and various state mandates as complementary improvement processes. In this way, they used the design framework to collect data and plan action steps that were consistent with the voluntary Accelerated Schools objectives and the mandates from the state (Keller and Soler, 1996; Brunner and LeTendre, 1996).

Smith et al. (1998) found that principal leadership was a strong factor in determining the speed at which schools implemented reforms. Effective principals helped their staffs select a design that was well matched to the needs of the school, were knowledgeable about the design, and were creative in reallocating resources and rearranging school schedules as required. These principals also supported teachers' efforts to learn about and implement designs.

Anderson and Shirley (1995) identified characteristics of school principals that were more or less consistent with the conceptualization of the principal advocated by the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1984). These characteristics effectively summarize the type of principals who optimize the Coalition reform's implementation. Principals who achieved successful implementation of the CES model were highly visible in the school, acted as "buffers" to block interferences from the district administration and community, were effective in getting the community to back the reform initiatives, and provided essential support and encouragement to teachers in the initial stages of reform before stepping back to allow teachers to sustain the project.

Site Based Autonomy

Most school reform initiatives are conducted through concurrent efforts to decentralize authority, particularly through school-based management and accountability strategies (Murphy and Hallinger, 1992). While schools are increasingly being given power and control to function on their own and manage their own budgets, this control is constrained through district, state, and federal standards and accountability measures (James and Connolly, 2000). These conditions have been shown to be critical factors in achieving successful CSR implementation (Bodilly and Berends, 1999). By decentralizing, principals have more decision-making power and more control over creating an environment more conducive to change. These changes in power and control can lead to increased authority of school reform efforts, as principals can be thought to have greater expertise over site-based reform initiatives (Desimone, 2002). For instance, principals who were given the freedom to hire and fire teachers to match a reform's philosophy faced less resistance and had more implementation success than principals without this control (Haynes, 1998; Muncey and McQuillan, 1996).

In the Chicago school reform initiative, principals were given the power to recruit and hire new teachers, while losing tenure and becoming accountable to their Local School Councils. These changes encouraged principals to direct their efforts toward meeting their individual school's needs, while remaining accountable to explicit educational goals set forth by the Chicago School Reform Act. In these cases, when the principal, teachers, parents, and community leaders were able to reach consensus over the types of actions necessary to achieve school improvement, the reform's authority reached high levels, and implementation was achieved (Sebring and Bryk, 2000).

District Leadership

The importance of district support in implementation success is revealed in the comparison of schools in separate jurisdictions, which adopted several different NAS designs and achieved very different levels of implementation. Berends et al. (2001) found four critical factors associated with high levels of implementation in Memphis City Schools and schools in Kentucky: the stability of district leadership, the centrality of the NAS effort amidst other possible reforms, lack of severe crises (limited budgets and union strikes), and district focus on professional development and performance results. Conversely, San Antonio and Philadelphia, both districts that achieved very low levels of implementation, attempted to implement multiple reforms that called for different kinds of training, support, and classroom practice (Berends et al., 2001).

Bodilly (1998) found that one of the most important factors related to successful CSR implementation included the level of priority the district communicated to schools in regard to the initiative. Districts that took actions to ensure that schools understood the reform's importance and set up priorities for accomplishing design implementation achieved higher

implementation levels. For instance, districts with high implementation levels changed or dropped mandates that required schools to attend professional development workshops or follow strict schedule guidelines that didn't match with reforms. Haynes (1998) concluded that district-level planning groups to oversee implementation of Comer's School Development Program (SDP) were essential to the success of its systemic implementation. In addition, program implementation was also improved when SDP facilitators working in the schools had direct communication and worked closely with either the superintendent or the central office staff.

Districts must also provide the resources necessary for schools to implement and sustain reforms (Cooper, Slavin, and Madden, 1998). Although individual schools can reform themselves with support from the school staff and design teams, district support is needed to sustain school the reforms and scale up efforts across the district's schools (Glennan, 1998).

Resources

School change is "resource-hungry" because it requires developing solutions to complex problems, learning new skills, and solving problems, all of which must be carried out where people are already overloaded with demands (Fullan and Miles, 1992). Money, materials, human resources, and time are all necessary for successful school improvement. Smith et al. (1997) found that lack of these resources is a common problem among schools implementing CSR models, and schools that sustain reform implementations often must find creative ways to secure money for school programs (see also Haynes, 1998).

Bodilly (1996) found that additional funding was needed to get reforms off the ground, and often schools accessed these funds through grants or creative distributions. In addition, teachers and administrators could not operate effectively to change their practice without adequate school funding for concrete support to all parties, such as materials, models,

facilitators, and non-instructional time (Berends, et al., 2001). Kirby, Berends, and Naftel (2001) found that lack of funding for supporting both the design and professional development was the most frequently cited reason for schools dropping a design. Glennan (1998) discovered that design implementation weakened and often even stopped when resources were no longer available, and schools with unpleasant past experiences with "start and stop" reform deterred their selection of a NAS design. In one jurisdiction, some principals reported that their schools were unwilling to be involved unless the district committed necessary resources (Glennan, 1998).

Smylie et al.'s (2003) study of the Chicago reform efforts found that developing schools were generally more effective than non-developing schools at searching for, securing, and taking full advantage of external resources. A distinguishing characteristic between developing and non-developing schools was the ability to secure resources aligned with a particular agenda for development and to employ resources in an efficient and strategic manner. Interestingly, the amount of resources did not matter. If the resources were not aligned with an overall vision for development, then the reform effort did not show improvement.

Implementing CSR represents a major educational change effort that requires substantial changes in program and staffing (Odden, 2000). This is because CSR models tend to do things differently in terms of school staffing, curriculum and instruction, and student grouping strategies. Reallocation of funds usually involves redefining positions of current educational specialists and staff to meet reform requirements (Odden, 2000).

The needs for time are also required for reform, and funding is considered an underlying resource because it buys other program resources like training, technical assistance, and staff. Most importantly, it buys teachers' time by paying for substitutes and planning days for professional development (Purnell and Hill, 1992). Insufficient time to plan for implementing a

new reform model is cited as a common concern for teachers and a significant reason for low implementation levels (Muncey and McQuillan, 1996; Smith et al., 1997). Bol et al. (1998) found that teachers implementing NAS designs in Memphis identified the lack of planning time and materials as the two most negative aspects of design implementation. Bodilly (1998) found that teachers who found more planning time also had higher levels of implementation. In addition, Mims (1996) found that principals instituting the Accelerated Schools designs expressed a need for more time to share concerns, reflect, and build commitment for the design in their schools.

Parent and Community Involvement

Community and parent support has also been associated with effective schools and school reform efforts (Wasley, Hampel, and Clark; Hopkins, 2001). Teachers in the Memphis City Schools were more positive about design implementation when parents became more involved in the schools (Smith et al., 1997). However, increased authority for school reform through parent support is often challenging for teachers who may be apprehensive about being monitored and criticized by parents. In addition, parents are sometimes reluctant to become involved in their children's school for fear of being rejected by the school staff, past experiences of school failure, or language barriers (Haynes, 1998). Despite these concerns, CSR designs that find ways to involve parents and community members in the daily activities of school tend to create a supportive climate for learning and achieve higher levels of support and implementation (Hopkins, 2001).

<div align="center">

Power

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A fourth attribute associated with the success of CSR is power. Power refers to the rewards or sanctions attached to the whole-school reform, such as teachers receiving bonuses or

greater autonomy if they comply with design implementation (Porter et al., 1988). Power also

considers the relationships and positions of authority across different levels of an organization.

Unlike authority, which operates "through laws, norms, and individual and expert support, power

operates through force exerted upon others and is applied through the rewards and sanctions

associated with change" (Desimone, 2002).

Power and politics must be considered when implementing reforms, as these factors

influence the level of authority given to reform. For instance, initial reform designs that were

part of the NAS effort were later dropped when district leadership lost the support of teachers

and parents in the district. Some teachers and parents accused the central office in Gaston, NC,

of not allowing them to participate in the design's creation and not allowing opportunities to hear

their views about particular design constructs. NAS found that both district-led teams had not

effectively led the initiatives to build stakeholder support of the design. District staff time was

being taken up in these political battles, preventing them from further developing design

parameters and the project was dropped. From this experience, NAS reemphasized its view that

schools and districts are likely to need outside help in reforming from external agents (Berends,

Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002a).

Powerful people can impose meaning on others through decisions that may favor some

groups over others, and the rewards tied to these decisions often begin at the state level (Datnow,

Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002). In Kentucky, the adoption of the AVID (Achievement Via

Individual Determination) reform initiative was eventually moved to the center of the state's

educational reform efforts after a new State Department of Education Commissioner was hired

and lobbied for AVID. The commissioner was a strong advocate of the program and was able to

convince the state legislature to devote $500,000 to AVID in 1993. As a result, 19 districts eager

for reform funds adopted and implemented AVID, making the commissioner's and legislature's actions significant in dictating the adoption and implementation of specific reforms (Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002).

The unequal power distributions are also evident at the district level. Datnow and Stringfield (2000) found that in the Memphis City Schools, the superintendent's promotion of NAS reform models influenced educators to adopt these designs. In another case, some teachers felt their school principal pressured them into implementing Success For All. Three years into implementation, many teachers continued to resist the reform, expressing frustration over the way it was initially introduced (Datnow and Stringfield, 2000). Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby (2002a) found that schools that were forced to accept a design experienced lower levels of implementation than schools that were well-informed about different NAS designs and were given the freedom to decide on designs that best fit their school.

As Desimone (2002) concluded, there must be a balance between district support and information about reforms and the force they place on schools to adopt them. When districts provide information about various reform models but refrain from mandating them, reforms tend to be more stable (Datnow, 2000). A combination of incentives and sanctions must be ongoing and continuous to sustain school improvement.

Stability

Stability refers to the reform being sustained over time in a coherent and consistent manner. Policies that are stable and part of a stable environment tend to achieve better implementation success. Desimone (2002) found three factors related to the stability of CSR, including the turnover of students, teachers, principals, and district leadership; the stability of the policy environment; and the pace of reforms.

Frequent district and school leadership turnover, as well as teacher turnover, tend to disrupt and slow down design implementation (Bodilly, 1996). Bodilly (1998) found that stable leadership during the first two years of NAS design implementation subsequently led to schools achieving higher levels of implementation. Muncey and McQuillan (1996) found that principal turnover led to lower implementation levels of the Coalition of Essential Schools design. In the Memphis City Schools, a change in the superintendent resulted in schools dropping efforts to implement NAS designs entirely (Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002).

District, state, and federal policy also affect CSR implementation (Berends et al., 2001), and frequent changes in the reform environment often foster the view that the reform is only temporary (Desimone, 2002). Glennan (1998) found that principals who considered the NAS designs a permanent initiative in the district were more likely to commit to implementation than principals who perceived designs as temporary. Current federal policy, in particular the No Child Left Behind legislation, does not support long term stability of "break the mold" CSR programs because it increases the amount of testing across grade levels and interferes with reform efforts (Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002b, 174; Desimone, 2002). Such interference occurs when teachers temporarily abandon reforms that use innovative curriculum and instructional strategies and instead focus on test taking and basic skills to increase state test scores.

Finally, the pace of reform also influences stability (Desimone, 2002). Several studies of reform initiatives have concluded that school reform is a slow process, which takes anywhere from three to ten years to fully implement (Berends, 2002; Comer, 1980; Haynes, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sizer, 1984). The length of time it takes to achieve certain levels of implementation varies dramatically across different reform designs. CSR designs that are less

structured and focus on philosophical changes (ATLAS, Coalition of Essential Schools, Accelerated Schools) require more collaboration and planning from the staff to implement and tend to take much longer to implement than structured (Success For All, NARE/America's Choice) designs (Slavin, 2001b). Designs based on philosophical changes tend to place more emphasis on shared governance and staff collaboration, as well as home-school connections, which require more time to develop. Initial pilot schools involved in Comer's School Development Program fully implemented the design and experienced significant change after close to ten years (Comer, 1980). In addition, implementation of NAS designs can take much longer than two years to implement (Bodilly, 1996), and Berends et al. (2002) noted that schools in several jurisdictions had not fully implemented NAS designs even after three years. Bodilly (1998) also found that teachers often take several years to understand and effectively implement CSR designs, and Muncy and McQuillan (1996) found that without sustained support from the design teams, school, and district, reforms tend to disappear over time.

Other Factors Affecting Comprehensive School Reform

In addition to the factors outlined in the Policy Attributes Theory, two other characteristics merit discussion. For instance, local context plays a very important role in the implementation of reforms (Fullan, 1991), and it appears that a balance between a design's relative structure and flexibility to meet localized needs is best. Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that local educators reconstruct reforms to meet the needs of the classroom and school, and Tyack and Cuban (1995) concluded that most teachers eventually implement reforms to fit their own pedagogical views. In some cases, external design teams complained that local educators were not implementing models with fidelity, and their changes to the design prevented the school from realizing positive outcomes in student achievement (Datnow and Castellano, 2000).

However, Stringfield et al. (1998) concluded that design implementation requires sensitivity and adaptability on the part of design developers, local policy makers, and school educators.

School characteristics also influence design implementation. Bodilly (1998) found that implementation tends to be slower in secondary grades than elementary grades. In addition, stronger progress often occurs in alternative or restructured secondary schools versus traditionally structured secondary schools. Similarly, Ross, Wang, et al. (1999) found that high schools are typically slower to implement reforms than middle schools, and middle schools are slower implementing than elementary schools (see also Berends et al., 2001). Berends et al. (2001), in their study of 184 schools across eight jurisdictions representing all areas of the country, found that black teachers reported significantly higher implementation than white teachers (about .2 of a standard deviation higher). Other teacher characteristics were not significant in the model, including teacher age, experience, and education level.

Studies of school reform initiatives provide much evidence for concluding that factors related to successful CSR are extremely complex and interrelated. School development requires long, steady work that is not focused solely on the implementation of specific programs and policies, but on the broader coherent development of school organization and practices (Smylie, Wenzel, and Fendt, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Louis & Miles, 1990). In addition, school change requires a coordinated focus on multiple essential supports, which are not discrete, independent elements. Rather they operate as related parts of a system (Smylie, Wenzel, and Fendt, 2003).

Much remains to be learned about the process of implementing, sustaining, and scaling up CSR initiatives across schools. The present study was designed to extend this body of research at the school level by investigating ways in which comprehensive school reforms

impact teachers' work and workplace. This study provides insight into the teachers' experiences of school reform initiatives and how such experiences influence their classroom practices.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodology that informed the investigation into teachers' experiences as stakeholders of a comprehensive school reform initiative. The chapter begins with a detailed explanation of the epistemological assumptions that informed constructivist inquiry, which constitutes the theoretical framework used to guide this study. I follow this with a description of the study's context and a discussion of the methods I used to collect and analyze my data and present my findings.

This study used the constructivist inquiry paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) to understand teachers' culturally derived interpretations of comprehensive school reform initiatives within their school. Constructivist methodology is informed by a constructionist epistemology and symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective. Below, I provide an explanation for the meaning of constructionism and the symbolic interactionist framework, which constructionism informs.

Michael Crotty defines constructionism as the following:

The view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998).

In other words, there is no objective truth in the external world waiting to be discovered. On the contrary, human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. At the same time, truth is not an arbitrary creation that is imposed on reality. From a constructionist point of view, we do not create meaning. Rather, truth is made through the interpretive strategies that are utilized when subject and object interact. In this way, objectivity and subjectivity are united. Constructionism allows for an infinite number of possible interpretations of reality and is at the same time "real and relativist" (Crotty, p. 63). According to Stanley Fish (1996), there is no contradiction in saying that something is socially constructed and also real. In a New York Times article, Fish illustrated this concept through an example from baseball:

> Balls and strikes are certainly socially constructed. They exist as such because of the rules of the game. Yet they are real. Some people are paid as much as $3.5 million to produce them or prevent their production! They are constructions, and may change in their nature tomorrow if the powers-that-be decide to change the rules, but they are real nonetheless (In Crotty, p. 64).

Symbolic interactionism stems from the epistemology of constructionism and operates under the following three basic interactionist assumptions:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings these things have for them.

2. Meaning of such things is derived from social interactions of one with others.

3. Meanings are handled/modified through an interpretive process used by one in dealing with things he/she encounters (Blumer, 1969).

Operating under this framework, experience and culture virtually become interchangeable terms. Searching for the meaning of an experience becomes a search for understanding the culture that informs this meaning.

A significant dimension of symbolic interactionism is informed by pragmatist philosophy, which is the "attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories', supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts" (Crotty, p. 73). The analysis of meanings is an analysis of actions in certain contexts. Furthermore, pragmatism is not critical; it allows the researcher to explore cultural ideas and values in terms of their practical outcomes. Culture is not to be called into question, and is not to be criticized by someone from another culture. Instead, cultural experiences are observed as closely as possible in order to clarify people's intentions.

According to George Herbert Mead, people evolve through the social forces that shape them. "A person is a personality because he belongs to a community, because he takes over the institutions of that community into his own conduct" (Mead, 1934, p. 162). In this case, the community comes before the individual and serves to shape the individual. Our society shapes who we are through the language, symbols, and physical cultural tools that we use to communicate with one another. In order to understand a community, we must be able to take the role of others in the community.

> Methodologically, the implication of the symbolic interactionist perspective is that the actor's view of actions, objects, and society has to be studied seriously. The situation must be seen as the actor sees it, the meanings of objects and acts must be determined in terms of the actor's meanings, and the organization of a course of action must be understood as the actor organizes it (Psathas, 1973, p. 6-7).

An implication of the interpretivist idea of "stepping into another's shoes" requires researchers to continuously scrutinize their interpretations to ensure that the meanings recorded are the "actor's" intended meaning and not their own. The role taking that occurs in symbolic interactionism is made possible through the language and other symbolic tools that are shared between people. It is primarily through dialogue that we become aware of the perspectives and feelings of others and interpret their intended meanings.

<div align="center">Case Study Methodology</div>

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework that informs a range of methodologies, which governs a researcher's choice and use of methods (Crotty, 1998). In this study, symbolic interactionism represents the theoretical perspective that informs a case study methodology. Below, I discuss the purpose for using a case study methodology and explain how this methodological approach links to the specific methods used in this study. I follow this with a description of this study's context and a detailed explanation of the methods I used to collect and analyze my data. I conclude this chapter by discussing the potential ethical issues that emerged while conducting constructivist inquiry considerations, and I describe how I dealt with such issues throughout the course of this study.

The main purpose of the case study approach is to describe and illuminate one specific case, by looking holistically and in-depth within relevant contexts and describing contextual influences on the person, object, or program being studied (Stufflebeam, 2000). Yin (1994) outlines three features within case study methods, which include (1) triangulating information from multiple sources of evidence; (2) collecting rich and detailed contextual data, and (3) research that takes place within a single or multiple cases. First, triangulation includes collecting and converging information and perspectives from multiple sources, including direct

observation, interviews, documents, archival files, and artifacts. Facts and conclusions are built

around the consistency of data from multiple methods, which may be expressed in both

qualitative or quantitative terms (Yin, 1994). Second, capturing the contextual influences on the

case is inherent in all case studies and demands that researchers collect detailed data from the

field. Case studies examine a phenomenon in its authentic context to delineate the nebulous

boundary between the complexities of the phenomenon and the context in which it operates (Yin,

1994). As Stake (2000) points out,

> Case studies using qualitative methods of inquiry are typically based on the holistic view
>
> that social phenomena, human dilemmas, and the nature of cases are situational and
>
> influenced by happenings of many kinds (p. 436).

Qualitative researchers usually do not attempt to show causality in case study research. Instead,

they use contextual data to describe events in different ways from different perspectives, by

deeply examining diverse issues and contexts that influence such events (Stake, 2000, p. 440).

Third, case study methods include single and collective, or multiple, case studies (Stake, 2000),

and "the process of generalizing the results of these studies depends on the development, testing,

and replication of theoretical propositions (analytic generalizations)- rather than ... statistical

generalization." (Yin, 2000, p. 186).

A detailed case study approach is a common method used in constructivist inquiry

because it enables researchers to report how the program was implemented at different sites

within a district or jurisdiction. Such methods for data collection provide researchers and their

participants with detailed information, which will help both parties understand why a reform did

or did not work well, with what groups, and under what conditions (Madaus and Kellaghan,

2000, 23). In addition, case study research represents a choice of what is to be studied that is

epistemologically in harmony with how a constructivist believes readers arrive at their understandings (Stake, 2000).

According to Robert Stake (1978, 1995), understanding occurs through direct and vicarious experience. It is through such experience that naturalistic generalizations develop and eventually take the form of regular expectation that informs future action. Case studies focus in detail upon people's "common and uncommon" (Stake, 1978, p. 6) experiences within one bounded case or "system" (Stake, 2000). Such research enables a full and thorough knowledge of the particular, which becomes transferable when such particulars are recognized across similar issues in new and foreign contexts (Stake, 1995). Thus, the unique issues, contexts, and interpretations within one case, using rich and detailed description, enables the researcher to convey the complex meanings of those being studied. It is through such meanings that readers extend their unique memories of happenings and draw conclusions about its applicability to their own lives. In this way, case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge (Stake, 2000).

Setting the Context

The present study used a case study approach to investigate teachers' experiences as stakeholders in a comprehensive school reform initiative at one school. Beginning in spring, 2002 and continuing through fall, 2004 the HCSD-U of S-ACC Partnership for Community Learning Centers supported my research to investigate the culture of Creekside Elementary school as it transitioned from traditional schools into community learning center. I conducted observations, interviews, and an extensive document analysis to describe the Partnership and explore the school faculty's experiences and interpretations of the changes that occurred throughout the school year. From the first day of the 2002-2003 school year, the faculty was

overwhelmed with change, as they attempted to integrate classroom changes from three significant initiatives while managing the everyday classroom realities that alone consumed their days. University, district, and school leaders assisted teachers in implementing instructional changes resulting from a new GA READS Grant, the district's School Improvement Process, and various new Partnership initiatives. Implementing these changes at times became an enormous and seemingly insurmountable challenge for everyone involved. Many veteran teachers began the year distrusting their district and university partners. They viewed the process that prompted the school's initial selection as a pilot school and a new year-round calendar as a top-down decision that silenced teachers and failed to address the real problems that plagued the school. Several of the newly hired teachers began the year filled with enthusiasm and excitement about the opportunity to be part of such an innovative project from at the ground level. However, many lost their vision for a new community center early, after realizing that change would prove to be a very slow and difficult process. While a few were charged by the emotional energy that fueled new ideas and sparked classroom changes, others endured what they perceived as a chaotic environment by clinging to proven and familiar practices of the past.

Pedagogical conflicts among teachers created a tense environment for everyone involved, and events of the past influenced their willingness to change current practices. For some, the Partnership was the most current of several reform initiatives that swept through the school in recent years, but never stayed long enough to impact lasting changes. A few teachers questioned whether they wanted to put a great deal of effort into yet another reform that, if history again proved correct, would disintegrate within the next few years. In addition, "Fiscal mismanagement and other matters," (see HCSD curriculum management audit, 2002) combined

with several failed district initiatives of the past, facilitated trepidation among faculty who questioned whether large scale and lasting change was still possible for their school.

Issues involving time, trust, and the school's overall capacity to change came to bear on the evaluation process at Creekside Elementary School. While initially very eager and enthusiastic about interviewing all faculty to capture the overall process of change, I quickly learned that many were not comfortable sharing their feelings with an unfamiliar representative from the university. Given the history that led to the Partnership and events that shaped the Partnership's impact on the school beginning in spring 2002, one can easily understand the faculty's hesitation in sharing very personal and emotionally charged interpretations and experiences of the Partnership initiative at Creekside. It took close to a year before some faculty felt comfortable speaking with me at all. A few questioned who had access to my field notes and taped interviews and were initially wary of the consequences resulting from sharing interpretations that were in conflict with those in power. Acknowledging this, I may have at times been overly-conscious about pursuing certain stories and experiences, particularly during the first semester. However, after having spent a year with Creekside faculty, I was able to establish close relationships with several faculty members and gain the trust of virtually all who worked there.

It was in this context that I sought to describe the Partnership and other reforms being implemented at Creekside Elementary School and to capture the school faculty's experiences and interpretations of these reforms. The present study represents my attempt to understand how teachers experienced and interpreted Partnership reforms and the various concurrent reforms being implemented at Creekside, and how these reforms affected teachers' classroom practices.

Below I provide a detailed description of Creekside Elementary School, followed by a description and rationale for the data collection methods used to support this study's findings.

Creekside Elementary School Description

Creekside Elementary School is located in a southeastern college town that has a population approaching 113,000. Of the four hundred seventy six students at Creekside Elementary in 2002-2003, 77% were African-American; 11% were Hispanic, 9% were White, 2% were Asian, and 1% were Multi-racial. Of these students, 84% qualified for the free or reduced lunch program, compared to 74% in the greater Hillside County School District. Twenty-nine percent (140 students out of 476) qualified for EIP (Early Intervention Program) services. During the 2001-2002 school year, 20% of students at Creekside had more than ten absences.

The state's Department of Educational Accountability mandated that Creekside follow specific procedures detailed in a bill that mandated placement and promotion policies for students in grades three, five, and eight. Creekside was legally required to adhere to these policies, due to the proportionally high number of students scoring below state standards on the state criterion referenced competency test in mathematics during the 2001-2002 school year. In 1st through 5th grades, significant numbers of students scored below state standards on this assessment in the areas of number sense and numeration (47%), problem solving (46%), geometry (45%), and computation (43%).

The school sat on the east side of a four-lane road, approximately files miles east of downtown Hillside. From the front, the main school building looked well maintained. The circular drive in front of the school left space on either side for parking. On the far north end of the main building, five white trailers created the boundary for the school grounds. Although

these trailers looked as though they were constructed to temporarily create extra space for the overcrowded main building, the chipped paint and dents in the aluminum siding betrayed a sense that they had been used well past their prime. To the east of the trailers and main building, a small concrete pad served as the floor of a basketball court, measuring a little more than half regulation size. Two hoops stood facing one another at either end of the court, with a shorter hoop erected about five feet from the hoop at the north end of the court.

Looking beyond the asphalt court, there was a large rectangular plot of land about five acres in size behind the school. This land served as a playground for students during school hours and a park for the greater community after school hours and on weekends. A concrete walking path weaved its way through the grounds, and five jungle gyms occupied their own spaces on the far north and south sections of the playground. One set of swings sat just behind the two jungle gyms on the south end of the playground, with two additional sets located on the north end. Beyond these sets of swings appeared to be the remains of an old play area, with a concrete tunnel about 3 feet in circumference and two small wooden structures for climbing. Between the wooden structures and the tunnel were four old railroad ties buried in the ground, situated as if they formed the boundary for what was once a sandbox.

An abandoned brick building was located at the back edge of the playground. A few words and symbols were spray painted in black on the roof of this building. Walking around the back, glass, paper and other trash were scattered about the wall of the building, with four wooden cribs lined up along the north edge. A chain wrapped itself around the handles of two steel doors in the back of the building. Behind this building was a road that enclosed the southeast corner of the playground, eventually leading back to the four-lane road passing in front of the school.

Turning back toward the school, another brick building similar to the abandoned building in size and shape, blocked the southern portion of the school. Inside this building was a gymnasium with a full-size basketball court. Walking along the southern edge of the school, windows were partially covered by pink kites and children's artwork. The red brick that formed the walls below these windows were smeared with Georgia red clay. In the center of the south end of the building, crumbling bricks held up the stairs leading to a doorway into the building.

A small white sign sitting in the front and center of the school had written in black letters, "main office," with an arrow pointing toward the main doors into the building. Two metal-framed double doors made of mostly glass provided entry into a small foyer. Long windows nestled against each side of the doors invited light from the outdoors into the entryway. The main office was situated directly in front of the main doors, and a long, blue-carpeted hallway lead to the far north and south ends of the building. Located on the south end of the building were the cafeteria, pre-k, and kindergarten classrooms. Classrooms for the intermediate grades were located at the north end of the building. A separate hallway located between the main office and the intermediate classrooms extended behind the main office to the media center and the first, second and third grade classrooms.

Drawings and student work filled up much of the wall space in the hall and beside the classroom doors throughout the building. Overall, the school's interior was in good condition, and the many windows throughout the school provided a light and spacious-feeling atmosphere.

<center>Data Collection Methods</center>

The data collected to inform this study's findings were collected over a two-year period and utilized multiple methods. Both methodological triangulation (using multiple methods) and data triangulation (using several data sources) was used to enhance the truthfulness of my

findings (Mathison, 1988) by incorporating data collected in multiple settings and from multiple

sources from January, 2002 through December, 2003 into the final analysis. Below I provide a

chart that contains this study's research questions and the primary data collection methods I used

to answer each of them.

Primary Data Sources	RQ#1: How do teachers at one elementary school describe their experiences with the Partnership and the comprehensive reform initiatives that it supports?	RQ#2: How do teachers interpret the comprehensive changes that have occurred since the Partnership's inception?	RQ#3: How do the Partnership's comprehensive reforms impact teachers' perceptions of their classroom practices?
Documents	X	X	
Interviews	X	X	X
Participant Observation	X	X	X

Data collection methods in this study resembled Charmaz's (2002) grounded theory

approach. Using this approach, I collected and analyzed data simultaneously from the initial

phases of research, and I utilized multiple methods to delve into emerging questions about

Creekside faculty's experiences and interpretations of the Partnership reform initiative. During

the initial data collection phase, I explored and examined the Partnership by conducting an

extensive document analysis, attending monthly Partnership design team meetings, and engaging

in occasional conversations with Partnership Design Team members. I focused on understanding

the Partnership structure and the Design Team's overall vision for how they planned to transition

Creekside into a community-learning center. My research focus gradually narrowed as I

conducted several taped interviews and spent extended time observing at the school and in

various Partnership-related meetings. These observations and interviews began in the fall, 2002 semester and extended through the fall, 2003 semester. A survey was also administered to the school faculty during the spring 2003 semester. The purpose of this survey was to gain formative insight into school faculty's perspectives of the Partnership reform initiative during the 2002-2003 school year by focusing on five broadly-defined categories, including (1) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (2) professional development, (3) communication, (4) decision-making, and (5) the school learning environment. Appendix A contains a summary of the survey findings. Below I provide a detailed description of my data collection methods and rationale for this study, dividing this discussion into the four major data collection procedures.

Documents

Documents included the Partnership vision statement; email correspondences between Partnership stakeholders and between myself and school faculty; newspaper articles and other documented publicity; and minutes and other documents from design team, action team, and Creekside Community Learning Center's (CLC) faculty/staff meetings.

During the spring 2002 semester, I conducted an extensive document analysis, which included all of the documents described above. I retrieved several hundred pages of archived documents from Dr. Kathy Packard, a Partnership co-director who generously provided me with previous Partnership related committee meeting minutes, the Partnership vision statement, Partnership and Creekside Elementary School newspaper articles, and email correspondences between Partnership stakeholders. I was also included on the Partnership's listserve during this semester and received all email messages sent through this medium. Occasional conversations with Packard and other design team members throughout this semester helped me to clarify confusing information gleaned from these documents and Design Team meetings.

My document analysis consisted of reading through all previous documents and highlighting important information with a pink highlighter. I repeated this a second time using an orange highlighter to mark any important phrases that I missed the first time through. After reading through these documents several more times, I constructed categories and began crafting a Partnership description that synthesized the information from these archives. This description provided an historical and political overview, covering the Partnership's inception, vision, mission, goals, and plans for action. I spent the next year revising this description by incorporating new documents (minutes, publicity, email correspondences, etc.) and adding important details that described how emerging district and grant-related reforms fit into the overall Partnership reform initiative (see chapter four for the full description).

Throughout the 2002-2003 school year, I collected and read school-related documents such as the faculty meeting agendas, the school's newly constructed mission statement and covenant, the school improvement plan, the school song, district benchmarks (these were distributed to the school at the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year), periodic newspaper articles about Creekside Elementary School, and other information contained in the school handbook. I organized these documents into categories and referred to them several times during my ongoing data analysis. Documents were used to verify specific dates, to compare with emerging concepts generated from interview and field notes, and to support information contained in my findings (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993).

Interviews and Transcripts

I used in-depth qualitative interviews to explore teachers' experiences and interpretations of the Partnership reform initiative and to understand how these various reforms impacted teachers' classroom practices. In-depth interviews involve asking open-ended questions and

probing for details throughout each interview to capture participants' diverse experiences and to

explore their meanings (Patton, 2002; Weiss, 1995). I used an interview guide, listing the areas

to be covered in the interview, along with topics or questions to guide the inquiry (Weiss, 1995).

Patton (2002, 346) points to three major advantages for using standardized open-ended

interviews that are appropriate for the present study, including the following:

1. The exact instrument used in the evaluation is available for inspection by those who
   will use the findings of the study.

2. The interview is highly focused so that the interviewee time is used efficiently.

3. Analysis is facilitated by making responses easy to find and compare.

Patton (2002) further contends that an open-ended interview guide is helpful because it gives the

interviewer the freedom to change the wording of questions when appropriate, establish a

conversational style, and build conversation within particular subject areas, all with a

predetermined focus. Weiss (1995) noted that open-ended interviews increase the researcher's

ability to gain dense and in-depth information that permits a holistic description of very complex

entities and issues. Silverman (2000) recommends including follow up questions for participants

to reconstruct their personal experiences in ways that open up for analysis "the culturally rich

methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of

the world (p. 123)."

Two separate interview guides were used to inform this study during two separate phases

of interviews with different purposes. My first phase of taped interviews occurred at the

beginning of the 2002-2003 school year and focused on the school faculty's experiences and

interpretations of the Partnership reform initiative at Creekside (research questions one and two).

Nine in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with seven faculty and staff members at

Creekside, ranging between 60 and 90 minutes. Of these nine total interviews, one participant at

Creekside was interviewed three times. These interviews were designed to encourage teachers to

reconstruct their experiences as stakeholders in the Partnership reform initiative. This study's

second interviewing phase occurred during the 2003-2004 school year and focused on the impact

of the Partnership reform initiative on teachers' classroom practices. I interviewed ten teachers

during this phase, with interviews lasting between 60 and 120 minutes. A copy of the interview

guide used for both taped interview phases is contained in Appendix B and C.

Theoretical sampling was used to select "information-rich" cases, which answered

questions of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry and produced in-depth

understanding of such issues (Patton, 2002; Charmaz, 2002; Dey, 1999; Mason, 1996).

According to Jennifer Mason, theoretically based sampling procedures are designed to provide

> a close-up, detailed or meticulous view of particular units which may
>
> constitute cases which are relevant to or appear within the wider universe
>
> (Mason, 1996, 92).

This type of sampling procedure "makes some sampling choices more sensible and meaningful

than others," since participants are chosen in terms of the theory that informs the study (Mason,

1996).

Teachers' different involvement levels produced multiple interpretations of the

Partnership's impact on change and in teachers' experiences as school change agents. Both

interview phases reflected my attempt to understand teachers' diverse experiences and

interpretations by using the maximum structural variation paradigm to inform data collection

(Patton, 2002). Maximum structural variation refers to collecting data from respondents who

experienced the Partnership reform initiative from very diverse perspectives. I used the following categories to determine my sample for both interview phases:

1. Involvement level on Partnership, district-level, and school-level decision-making bodies that most directly impacted school change (Ranging from faculty members' voluntary participation on between zero and four committees)

2. Years experience in the Hillside County School District (Ranging from one to over 20 years)

3. Education level (Ranging from four-year certification to doctoral degrees)

Below I provide a more detailed description of my sampling procedures during both interview phases.

Interview Phase One

Beginning in May 2002 and continuing through December 2003, I shifted my attention from Partnership documents and meetings and narrowed my focus to explore Creekside faculty's experiences and interpretations of the Partnership reform initiative. I started by conducting observations in and around the school and taping seven interviews with Creekside faculty members. My first three taped interviews included faculty members who demonstrated high levels of involvement in the Partnership's planning and implementation phases. These faculty members represented the school at Design Team meetings and participated in one or more Action Teams to plan and implement reforms such as a new year-round school calendar, innovative curriculum and instructional strategies, professional development workshops, and a family literacy center.

I also interviewed two faculty members who were new to the school and very enthusiastic and about being part of the Partnership reform initiative. As new faculty members, these

participants offered a unique interpretation of the school's current culture. Although they weren't present during most of the Partnership planning phase, these participants quickly became highly involved in Partnership committees and offered implementation support to other faculty members. My two remaining taped interviews were conducted with teachers who had been at the school for several years and were involved in the Partnership reform effort to a limited extent. These participants primarily learned about the Partnership's plans and various reform initiatives through faculty members and other key Partnership stakeholders during whole school meetings. Although these participants were not members of Partnership committees, they were both very interested in learning about how Partnership reforms would impact the school and their working lives.

Interview Phase Two

My second set of taped interviews were conducted during the fall of 2003-2004, as I examined how the Partnership reform initiatives influenced teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices (research question three). The interview guide for these interviews is contained in Appendix C.

To determine a maximum variation sample for this interview phase, I used the three categories described above (teaching experience, education level, and decision-making involvement) and included an additional category that takes into account teachers' ethnic backgrounds. Because my purpose was to investigate how teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices are impacted by the Partnership and various other school reforms, I selected teachers who taught similar student groups during the 2002-2003 school year and the 2003-2004 school year. This sample enabled me to determine the extent to which teachers' applied and/or sustained reforms in 2003-2004, which were implemented during the 2002-2003 school year. A

demographic profile sheet was given to teachers to collect information across the four categories noted above. Of the 31 teachers who voluntarily completed the demographic information form, 14 of them were classroom teachers who returned to their same position in the 2003-2004 school year[4]. Using this pool of 14 teachers, I applied labels to each category by constructing numeric codes that identified individual teachers' ethnicities, levels of decision-making involvement, years teaching experience in HCSD, and education levels. Categories were coded in the following way:

1. Ethnicity: 1=Black, 2= Hispanic, 3= White[5]

2. Involvement[6]: 0=No participation on any major committees, 1= Participation on 1 major committee, 2= Participation on two major committees, 3=Participation on three major committees.

3. Years Teaching Experience in HCSD: 1= Between 1 and 5 years teaching experience in HCSD, 2=Between 6-10 years teaching experience in HCSD, 3= Between 11-15 years teaching experience in HCSD; 4= Over 15 years teaching experience in HCSD

4. Education Level: 1= Four year certification, 2= Masters degree, 3= Educational Specialist degree, 4= Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD)

Below is the chart that contains these coded labels for each of the 17 teachers:

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[4]Seventeen classroom teachers at Creekside maintained their same positions from the 2002-2003 school year to the 2003-2004 school year. Three of these 17 classroom teachers did not fill out the demographic information form, leaving me with 14 teachers from which to select my sample. The three teachers who did not fill out the demographic information form are included in the teacher profile chart (Appendix E). Data for these three teachers are not filled out in the chart.

[5] Ethnic labels were retrieved from the university's Office of Minority Affairs.

[6] Teachers' level of involvement was determined by their participation on major Partnership and school-level decision-making bodies during the 2002-2003 school year. Six major decision-making bodies were identified at the Partnership level, including (1) the Partnership Nuts and Bolts Team (NB), (2) the Partnership Design Team (DT), and (3) four Partnership Action Teams, including the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Action Team (CIAAT), the Community and Family Involvement Action Team (CFIAT), the Calendar Action Team (CAT), and the Professional Development Action Team (PDAT). At the school level, four major committees were identified and included (1) the School Improvement and Leadership Committee (SILC), (2) the Math Curriculum, Instruction,

Creekside Elementary School Teacher Profiles

Name	Ethnicity	Involvement	Years Teaching Experience in HCSD	Education Level
Teacher 1*[7]	3	3	1	1
Teacher 2	3	0	3	2
Teacher 3*	3	2	2	2
Teacher 7	3	0	3	3
Teacher 8*	3	1	1	1
Teacher 10	1	1	3	1
Teacher 11*	N/A	1	1	1
Teacher 12	3	1	2	1
Teacher 15*	1	0	1	1
Teacher 20*	3	0	1	1
Teacher 21*	1	0	3	1
Teacher 22*	1	1	2	3
Teacher 25*	3	0	1	2
Teacher 28*	2	2	1	4

In terms of decision-making involvement, I selected teachers based on the number of committees upon which they served and my own knowledge about teachers' voluntary involvement levels.

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and Assessment Team, (3) the GA READS Governance Committee (Governance), and (4) the Literacy Committee (Literacy).

For instance, while teachers may have served on several committees, some of these committees either seldom met or required teacher participation. Other teachers did not join any Partnership committees, but occasionally attended Design Team meetings and other school based meetings to stay current with the multitude of programs being implemented at the school. By taking into account teachers' formal and informal voluntary involvement-levels on various decision-making bodies, I was able to ensure maximum variation across this dimension.

Data collected during the 2002-2003 school year provided strong evidence that teachers' diverse pedagogical beliefs affected their enthusiasm and willingness to implement various classroom reforms. Thus, I also considered teachers' different pedagogical points of view in may sampling selection procedures. Appendix D and E contain the teacher survey and corresponding profile chart that I used to pull my phase-two interview sample.

I selected my participants after considering information contained in the demographic form, as well as my own knowledge of teachers' diverse pedagogical beliefs, teachers' decision-making involvement levels, and teachers' diverse perspectives on the Partnership Reform Initiative. The participants interviewed included the following:

1. Ethnicity: Three black teachers, one Hispanic teacher, and five white teachers participated in these interviews. Ethnic information for one participant was not available.

2. Involvement: One teacher participated on three committees, two teachers participated on two committees, three teachers participated on one committee, and four teachers did not participate on a major committee.

3. Years Teaching Experience in HCSD: Seven teachers had between one and five years experience, two teachers had between six and ten years experience, and one teacher

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[7] The "*" indicates the teachers who I plan to interview.

had between eleven and fifteen years experience teaching in HCSD. No teachers in

my sample had over fifteen years teaching experience in HCSD.

4. Education Level: Six teachers earned a four-year certification, two teachers earned a

    Master's Degree, and two teachers earned a degree beyond the Master's level.

The table below compares my selected teacher sample with the 14 classroom teachers at

Creekside who completed the demographic profile. As I noted earlier, three classroom teachers

who remained in their positions over the two-year span from 2002-2004 did not complete the

demographic form. Thus, the total number of interview participants from which I could choose

fell from 17 to 14.

Sample Selection to Population Sample Comparison across Four Categories

Ethnicity	Black	Hispanic	White	N/A
Interview Sample	3	1	5	1
Population	4	1	8	1

Committee Involvement	Three	Two	One	Zero
Interview Sample	1	2	3	4
Population	1	2	5	6

Yrs Teaching Exp in HCSD	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 or more
Interview Sample	7	2	1	0
Population	7	3	4	0

Education	Four-Yr. Cert.	Masters	Ed. Sp.	PhD
Interview Sample	6	2	1	1
Population	8	3	2	1

Tenuous relationships and shaky trust levels between some school faculty members and other Partnership stakeholders often created an environment in which teachers were uncomfortable speaking candidly on tape. As one teacher put it, "I'm just afraid of what might happen if [the interview tape] were to land in the wrong hands." To address these concerns, I developed two separate data collection strategies during phase 2 interviews. I approached teachers individually, inviting them to participate these interviews. If a teacher agreed to participate, I mentioned my intention to tape our conversation and made explicitly stated my rationale for doing so. The purpose of these taped conversations was to provide me with a transcript to most accurately capture and represent teachers' experiences of the Partnership reform initiative. I explained that these tapes would be kept in a closet in which I alone had access, and all tapes would be destroyed after the conclusion of the study. After explaining my

procedures, I asked teachers if they would be willing to allow me to tape our conversation. All interview participants gave their consent to be taped.

Participant Observation

During the spring 2002 semester, I began attending monthly design team meetings and used a laptop computer to write extended field notes while I was there. Later the same evening, I expanded and organized my typed field notes to make sense of the meeting dialogue and content and to become familiar with the major stakeholders and their respective roles. At these meetings, I introduced myself to district administrators, university faculty, community members, and school faculty, many of whom devoted extensive time developing action plans that were to be implemented at Creekside and another pilot school beginning in the 2002-2003 school year. On limited occasions during this semester, I traveled to Creekside Elementary School to walk up and down its hallways and spend time on school property both during and after school hours. I used these visits to begin constructing a school description.

After a few teachers resisted my early attempts to tape open-ended interviews, I decided during the fall 2002 semester to spend more time observing the faculty to capture their diverse experiences through informal conversations and observations conducted in and around the school. As I mentioned above, the school faculty as a whole was much more comfortable talking about issues and concerns informally and without a tape recorder.

Over 75 observations at Creekside Elementary were conducted from August 2002- June 2003, resulting in several hundred pages of field notes. Most visits lasted between 60-120 minutes. Informal interviews and observations were conducted with teachers, school staff and administrators, as well as district and university stakeholders. Between two and five hours of observations per week at Creekside took place in the school's faculty lounge, on the playground,

in classrooms, faculty meetings, and the district's central office. On three occasions during the

2002-2003 school year, day-long conversations involving the faculty and other district and

university Partnership stakeholders resulted in five or more hours of intensive observations and

field notes. I also spent one full day shadowing a classroom teacher and two full days observing

staff development meetings during the year. Observations continued through the first semester

of the 2003-2004 school year.

During most of the fall 2002 semester, I took a notebook with me and wrote keywords to

remind me later about experiences and important issues to document. I spent much time

observing in faculty meetings, school hallways, the school's cafeteria, media center, and the

playground. On rare occasions, my observations took place in teachers' classrooms. When I

could, I helped school faculty by administering student assessments, walking younger toddlers to

classrooms, distributing materials, writing up minutes from meetings, and assisting in other

ways. After these observations, I walked home and immediately expanded my notebook

scribbles into detailed field notes. During the spring 2003 semester, I increasingly brought my

laptop computer and typed in field notes during my observations. I virtually always re-read my

field notes, organized and expanded them when necessary, and wrote short memos that included

initial codes and emerging categories. I also documented questions that emerged from my

observations, which directed portions of my future visits and observations.

Twice during the 02-03 school year, I attended a day-long conversation, which included a

Partnership director and university faculty member, the district's executive director for

curriculum and instruction, the school principal, and various faculty members who visited

throughout the school day.[8] Faculty members signed up for 15-30 minute blocks to talk with

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[8] Day-long conversations occurred once each semester during the 02-03 school year. The school principal was in attendance during the spring 03 semester only.

Partnership, district, and school leaders about issues and concerns affecting the school. From these conversations, the school developed plans for addressing concerns. Notes from these meetings proved extremely helpful to me, as I was able to capture several teachers' experiences and interpretations of various reforms at one concentrated time.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Inductive data analysis procedures were used to analyze my data. This type of data analysis has been described in a variety of ways (see Miles and Huberman, 1994; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). For the purposes of this study, I referred to Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) definition of data analysis, which consists of the following:

> The process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field
> notes, and other materials…organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing
> it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and
> deciding what you will tell others (p. 145).

Throughout my research at Creekside Elementary, I inductively analyzed data in this way on an ongoing basis, offering findings to Partnership stakeholders through two interim evaluation reports. I also provided Partnership stakeholders with two additional reports during the 2002-2003 school year, which presented findings generated through the Partnership survey and the day-long conversations between the school and key district and university stakeholders.

Data collection and analysis procedures began by asking broad questions in the field such as "What is happening in the school? How do school faculty interpret their experiences as Partnership stakeholders? How do school faculty interact with one another in the school? How does the Partnership impact student learning?" These questions are similar to the types of

questions Wolcott (2001) recommends using to guide the researcher in collecting the rich, thick descriptive data from which broad categories can emerge.

In my initial data analysis stages, I inductively analyzed transcripts and field notes by scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories. I constructed hypotheses on the basis of subsequent cases, which directed my attention at the school (Preissle and LeCompte, 1993). Codes were systematically organized with words and phrases that identified regularities, emerging patterns, and topics covered within (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). This method of coding *reduced* data into equivalent classes and categories and allowed me to organize, manage and retrieve meaningful components (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; LeCompte, 2000). At the same time, codes functioned as tools that opened up and *"complicated"* the data, which enabled me to identify and speculate about further features that lead to the generation of theories and frameworks (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Codes were taken directly from the transcript as much as possible, in order to place emphasis on members' meanings and to stay as close to the original data set as possible. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) recommend reading and rereading the data several times, approaching the coding process from different perspectives, and using words and phrases that emerge directly from the text to construct codes (in vivo). These procedures produce a dense set of categories and related themes that clearly and meaningfully reflect participants' diverse set of experiences. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) explain the multiple functions involved in the coding process:

> Viewed in this way, analysis is at once inductive and deductive, like someone who is simultaneously creating and solving a puzzle, or like a carpenter alternately changing the shape of a door and then the shape of the door frame to obtain a better fit (p.144).

Using this approach to data analysis, examined and grouped codes into categories that reflected overarching concepts.

After coding and categorizing the data, moved to the interpretation process, which Wolcott (1994) distinguishes from data analysis procedures. According to Wolcott (2001), analysis represents

the standard procedures for observing, measuring, and communicating with others about the nature of… the reality of the everyday world as we experience it (p. 33).

Interpretation is derived from the researcher's efforts to make sense of the data, using his "intuition, emotions, past experiences, and personal attributes (p. 33)." In this way, the researcher's interpretive framework is central to the process of identifying and determining relationships among codes (Wolcott, 1994). Throughout the interpretation phase, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) caution the researcher to include deviant cases that may not fit neatly into established categories, as these cases are important to consider when interpreting the findings. Delamont (1992) suggests that the researcher should look for patterns and regularities as well as contrasts and irregularities. The emphasis on both the patterns and exceptions remain critical throughout the interpretation process. Discovering the complex relationships among categories and the deviant cases that are positioned outside of these categories enables the researcher to move between data and codings "to explore and expand on key analytic themes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 51)."

The data analysis and interpretation approach described above incorporated the systematic methods of managing data through reduction, organization and connection (Dey, 1993; LeCompte, 2000). Systematic procedures for coding and categorizing the data supported my exploration and discovery of categorical relationships that derived directly from the data and

informed the overall schematic structure of my research. I accounted for deviant cases by bringing in theory to generate a more detailed and representative interpretation of teachers' experiences as stakeholders in the Partnership reform initiative.

<center>Ethical and Researcher Subjectivity Considerations</center>

Guba and Lincoln (1989) point to five ethical risks to consider when conducting constructivist inquiry. The first risk is associated with the face-to-face contact that typifies a constructivist paradigm. Often, the intimate relationships that are formed with participants lead to intensive and sometimes shaky and fragile relationships, which become subject to violation of trust, shading the truth, misunderstandings of purposes or relationships with other participants. I dealt with this risk by sharing sections of analyzed texts with stakeholders representing the school and the university. For instance, on several occasions I conducted member checks by sending particularly sensitive sections of analyzed text to Creekside faculty and university stakeholders for their feedback. Before including such information in final reports, appropriate participants were given the opportunity to review and revise sections for which I intended to include. While some did not offer feedback, other participants requested changes, which I included in later drafts.

During the phase-two interview process, member checks were conducted with each of my participants. Interview transcripts and a draft of the analysis and interpretations were sent to all participants via electronic mail. A note was included to participants explaining the purpose of the member checks, and members were invited to provide corrections or additional material when they determined it is necessary to adequately reflect their experiences. I used feedback from these member checks to make necessary changes to the final document.

A second risk posed by constructivist inquiry is the difficulty of maintaining privacy and confidentiality (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). To address this issue, it was made clear throughout the course of this study that faculty and university stakeholders retained the right to correct erroneous information or have removed direct quotations that may be too obviously attributable to specific people. In addition, all names, places, and dates have been changed to protect participants' rights to confidentiality.

Third, risks associated with violation of trust can occur when large amounts of interviewing and observation must be accomplished in a short time. As Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out, achieving trust, building rapport, and engaging in negotiation from positions of mutual power can be difficult to achieve and may take considerable time to build. During my time at Creekside, I witnessed several instances where trust was violated between stakeholders at the district, university and school levels. Such violations resulted in divisiveness among groups of teachers, teachers and administrators, and teachers and university faculty. In my experience at Creekside, trust was the beginning and end of effective implementation of reforms across the school. Indeed, as Hargreaves (1994) points out, "The establishment of trust is central to restructuring education" (p. 254).

The school faculty and supporting stakeholders must trust one another throughout their work toward a shared vision of change. In addition, they must trust the processes of change, even when stakeholders may not know each other well (Hargreaves, 1994). Having spent over a year in the site and with participants, I occasionally experienced resistance from faculty members and other stakeholders who resisted sharing their thoughts and perspectives of the school's reform efforts with me. On one occasion during the first weeks of the school year, I literally chased a teacher out of the building after becoming overly ambitious about pulling perspectives

from her that she was not comfortable revealing to me. Luckily, she forgave me and we could laugh about it later in the year! My time at Creekside was spent walking a thin and nebulous line that internally divided faculty members at Creekside, as well as outside stakeholders from the district and university. This line was frail and tenuous, requiring me to gather information to understand multiple perspectives, while being careful not to appear sympathetic toward any particular group.

Trust continued to be an issue among diverse Partnership stakeholders as well, impacting the internal processes and relationships within Creekside and the power and authority of Partnership stakeholders to implement, support, and sustain the school's reform efforts. In addition to my own mistakes and misfortunes, I witnessed several incidences where the lack of trust between stakeholders led to unintended consequences for teachers who attempted to implement reforms, as well as silent resistance from those who had yet to buy into the Partnership's vision for change.

I tried to maintain diplomacy by listening to all perspectives with an empathetic and non-judgmental ear. Extended time at the school, patience in gathering data, and respect for the diverse levels trust that were ultimately built between myself and Partnership stakeholders (in particular the school faculty) became critical components in my own efforts to gather accurate and holistic accounts of participants' experiences of the Partnership's reform efforts. This study's sampling procedures (described above), combined with the ethnographic data gathered over a year and a half, helped to ensure that teachers' diverse experiences were represented fairly and holistically.

Fourth, the need for open negotiations can lead to researchers into deceiving their subjects, which is expressly forbidden in the constructivist form of inquiry (Guba and Lincoln,

1989). Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that such negations be carried out "with great attention to egalitarian concerns and with attention to the requirements of human dignity, self-esteem, and self-agency" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, 135). They recommend that the researcher be extremely conscious of his own motives and spend some time each day examining and reflecting on his interactions with persons to discover whether the researcher has been as honest and straightforward as humanly possible.

> Social scientists have long been in the largely unconscious habit of justifying what they do in the name of science or truth; overcoming that frame of mind with intense self-scrutiny is a habit that will need great cultivation (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, 135).

In my work at Creekside, I tried to make a habit of writing reflections on a regular basis. While this sometimes became difficult to do, given the time constraints that those of us working in academia often experience, I found it to be a healthy and productive way to be critical about the decisions I made in my work with Partnership stakeholders. In addition, regular and confidential conversations with the professor in charge of the qualitative evaluation and others involved in this and similar work presented opportunities to question my motives and decisions.

The fifth risk is inherent in framing case studies and has to do with data selection problems when writing up final reports. Extended periods of time in the field generate more data than can be profitably included in a single case, leaving the researcher with choices in regard to the purpose of the case study and the data that s/he should use to illuminate these choices (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Constructivist inquiry enables all participants to nominate concerns and issues they believe are important to include in a final report. However, the researcher is left with the responsibility for reconstructing and presenting multiple perspectives, and with deciding what data will most effectively make the case for each perspective. This requires an intimate

understanding of the issues across participants and a sharp clarity of the researcher's audience. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that researchers pose the question to themselves: "Does a given case study serve the needs of the various audiences (all of them) who have some stake in its use?" (p. 137). As mentioned in the first risk, the researcher can deal with this by inviting stakeholders to offer feedback and assist in revising the final report. Aside from conducting ongoing member checks, I also discussed emerging themes and preliminary findings with participants who were not part of this study, but who remained stakeholders in the ongoing Partnership school reform initiative. Ultimately, the people who have a vested interest in the Partnership and Creekside Elementary School, including both study participants and Partnership stakeholders, will judge my final written product.

CHAPTER 4

A DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMUNITY

LEARNING CENTERS

On February 1, 2001, College of Education Dean Manuel Davis announced the
University of the South's intention to join forces with the Hillside County School District
(HCSD) and the local community, publicly launching a new initiative to improve student
learning (April 19, 2001 memo).   This collaboration marked the first time in the state's history
that such a comprehensive approach would bring together a university, school district, and local
community for "education renewal." During the initial press conference, Dean Davis discussed
the university's perceived responsibilities to the school district and greater Hillside community:

> We are dedicated to the well-being of our citizens, our communities and our state. Our
> children deserve the very best in education. They deserve the opportunity to reach their
> full potential. What we hope to do is provide an umbrella - a way to collect and focus our
> many resources and those of other agencies in a manner that the community can best use.
> (University of the South release, Feb. 1, 2001)

The initial five-year partnership is expected to lead to research-based processes and
practices that will ultimately be adapted by other schools across the district and state. For the
University of the South, the partnership provided opportunities for enhancing vital relationships
in the school district necessary to improve teacher education programs. In addition, faculty
recruiting across the university and local economic development were intimately tied to the local
school district's success. Throughout the initial partnership, the Hillside County School District

and the University of the South worked together to assess the specific needs of students in the
district, identify resources, and research the effectiveness of innovations on student learning. Dr.
Martin Irvin, Hillside County Schools Superintendent, expressed his enthusiasm for the
Partnership during the initial press conference:

> The Hillside County School District is excited about the possibilities to tie research and
> best teaching practices into real life opportunities for students. This broad-spectrum
> approach will allow many major initiatives to operate together with a focus on improving
> students' learning. It's a great opportunity for our staff and students to work hand in
> hand with researchers" (University of the South release, Feb. 1, 2001).

Dr. Irvin explained that funding for the partnership would come primarily from internal
sources, through the "creative redirection of money being spent on students." Additional
funding would be sought through federal grants and other outside sources. The specific grants
and sources targeted would depend on both the specific needs of the schools and the partnership.

Partnership Inception

According to Dr. Kathy Packard, the Director of Academic Initiatives for the College of
Education and a key partnership stakeholder, the idea for such a comprehensive reform effort
evolved through conversations between Davis and Irvin shortly after they each assumed their
respective positions within the college and school district. Having arrived in Hillside County
within three months of one another, both were anxious to communicate their own ideas in regard
to educational change and both acknowledged the enormous challenges that were handed over to
them when they entered their respective posts. The superintendent faced a 53% high school
dropout rate when he arrived and was motivated to improve achievement scores through the
collective pooling of district, community and university resources. The College of Education

Dean recognized that the university depends on quality schools to attract university faculty, and

enrollment in graduate programs depended on close working relationships with educational

professionals in the community. Graduate research and funding opportunities and the quality

and depth of pre-service teaching experiences depend on strong relationships between the college

and local schools. In addition, practical experiences and mentoring programs intended to

connect classroom learning to real application of research-based processes require support from

highly trained professionals in the local schools. The quality of the local school district also

impacts the economic development of the community, and a partnership with the district and

greater Hillside County community could potentially build good will across stakeholders.

The dean and superintendent's conversations generated a shared vision for educational

excellence that converged in the public schools. They agreed that the collective goal of

improving educational experiences, options, and outcomes for Hillside County students could be

achieved through collecting and focusing university, community, and school district resources

through a dynamic and systemic collaboration (Partnership Vision Statement, 2001).

Once the idea to establish a partnership was agreed upon, Davis and Irvin chose seven

people representing the district and university to begin coordinating a comprehensive plan for

school reform. Davis and Irvin recruited Dr. Karen Burton and Dr. Kathy Packard, faculty

members at the University of the South; Karla Yin and Cindy Kelley, principals from two

elementary schools; Olivia Nash, executive director of curriculum and instruction, HCSD; Helen

Carter, Director of Gifted and Assessment, HCSD; and Hillary Kelso, Coordinator for

Educational Technology Group, HCSD. The seven-member core leadership team eventually

became known as the "Nuts and Bolts Team," responsible for setting the agenda for meetings

and overseeing the development of the larger design team, which began developing the plan for

school reform in the spring of 2001. Prior to the initial February 1, 2002 press conference, the Nuts and Bolts Team compiled a list of fifteen actions that would need to be accomplished during Phase 1 of the partnership. Three top priorities on the list included the following:

1. Identification and establishment of a core leadership team ("Nuts and Bolts"), who would meet bi-monthly to plan and coordinate partnership activities.

2. Identification and establishment of a Partnership Design Team with broad representation from all partners. The Design Team would meet monthly for half-day and full-day meetings to develop the Partnership vision, goals and implementation plan (Phase 1). Once these initial plans were in place, the Design Team continued to meet, assuming primary responsibility for supporting the reform implementation process (Phase 2). Preparation of summary notes of each meeting provided ongoing documentation and an archive.

3. Establishment of Action Teams to provide leadership in the areas of: curriculum, instruction and assessment; calendar/modified time; community and parent involvement; educator preparation; professional/staff development and personnel; leadership, governance and policy; technology; and human and social services. The need and importance of broad representation from all partners was emphasized through the diverse membership on these Action Teams. Subcommittees were utilized to both identify relevant research through literature reviews, as well as to engage in action research in the partnership schools.

(Design Team minutes, January 12, 2001)

Davis and Irvin worked with the Nuts and Bolts Team to brainstorm a list of people to serve on the larger Design Team, which ultimately launched the programs to improve academic achievement in the schools. The Design Team represented all partners, including teachers, school counselors, district office administrators, university faculty, school board and other community members and leaders representing various agencies and organizations in Hillside County. The following is a description and list of the original Nuts and Bolts Team and the 27-member Design Team:

Nuts and Bolts Team

The Nuts and Bolts Team represented the original group recruited during the fall of 2001 by Manuel Davis, College of Education Dean at The University of the South, and Martin Irvin, Hillside County School District Superintendent, to establish a Partnership Design Team responsible for developing the partnership's overall vision, mission, and goals for "educational renewal" in the College of Education and the Hillside County School District. This team plans and coordinates partnership activities and develops the agenda for design team meetings. The original team consisted of the following seven members:

1. Co-Directors of The Partnership for Community Learning Centers, University of the South

   Dr. Kathy Packard, Director of Academic Initiatives, College of Education

   Dr. Karen Burton, Professor, Department of Language Education

   Olivia Nash, Executive Director of Instructional Services, HCSD[9]

2. Hillside County School District Central Office

   Helen Carter, Director of Gifted and Assessment, HCSD

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[9] Olivia Nash retired from her position after the 2001-2002 school year. Dr. Louis Cruz replaced Nash in the fall of 2002.

Hillary Kelso, Coordinator for Educational Technology Group, HCSD

3. Hillside County School District Principals

Karla Yin, Principal at Eisenhower Elementary School, HCSD[10]

Cindy Kelley, Principal at Grant Street Elementary School, HCSD[11]

Design Team

The original design team represented the larger decision-making team that developed the partnership's vision statement, rationale, and goals. In addition, the original design team brainstormed the list of selection criteria from which they selected the two Partnership pilot schools, Creekside Elementary and Eisenhower Elementary Schools. Karla Yin, Principal at Eisenhower Elementary, was the sole representative from the pilot schools who served on the original Design Team. After Creekside and Eisenhower were chosen to become Partnership Pilot Schools, Design Team members invited teachers and administrators from each of these schools to join their team. The Design Team was the major decision-making body in the Partnership. The original design team members are listed below.

Stakeholder Groups	Original Design Team Membership
HCSD Teachers	Randy Uhlmann, Dalton Elementary School
	Elizabeth Cassidy, Hillside Middle School
	Vernon Newton, Justice Middle School

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[10] Karla Yin resigned as principal of Eisenhower Elementary after the 2001-2002 school year. William Clanton is currently school principal of the school.

[11] Cindy Kelley remains a member of the Nuts and Bolts team. Delores Taylor, principal at Creekside Elementary School, joined the team after Creekside was chosen to become a Partnership School. During the 2001-2002 school year, Karla Young and Molly Snider, teachers from Creekside Elementary and Eisenhower Elementary respectively, joined the team. Dr. Ellen Carlisle, Director of Outreach and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (University of the South), and Richard Tinsdale, Director of Technology Services (HCSD), also joined the team in 2001-2002. As of March 2003, the Nuts and Bolts team consisted of 10 members.

HCSD Principals	Karla Yin, Eisenhower Elementary School
	Cindy Kelley, Grant Street Elementary School
	Wallace Evans, Capital Middle School
HCSD Central Office	Olivia Nash, Director of Instructional Services
	Helen Carter, Director of Gifted and Assessment
	Hillary Kelso, Coordinator for Educational Technology Group
Parents, Community Members	Carl Tasker, PTO, Grant Street Elementary School
	Kristy Baker, University of the South
	Frank Carithers, Norton Avenue Baptist Church
University of the South	Kathy Packard, Dean's Office
	Karen Burton, Language Education
	Kelly Keppel, Instructional Technology
	Rhonda Sampson, Counseling
	Violet Sardin, Social Work
Community Services	Walt Kendall, Family/Community Connections (Hillside Cty)
	Darla Baldwin, Hillside Tutorial Program (Hillside Cty)
	Nick Johnson, Stonehenge Youth Association (Hillside Cty)

Integration of the Partnership with National and State Policies

The structure of the Hillside County-University-Community Partnership model evolved out of an extensive literature review of comprehensive school reform (see below). The Design Team used this research to inform their overall vision for school reform in the Hillside County School District and to align their vision and goals with state and federal

legislation. From the beginning, collaborators focused their efforts on meeting the "academic, social and cultural needs of all students" (Partnership vision statement, 4/30/01), as current theory and law support a comprehensive model of school development and reform that focus on the whole child.

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                        │  Nuts and Bolts │
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                                │
                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │   Design Team   │
                        └─────────────────┘
                                │
                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │   Action Teams  │
                        └─────────────────┘
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| Calendar/ Modified Time | Community and Parent Involvement | Human and Social Services | Professional/Staff Development |

| Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment | Educator Preparation | Leadership, Governance, and Policy | Technology |
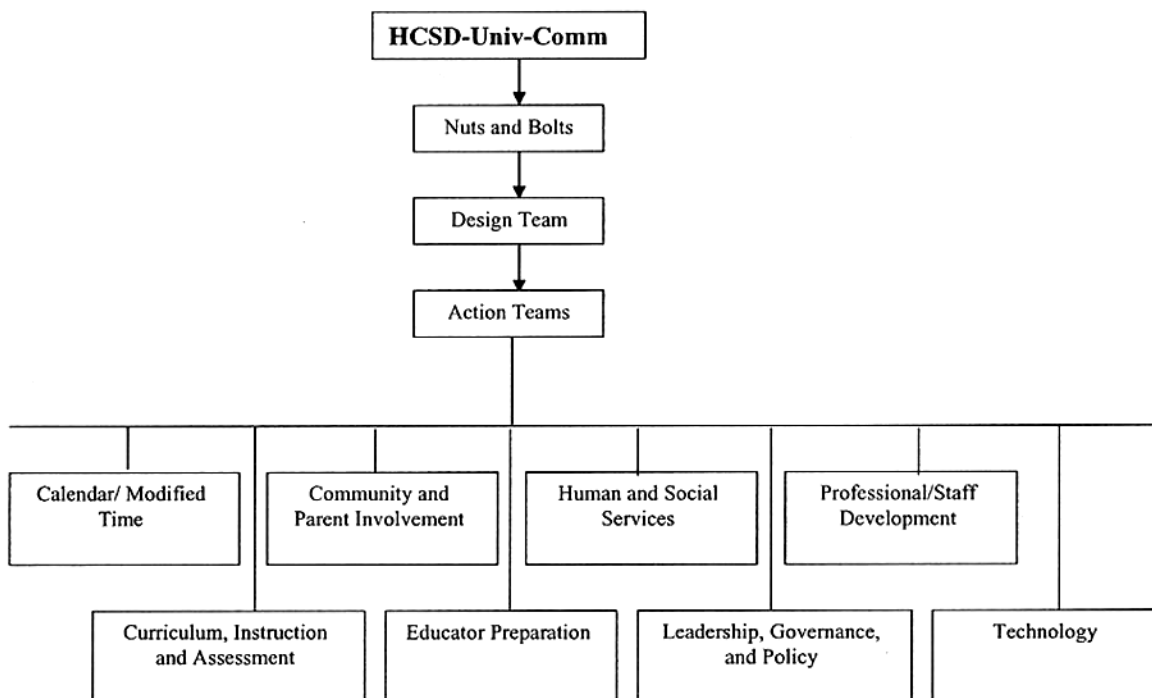
Theoretical Support Informing the Partnership's Vision for School Reform

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRD) was developed by Congress in 1997 to provide financial incentives and research-based support for schools to undertake comprehensive reform. The CSRD program suggests that schools combine published reform models and individual school-level designs in their approach to reform (2002). Partnership stakeholders referenced several school reform models recommended by CRSD, as well as other research on comprehensive school reform, to develop a plan that would address contextual issues unique to the Hillside County School District. Design Team members

conducted an extensive literature review of school reform and researched several comprehensive

school reform models to inform the development of their own unique model for school

improvement in the Hillside County Schools. A few such models included the Accelerated

Schools Project (Levin, 1996), the Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1984), Comer's School

Development Program (1980, 1996), among others. The Design Team also attended national

conferences and consulted with various experts on school-university partnerships (Haycock,

1996, The Education Trust, 2001) to develop an innovative collaboration that extended beyond

the piecemeal innovations, which reflected most university partnerships. From the beginning,

the Design Team focused on combining their resources and collectively working to alter the

"core of schooling"(Elmore, 1996). The Design Team's collective efforts at whole-school

change were designed to activate the proper mechanisms to affect what teachers do in the

classroom and how students learn (Cohen and Ball, 1990; Tyack and Tobin, 1994).

Aligning Partnership Vision and Goals with Federal and State Legislation

Throughout the Partnership's planning phase (Phase 1, spring 2001-summer 2002), the

Design Team considered federal and state legislation while developing goals and initiatives for

local schools. For instance, legislation emerged in the late 1990's when the state created a

Department of Educational Accountability to oversee a statewide performance-based

accountability program for grades kindergarten through 12. This department established levels

of performance at the school level and individual school ratings (A, B, C, D, F) for each school

in the state, based on annual academic performance on various assessment instruments

administered by the Department of Education. Procedures were mandated by the state for

schools that did not meet these standards, and federal legislation provided incentives for

implementing comprehensive school reform models. As a result of the No Child Left Behind

Act (NCLB) of 2001, the U.S. Department of Education made funds available for states to award competitive grants to establish and support 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) and comprehensive literacy programs. This year, the state in which this study was conducted received approximately $9,000,000 to support such programs. The development of community learning centers supported supplemental educational services and school support teams, both of which are called for in Title I of NCLB. NCLB has three purposes:

1. To provide opportunities for academic enrichment and tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low performing schools, to meet state and local performance standards in core academic areas.

2. To offer students a broad array of additional services to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs.

3. To offer families of 21st CCLC students opportunities for literacy and related educational development (www.ga-oea.org/21cclc/overview.html).

Understanding the support that federal funds offered 21st CCLC's, as well as the research that supported these centers' potential for increasing student achievement for students who attended high-poverty and low-performing schools (Comer, 1988; Ziglar, 1989), the Partnership Design Team developed an overall plan that aligned with federal and state legislation.

Utilizing Resources to Support Partnership Initiatives

The university and HCSD jointly allocated resources to support the Partnership during its first year. The Design Team worked with university and district leaders to find creative ways to

utilize resources available through the No Child Left Behind Act (2000) and Title I funds.

Changes in Title I legislation allowed schools to use Title I money to fund whole school reform

efforts. These incentives prompted the Design Team redistribute money previously set aside for

specialized programs and services and to fund programs that were more comprehensive in

nature. Design Team members and Partnership school faculty sought other funding sources

through grants that were aligned with Partnership vision and goals. For example, faculty at

Creekside Elementary secured funding from a state literacy grant (funded with money obtained

through the No Child Left Behind Act, 2001), which provided the school with approximately

$800,000 over two years to improve reading and language arts instruction and achievement. The

Design Team also recruited representatives from organizations in the local community to support

the Partnership. A Design Team member from Hillside Leisure Services worked with the

Design Team and faculty and staff at the Partnership Schools to develop an educational and

recreational day care program for students during the Partnership Schools' fall and spring breaks.

A local business also committed $10,000 in winter 2002 to Eisenhower Elementary School (A

Partnership Pilot School) for renovating a small log cabin to be used as a Family Resource

Center. Other community and fellow Design Team members offered tutorial and mentoring

programs and services to the Partnership Schools.

<div align="center">The Partnership Planning Phase, Spring 2001-Summer 2002</div>

On January 19, 2001, Design Team members attended a Partnership Kick Off Retreat to

begin discussing "the elements of their vision" (Partnership Retreat Summary, Jan. 19, 2001).

Manuel Davis, College of Education Dean, was present at this meeting and began the design

team's first official meeting with a brief presentation to Design Team members. Davis assured

Design Team members that the partnership was a long-term, collaborative initiative that would

not be "top-down driven" (Partnership Retreat Summary, Jan. 19, 2001). Rather, the "top is

there to support" the Design Team and protect their work (Partnership Retreat Summary, Jan. 19,

2001). He encouraged the Design Team to be patient with their work and to be creative when

developing the Partnership's vision for school improvement.

Olivia Nash, NCSD Instructional Services Director, spoke after Davis and described the

Design Team's work as a process where "we have an end in mind" (Partnership Retreat

Summary, Jan. 19, 2001). After Design Team members introduced themselves, Nash asked

members to break into randomly appointed color-coded groups (approximately four per group)

and discuss what was working in the Hillside County School District. Nash handed out

worksheets with the question, "What is the Hillside County School District currently providing

that is the greatest value to students?" She asked members to spend a few minutes answering the

question individually and share the answers in their small groups to reach a group consensus.

Small groups spent about 30 minutes on this activity and concluded by presenting their small

group reports to the entire Design Team. Nash asked Design Team members to repeat the

activity by answering a second question, "What are the most significant challenges in the

Hillside County School District?" Following this second activity, small groups again presented

their ideas to the entire Design Team.

Later the same day, Karen Burton, Partnership Co-Director and university faculty

member, asked the Design Team to think about "what a community learning center would look

like…" adding several endings to this subject such as, "if the curriculum were more culturally

relevant for all children," and "if families, regardless of income, could become involved in their

children's educations in meaningful ways that have a direct impact on their children's success in

schools." The same small groups reconvened to answer these questions and begin developing

the "elements of their vision" (Partnership Retreat Summary, Jan. 19, 2001). Each small group reported ideas to the all Design Team members. The Nuts and Bolts Team compiled each small group's responses and categorized them into themes, which were distributed to the entire design team, prioritized, and later used to aid in the development of the Partnership vision, rationale, and goals statements.

Throughout the spring semester, the Design Team identified district and community members' resources and needs and collaborated to develop a vision and plans that would be implemented in the two pilot schools beginning in the 2002-2003 school year. By the end of April, 2001, Nuts and Bolts representatives presented a fourth and final draft of the Partnership's vision, an explanation of community learning centers, and Partnership rationale and goals to the larger Design Team. The Design Team agreed to accept this draft, which became the standard upon which all Partnership decisions were to be made. The following four sections represent the Partnership's vision, explanation of community learning centers, Partnership rationale and goals.

Partnership Vision

Through this partnership, the community, HCSD, and The University of the South agreed to share the goal and responsibility for improving educational experiences, options and outcomes for all Hillside County students. Through the sharing of leadership responsibilities, resources, and accountability, partnership stakeholders will be focused toward the creation of schools that are community-learning centers designed to meet the intellectual, social, and cultural needs of all students. In these community-learning centers, effective culturally responsive teaching will be developed, assessed and refined. Students will have equal opportunities to engage in the present and prepare for the future as productive and contributing citizens. In addition, all personnel in the community

learning centers will use practices that promote the growth and well being of the whole child (Partnership Vision Statement, 4/30/01).

According to the Partnership Vision Statement, a community-learning center is a school that recognizes success through each student's academic, social, emotional, artistic, and physical growth. Partnership Design Team members agreed that community-learning centers could be most effectively created through the following set of actions:

1. Setting and communicating clear and high expectations for all students

2. Building on the cultural and linguistic diversity of students and viewing this as a resource that enhances the learning of all community members

3. Providing flexible and adaptable learning structures and school calendars to meet the varying needs of students

4. Integrating technology

5. Developing and adapting curriculum and instructional approaches to the diverse needs of students

6. Using multiple and authentic assessments

7. Establishing faculty/community teams who would study the effectiveness of their practices through collaborative action research

(Partnership vision statement, 4/30/01).

The Partnership Design Team adopted a vision for the Partnership Schools' transition into community learning centers by pulling ideas contained in Yale University's 21st Century Community Learning Center Model (2002), as well as literature from several other sources.

Yale's Model outlines six community learning center components, which represented

components to be implemented into the Partnership Design Team's Partnership Pilot Schools:

1. Parent/child skill set building- home visits, playgroups, workshops

2. Before school, after school, and vacation programs for school age children

3. Health services- preventative and interventional care, nutrition and fitness, developmental, mental, and dental care

4. Social services

5. Legal services

6. Adult education, career planning

(Yale University's 21st Century Community Learning Centers, 2002).

Partnership Rationale

The Partnership's rationale expressed the mutual benefits shared by the University of the

South, HCSD, and the Hillside community:

The community, HCSD, and U of S share the goal as well as responsibility for improving

educational experiences, options, and outcomes for all Hillside County students. Our

missions converge in the public schools; therefore, we may achieve this goal and further

our missions through collecting and focusing our many resources through this dynamic

and systemic collaboration

(Partnership vision statement, 4/30/01).

For the following key reasons, it is in the University of the South's 'enlightened self-

interest' to reform our community's schools and our preparation of education

professionals simultaneously and collaboratively.

1. Hillside's economic development depends on quality schools

2. Attracting the best faculty to The University of the South depends on quality schools

3. The partnership exemplifies our tri-part mission of teaching, research, and outreach within our own community.

4. Building good will in a community that may see us as depleting the tax base (which pays for public education) is critical.

5. Enrollment in graduate programs depends on close working relationships with professionals in the educational community.

Partnership Goals

1. To reconceptualize schools as community learning centers designed to be responsive to the needs of the community by providing integrated services for students, and families with the goal of improving student learning and development (see "community learning centers").

2. To create a mutually-beneficial partnership where leadership, resources and accountability are shared across the school district, university, students, parents, and the community and its various agencies and organizations

(Partnership Vision Statement, 4/30/01).

The following is the compiled list of initial actions generated by the Partnership Design Team to meet these goals and the collective Partnership Vision:

1. Schools to operate for an additional 20 days a year in order to increase student learning

2. Schools to have extended hours to provide social services and opportunities for parents (e.g. access to technology, classes).

3. Schools to have curriculum area specialists in each discipline.

4. The University of the South to develop a model of educator preparation based on interrelated services (school social workers, psychologists, counselors, teachers, and administrators).

5. Professional development to be developed collaboratively, focusing on the unique needs of Hillside County in serving a culturally and linguistically diverse population.

6. Families to become partners with schools through new models of home visits, two-way communication and family learning.

7. To develop a joint program for recruiting, training, and retaining diverse faculty, especially African American and Hispanic educators

8. Research and development efforts to be collaborative and to address the specific needs of schools; federal grants stress this kind of partnership

(Partnership vision statement, 4/30/01).

The actions listed above represented the original Design Team's plan for executing the Partnership's vision. Although Design Team members implemented initiatives to support the above action plans, other factors ultimately influenced how these changes were carried out, including the Creekside faculy's increased involvement on the Design Team, HCSD initiatives

being implemented in the schools,[12] state and federal grant-funded programs, and contextual factors unique to Creekside Elementary School.

Timeline

The Design Team understood that school-wide change often takes at least three to five years to accomplish (Sizer, 1992; Hess, 1995; Levin, 1991; Darling Hammond, 1988, 1995, 1997), and thus developed an initial five-year timeline for achieving full-scale implementation in early spring 2001. The Design Team developed objectives and a specific time frame to track progress during program implementation, splitting their proposed actions into three separate phases as follows (Partnership vision statement, 2001):

Phase1	Spring 2001-Summer 2002	1. Development of vision, goals, and structures.
		2. Development of evaluation plans.
Phase 2	Fall 2002-Summer 2003	1. Implementation of recommended changes in two community-learning centers.
		2. Redesign of University Educator Preparation.
Phase 3	Fall 2003-Summer 2005	1. Continuous evaluation of elements leading to increased learning.
		2. Implementation at two middle schools.
		3. Institutionalization of systemic change.

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[12] The Hillside County School District initiated a district wide school improvement process beginning in the fall of 2002 to streamline the schools. This process supports the Title 1 schools in improvement process, which is the nationally mandated program designed to support

Partnership Pilot Schools

The Design Team decided to concentrate Partnership resources and implement initiatives in two elementary schools. Their decision to begin the reform effort in elementary schools emerged from the research that indicates reforms tend to be implemented faster in elementary schools than in middle schools or high schools (Bodilly, 1998; Ross, Wang, et al., 1999). Increased barriers such as graduation requirements, standardized tests, and college entrance exams serve as significant barriers for high schools in adopting the models. Thus, secondary schools need additional implementation supports (Bodilly and Berends, 1999). The Design Team also agreed that program implementation in the Hillside middle schools and high schools would achieve greater success by gradually phasing in Partnership initiatives when new student cohorts enter secondary school from the elementary Partnership Schools. In this case, students and parents of students from Partnership schools would have already adjusted to program changes.

In April 2001, the Nuts and Bolts Team met with the Design Team and proposed the task of identifying two high need (in terms of student needs) elementary schools (April 2, 2001 Design Team Meeting minutes). At this meeting, Design Team members brainstormed a list of possible criteria for the selection of Partnership schools, as well as a list of criteria to be used for the selection of new Partnership Pilot School principals. By the end of April, the Design Team selected Eisenhower Elementary and Creekside Elementary to become the first two pilot schools in which a new year-round calendar and community-learning center would be implemented.

The Design Team initially gave teachers the option to stay at the pilot schools or transfer to another school in the district.[13] Regardless of pilot-school teachers' decision to stay or leave,

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underachieving schools. During the 2002-2003 school year, the school improvement process has influenced the way in which Partnership initiatives were planned and carried out during the year (See School Improvement Process).

[13] Members of the Nuts and Bolts Team officially announced the selection of Creekside Elementary and Eisenhower Elementary as Partnership pilot schools in the spring of 2001. Kathy Packard and Olivia Nash, two Nuts and Bolts members present at this meeting, originally stated that teachers would not be guaranteed a job in the partnership

all were guaranteed a position within the district the following school year. An announcement

was communicated to teachers working at both pilot schools at the start of the 2001-2002 school

year:

> Regarding the process that will be used to affirm with current teachers their desire to
>
> continue to teach at the Partnership schools, it was agreed that Design Team
>
> representatives should also be involved in that process. Therefore, we agreed that
>
> beginning most likely in January, 2002, teaching faculty and staff choosing to continue in
>
> their positions at the partnership schools will be asked to meet individually with the
>
> principal and two representatives from the Design Team representing the university and
>
> the community. The purpose of this will be to discuss shared visions and expectations
>
> about the goals for a partnership schools. In addition, a teacher from the school who is
>
> also a design team member may be asked to join in that dialog. While this is a
>
> tremendous commitment of time for the affirmation team, the principals and design team
>
> members feel this process is important to help to ensure common understanding and
>
> goals about what it means to be involved with a partnership school (Design Team
>
> minutes, July 24, 2001).

In April, members of the Nuts and Bolts committee announced to the Creekside

Elementary School faculty and staff that Creekside and Eisenhower had been chosen to become

Partnership Pilot Schools. At this meeting, Kathy Packard and Olivia Nash briefly introduced

the Partnership's vision and goals and spent the remainder of the meeting answering the school

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schools. All faculty and staff, including the principal, were required to apply and interview for a position in the
school. In addition, people hired would have to make a five-year commitment to the school. All faculty and staff
currently working in the Partnership schools were guaranteed a position with the district, regardless of whether they
were hired to work in the partnership school or not. Faculty and staff protested this plan, and later this policy was
changed to allow those working in the Partnership schools to choose whether or not they wanted to continue their
position the following year.

faculty's questions. The Nuts and Bolts members' announcement prompted several questions from Creekside's faculty regarding the Partnership and their job security. The Design Team was still in the midst of planning how specific actions would be carried out, making it difficult for Nuts and Bolts members to be clear and specific in their answers to Creekside faculty's questions regarding a new school calendar, teachers' new responsibilities, and other specific reforms planned for the school.

After the announcement was made to the Creekside faculty, the Nuts and Bolts team invited each Partnership school to send one faculty representative to join the Design Team. The following day, Creekside faculty members met after school to discuss the implications these decisions had on the future of their students, the school, and their own personal and professional futures. Collectively, Creekside decided to send three faculty members to the next Design Team meeting, instead of taking the Nuts and Bolts suggestion to send one representative. A Creekside representative communicated to Eisenhower Elementary their decision to send three representatives to future Design Team meetings. After hearing this decision, Eisenhower also chose three staff members to represent them at the next Design Team meeting.

The original Design Team welcomed new representatives from Creekside and Eisenhower, and the new representatives from these schools influenced many of the proposed Partnership changes at both schools. School representatives communicated that faculty members at the Partnership Schools were unsupportive of the Design Team's personnel decision, which asked faculty members to make a five-year commitment and to re-apply and interview for their jobs at the schools. The schools' collective front persuaded Design Team members to change their original plans, and the Design Team later decided that Partnership school faculties and administration would be given a choice to stay at the school or transfer to another school in the

district. In addition, Design Team members did not require the Partnership school faculties to make a five-year commitment.

Other changes to action plans occurred as well. For instance, Design Team members added fifteen days to the new year-round calendar schedule instead of the 20-day addition that was originally proposed. Design Team members also regularly encouraged others from the Partnership schools, university, HCSD, and the greater Hillside County to join the Design Team. While the Partnership's original framework remained intact, the way in which initiatives were carried out continued to change as the Design Team considered the impact and implications of these changes on teachers and administrators at the Partnership Schools.

Action Teams

During the spring of 2001, the Design Team established Action Teams to research topics of importance, to develop, and to recommend initiatives for implementation in the Partnership schools. On August 2, 2001, Design Team members officially agreed to establish the following eight Action Teams:

1. Calendar/Modified Time

2. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

3. Community and Parent Involvement

4. Educator Preparation

5. Professional/Staff Development and Personnel

6. Leadership, Governance and Policy

7. Human and Social Services

8. Technology

(Design Team Minutes, August 2, 2001)

Calendar/Modified Time Action Team

The Calendar/Modified Time Action Team (CMT) was the first action team formed. This team met throughout the semester to explore the benefits and challenges associated with implementing a modified calendar for the Partnership schools. Throughout the calendar planning process, the CMT Action Team identified the specific actions that this team experienced throughout the new calendar development process. Design Team members later reflected on the process used by the CMT Action Team and developed a prototype for developing other Action Teams. These actions included:

1. Conducting research to uncover what can be learned about the topic.

2. Identify schools around the country that demonstrate best practices these areas.

3. Conduct focus groups with teachers, parents, and the community to explore local issues and needs pertaining to each domain.

4. Identify specific practices for implementation in the pilot schools.

5. Examine the topic's implications for the community, and its impact on local issues.

(Design Team Minutes, June 6, 2001).

The Design Team disbanded the Calendar/Modified Time Action Team after this team developed the year-round calendar for the 2002-2003 school year. During spring 2003, Design Team members met with Creekside and Eisenhower faculty members to revise the schedule for the 2003-2004 school year. Despite minor revisions at these meetings, the calendar continues to operate on a year-round schedule and the 15 extra school days remain intact. The Design Team formed the remaining seven Action Teams to address issues on an ongoing basis. These Action Teams were charged with the responsibility of addressing emerging issues related to their specific purposes on an ongoing basis.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Action Team

In August of 2001, the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Action Team (CIAAT) decided to form two subcommittees that focused on Pre-K to 3rd grade and 3rd grade to 5th grade, respectively. Subcommittees met separately, but they were both expected to follow through with Design Team expectations, which was to create a curriculum, instruction, and assessment profile for the Partnership schools. For instance, the CIAAT identified how assessments could be used more effectively in the schools. They developed plans to integrate more purposeful formative and summative assessments in the classroom, so that teachers could better identify their students' strengths and areas for improvement. The CIAAT developed plans to train teachers on how to use assessments to drive their classroom instruction. CIAAT also explored research in the area of school restructuring and best practice. Members of the CIA Action Team continued dialoguing with teachers at the Partnership schools, the university, and the community to develop curriculum, instruction, and assessment recommendations for the Design Team and the Board of Education. After meeting for several months during 2002, CIAAT members recommended to the Design Team that the overall CIAAT be divided and integrated into each individual Partnership school. On March 28, 2002, the CIAAT became two separate school-level committees at both Eisenhower and Creekside.

Community and Parent Involvement Action Team

The Design Team also facilitated the formation of a Community and Parent Involvement Action Team (CPIAT) to conduct research and develop a framework from which to design their own community learning centers. On January 24, 2002, CPIAT presented a summary of Yale University's 21st Century Family Resource Centers (FRC) model to the Design Team. The Yale model enabled individual schools to customize their needs and resources. The Design Team used

several components from Yale's model, among others, in their development of FRCs for Hillside County Schools.

The following information represents Yale's guiding principles for FRC development and implementation in schools across the country. These ideas were contained in a handout distributed to the Design Team on January 24, 2002 and reflected the CPIAT's vision for FRC development in Hillside County schools:

According to the Guiding Principles [Of Yale University's 21st Century FRC's]:

[The 21st century model is] a school-based family support services center designed to promote the optimal growth and development of our children: it transforms the traditional school into a year round, multi service resource that provides professional, and accessible services from early morning to early evening.

The School of the 21st Century is firmly grounded in the belief that all families in need of support should be provided these services. To achieve this goal, the following principles need to be upheld:

1. Strong parental support and engagement

2. Universal access to programs with sliding scale option; non-compulsory

3. Programmatic focus on the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of children and their families

4. Quality programming as measured by professional standards [and] staff/child ratios…

5. Professional training and advancement potential for the child care providers

(see also www.yale.edu/bushcenter/21C/about/gp/gp.html).

Before the 2002 school year, the Design Team worked on a limited basis with consultants from Yale's program to develop FRC's at Eisenhower and Creekside Elementary Schools. Virtually all of the core components and guiding principles that encompass 21st Century Community Learning Centers are contained in the Design Team's plans for Eisenhower and Creekside. The Community and Parent Involvement Action Team (CPIAT) continued to meet during 2002-03 to support FRC implementation in the Partnership schools.

Educator Preparation Action Team

The Design Team developed the Educator Preparation Action Team (EPAT) to accomplish the following:

1. Redefine issues related to educator preparation

2. Research issues that pertain to improved student learning for students in HCSD

3. Dialogue with faculty at Eisenhower, Creekside, the University of the South, and community members

(Minutes, Educator Preparation Action Team, September 24, 2001).

The EPAT was divided up into the following three subcommittees: (1) Recruitment and retention of African American and Latino/a educators; (2) Professional education and field/clinical experiences; (3) Induction/mentoring of new school professionals including TA's (Minutes, Educator Preparation Action Team, September 24, 2001). In February 2002, the EPAT decided to conclude their whole group meetings. Subcommittees continued meeting throughout the 2002-2003 academic school year and communicated with the encompassing EPAT via e-mail.

Professional/Staff Development Action Team

The Design team developed the Professional/Staff Development Action Team (PSDAT) to discuss and recommend changes that would address district personnel's diverse professional development needs. The PSDAT met regularly during the 2001-02 school year to develop recommendations for the Design Team and district to consider when revising Hillside County Schools' current professional development programs. The PSDAT constructed the following vision to guide their research and subsequent professional development recommendations for the Design Team and the district:

> The [Partnership Schools and the greater district] build a learning community that provides consistent opportunities for relevant, substantial, professional development and individual and collaborative planning so that students will be able to achieve at their highest potential and educators will engage in continuous growth (Design Team Minutes, February 28, 2002).

> The PSDAT identified the following goals to realize this vision:

> 1. To develop a professional development model

> 2. To determine the structure of professional development

> 3. To identify a timeline for areas of study

> 4. To determine a process of monitoring professional development.

> The PSDAT continued to meet throughout the spring 2002-2003 school year to address

these goals.

Other Action Teams

The remaining three Action Teams (Leadership, Governance and Policy; Human and Social Service; and Technology) operated at the school level, which dissolved the need for an Action Team facilitated by the Design Team.

<div style="text-align:center">HCSD School Improvement Process</div>

During the 2001-2002 school year, several Hillside County Schools did not meet state standards, which required them to follow specific procedures contained in the state's Title I Schools in Improvement Process. Although state guidelines for school improvement differ among schools with different ratings, HCSD administrators decided to streamline the School Improvement Process by requiring all schools in the district to develop plans that met identical criteria. Design Team and university faculty members helped to facilitate the development of an improvement plan in conjunction with the individual Partnership School faculties. Both university faculty and various community organizations offered services to the Partnership Schools that they hope will lead to higher test scores and encourage development of the whole child.

According to William Clanton, Eisenhower Elementary Principal and Design Team member, streamlining school programs and services was important to achieve greater coherence among schools in the district.

> Schools were operating as separate entities and not as a school system. There was also no common thread of programs between schools…In a system with such high transience, a student transferring from one school to another could be in trouble…The School Improvement Process is an attempt to get schools working as a school system again

In addition to providing coherence among schools, the School Improvement Process supports the Title 1 Schools in Improvement Process, which is the nationally mandated program that is designed to support underachieving schools in their efforts to increase student achievement on standardized tests. To meet Title I requirements and streamline programs and services, the superintendent formed a School Improvement Committee (SIC) made up of members representing all levels within the district to develop an overall process for school improvement.

The SIC developed guiding questions for individual schools to use as they developed the Three-Year Continuous School Improvement Plan. These guiding questions consisted of the following:

1. What is the current status of educational programming, services, and student achievement?

2. Based on the data analysis, what needs to be changed?

3. How do we get from where we are now to where we need to be?

4. How do we align the continuous School Improvement Plan with district, state, and federal-level efforts?

(Hillside County School District School Improvement Plan, 12/02/02)

The SIC used these questions to develop an overarching framework for schools to use when developing their individual Schools' Improvement Plans. The School Improvement Framework consisted of four sections, which included the following:

1. The formation of a School Improvement Committee

2. A school profile

3. A mission statement

4. A three-year continuous School Improvement Plan

(HCSD School Improvement Framework, 2002).

As part of the School Improvement Process, the district required each school to form a governing body to oversee development of the School Improvement Plan, which at Creekside Elementary School became the School Improvement and Leadership Committee (SILC). HCSD required that each school's improvement and leadership committee consist of the school principal and assistant principal, at least one teacher from each grade level, school paraprofessionals, parents, community members and students or the option of using the schools current school council.

A list of the original 2002-2003 Creekside School Improvement and Leadership Committee are provided below.

Creekside Elementary School Improvement Leadership Committee:

Creekside Representative	Title
Delores Taylor	Principal
Mildred Largent	Assistant Principal
Frances Turner	Pre-Kindergarten Teacher
Kathy Evans	Kindergarten Teacher
Melody Epstein	First Grade Teacher

Nancy Rudolph	Second Grade Teacher
Paul Prichard	Parent
Kristina Francis	Parent
Sandy Lytle	Community Volunteer
Karen Burton	University of the South faculty
Marc Burton	University of the South faculty
Linda Brown	Hillside Junior Woman's Club
Lillian Tucker	Third Grade Teacher
Cynthia Grill	Fourth Grade Teacher
Heather Christian	Fifth Grade Teacher
Rita Martin	EIP Teacher
Melissa Appleton	School Counselor
Patricia Marsh	Media Specialist

Karen Burton, Partnership Co-Director and university faculty member, and Marc Burton, Co-Director of the University of the South's Institute for Democratic Schools, joined the SILC to support the improvement process and help Creekside maintain coherence between the Partnership's vision and goals and the district's mandated School Improvement Plan. Two

parent representatives who originally joined the SILC at Creekside in fall of 2002, later resigned. One parent resigned after his employer shut down a local office and transferred him to another state. Another parent, an active member of the Army Reserves, was called into active duty.

Delores Taylor, Creekside's principal, enforced the district's requirement that all faculty and staff members join one of three study groups, each developing plans to improve student achievement in the domains of reading, language arts, and math. Teachers on the SILC acted as facilitators in these study groups and were responsible for documenting notes and study group feedback, as well as writing the drafts and the final copy of the School Improvement Plan. Within the three study groups, the district's School Improvement Plan required that two sub-groups be formed to develop plans for parent/community involvement and professional development. Each study group identified goals, objectives, and action steps to be taken to improve student achievement in each domain.

Creekside Elementary study groups developed a plan of action and a timeline for completion of specific actions in regard to the following issues:

1. Parental Involvement

2. Professional Development

3. School, Teacher, and Student Evaluation

Study groups identified physical and human resources they planned use to meet their objectives, such as university faculty who agreed to facilitate professional development courses, specific classroom supplies, and technology software and hardware. They also documented the individuals responsible for ensuring that action steps occur within the timeline's projected date

of completion. During each stage of this process, the school district provided ongoing feedback to all schools in the district.

By the end of February 2003, Creekside Elementary study groups drafted a School Improvement Plan for reading, language arts, and math, and the teacher representatives presented the plan to the schools entire faculty and staff at a faculty meeting. Faculty and staff provided feedback for each study group to consider, which representatives documented and added to the original School Improvement Plan draft. The school covenant and mission statements, also mandated by the district as part of the School Improvement Plan, were created with input from the entire school faculty. HCSD central office requested that each school submit their first draft of the respective School Improvement Plans by March 3, 2003. Creekside made revisions to the plan following this initial submission and the district accepted Creekside's final draft during the summer of 2003. Creekside faculty and staff will implement components contained within their school's Improvement Plan throughout the 2003-2004 school year.

Summary

The GA READS Grant and various Partnership initiatives provided the plan and impetus for change across the school and within teachers' classrooms. Creekside faculty and staff began implementing changes required through the GA READS Grant and various Partnership initiatives during the 2002-2003 school year. Faculty and staff also spent the year planning how they could merge these required changes into the School Improvement Plan.

In the following chapter, I provide a description of the specific Partnership reforms implemented at Creekside during the 2002-2003 school year. Following this description, I rewind to the Partnership's first implementation phase to explain how the school faculty's interpretations of Partnership initiatives mediated the reform process and impacted how

Partnership reforms were carried out at the school. In chapter six, I present findings that explain how Creekside's teachers interpreted their experiences as Partnership stakeholders during the 2002-2003 school year. I use chapter six to present categories that explain how individual and school-wide influences shaped teachers' relationships to Partnership reform efforts and led them to interpret reform initiatives in very different ways. In chapter seven, I turn our attention to the classroom. Using the interview data collected during the 2003-2004 school year, I show how the school's reforms impacted teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices. I conclude this study in chapter eight, where I present implications for federal and state education policymakers, districts, schools, and teachers as they continue exploring how to successfully implement comprehensive school reforms.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The School Faculty's Experiences of the Partnership Planning Process

The process of change within Creekside Elementary School and the overall Partnership

Reform model is continually being constructed and reconstructed through a reflexive process,

influenced by a web of interactions between Creekside faculty, staff, students and families,

HCSD school district administrators, members of the greater Hillside community, and University

of the South faculty and students. Each group's views influenced the way the school faculty

understood, changed, and carried out these reforms, which ultimately influenced the physical,

social, and intellectual development of each child in the school. The model below illustrates

these interactions.

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│                          │                 │        PLAN              │
│  1. Faculty & Staff      │                 └──────────────────────────┘
│  2. Hillside Community   │                 
│  3. Students and Families│          
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                    │          │  1. Faculty and Staff    │
                    │          │  2. Creekside Community  │
                    │          │  3. Students             │
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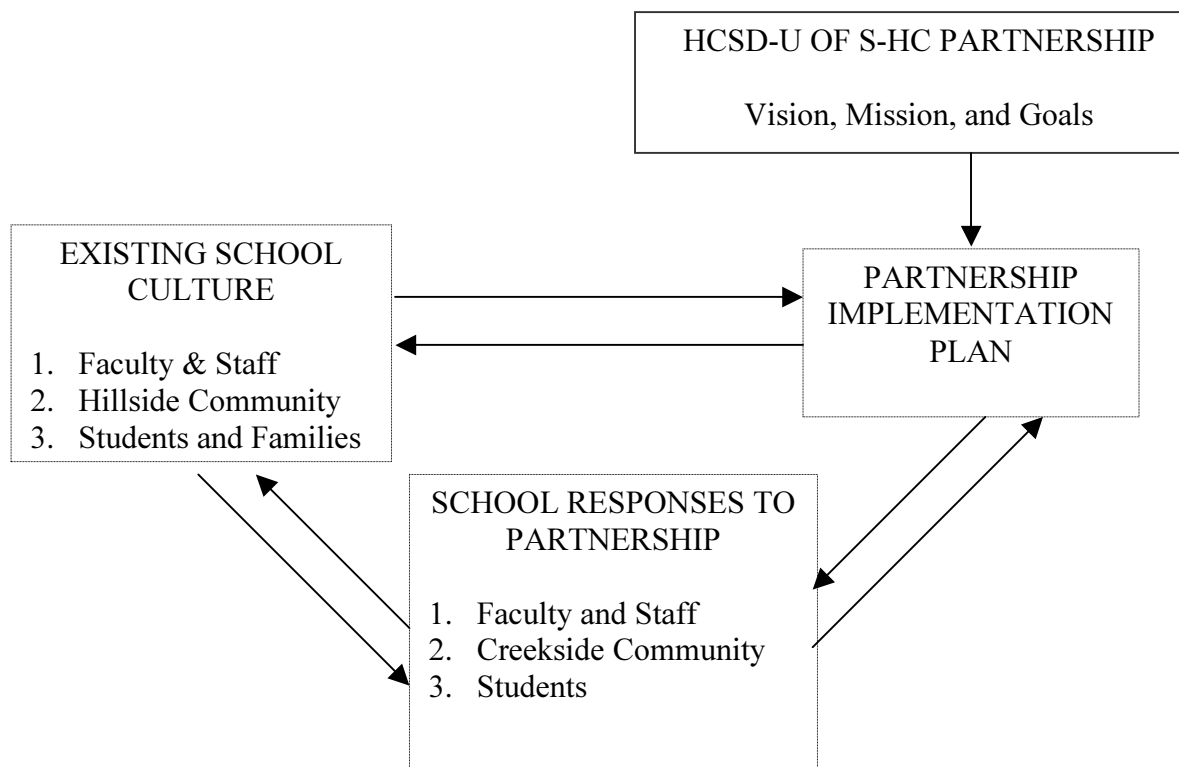
Creekside Elementary implemented several reforms through multiple initiatives during the 2002-2003 school year, including (1) the Partnership Reform Initiative, (2) the Georgia Reading Excellence Literacy Program, and (3) the Hillside County School District's School Improvement Process. The Design Team intended Partnership initiatives to support the school's transition into a community-learning center. The Georgia Reading Excellence Grant (Georgia READS) proposal included several initiatives intended to improve literacy instruction at school and in the home. The district's School Improvement Process provided schools with a systematic approach for developing plans to improve student achievement over the following three years. At Creekside, the School Improvement Process represented the necessary vehicle for aligning Partnership and grant related programs and resources into the school's overall plan for improvement.

The 2002-2003 school year sparked Creekside's efforts to implement both the Partnership Reform and GA READS Grant Initiatives, and to develop a School Improvement Plan to align reforms and support the school's transition into a community-learning center. Accomplishing these multiple tasks proved to be a monumental undertaking for everyone at the school. Teachers quickly found themselves overloaded with demands to implement a new literacy program, integrate Partnership resources and initiatives into their classrooms, and collaborate to develop a three-year School Improvement Plan, while adhering to the traditional district and state-mandated professional development requirements.

Despite several difficulties and setbacks during the implementation process, the school and their partnering stakeholders implemented a number of grant and Partnership-related initiatives throughout the year. In this chapter, I report findings collected from documents, seven interviews conducted during the fall semester of 2002, and field notes from 34 observations

conducted in fall 2002. I begin by describing the Partnership and school-related initiatives that

Creekside implemented during the 2002-2003 school year. Following this description, I turn the

clock back to the Partnership's planning process, which occurred during the 2001-2002 school

year. In this section, I use three significant milestones to explain how the school faculty

interpreted the Partnership planning process. These milestones become important for

understanding how teachers interpreted and carried out reforms during the school's first year of

implementation.

<div align="center">A Description of Partnership Activities Initiated at Creekside</div>

University faculty worked closely with district administrators and school faculty to

implement eleven major initiatives at Creekside during the 2002-2003 school year. While

initiatives such as the new year-round calendar schedule, an emerging family literacy center, and

university curriculum support services in literacy and math had an immediate and direct impact

on Creekside teachers' working lives, other initiatives such as the calendar intercession activities,

art enrichment project, university counseling services, and after school programs had little

impact. The wide array of activities and initiatives described below suggested to Creekside

faculty that university stakeholders would be highly visible in the school, directly impacting

students' school experiences. In fact, this was the case very early in the school year, and many

teachers believed early on that high levels of university stakeholder involvement would continue

throughout the school year.

<div align="center">*A New Year-Round School Calendar*</div>

The Partnership's Vision for Community Learning Centers included an extended year

calendar that operated under a quarter system. On August 1, 2002, Creekside began classes

under the new schedule, which contained 195 school days instead of the traditional 180. The

month of July constituted summer vacation, with three separate two-week breaks taken in mid-October, late December through the first week in January, and late March through the first week in April. The 15 school days added to the school year were split into three one-week sessions, with normal activities replaced by specialized educational activities that focus on remediation and enrichment. The Hillside County Leisure Services worked in conjunction with the district and university to provide activities for students during these intercessions. The increase in school days for both pilot schools represented approximately half a million dollars in extra spending from the district.

Intercession Activities offered to Students at the Partnership Schools

The fall 2002 Intersession represented a true financial and personnel collaboration (Recreation and Leisure Studies Department, University of the South, Partnership Pilot Schools, Hillside County Leisure Services) among district, university and community partners. One hundred thirty six students from both pilot schools participated in intersession activities during the fall 2002 semester and 170 students participated in activities during the spring 2003 semester. Intercessions activities revolved around themes encompassing the arts and sciences. Students participated in several activities, which included a University of the South campus tour, trips to the zoo and a visit to the local recycling facility. University students came to the school during intercessions to put on presentations and facilitate various experiential learning activities.

New school mission and covenant to drive changes and decision-making

With the planned transition from traditional schools to community learning centers, each school collaboratively developed a mission statement and covenant to reflect their collective beliefs about how teaching and learning should happen in their respective schools. University and district Partnership stakeholders facilitated school covenant development meetings with

faculty members during a summer retreat, which was held in May, 2002. The Partnership

Design Team planned for Creekside to use the mission statement and covenant to drive changes

in curriculum and instruction, assessment, professional development, school decision-making

structures, modes of communication, and school climate.

Literacy and Mathematics Support Services from University of the South Faculty and Students

Professors and students from the University of the South offered teachers classroom

support and professional development in language arts and mathematics. Dr. Karen Burton,

Professor in the Department of Language Education, worked with teachers in their classrooms to

integrate writing workshop. Burton continued her role as a consultant to school faculty to assist

in guiding the school's transformation into a community learning center. All professional

development activities were integrated the facilitation of planning and change for the School

Improvement Process. Dr. Kathy Redding, a university professor in the Department of Reading

Education, offered an on-site reading course to teachers and staff at Creekside. Teachers

received either professional development or college credit for taking the course, which

developed out of specific requirements mandated by a Georgia READS grant. A university

doctoral student and published author volunteered five hours per week to help implement writing

workshop components into teachers' classrooms.

Dr. Ernestine Newman, a professor in the Department of Mathematics Education,

provided professional development seminars in math curriculum and instruction for teachers

once a month. A university graduate student in math education worked with her to develop a

materials inventory for each grade level and provide other support services as requested by

faculty and staff.

During the spring 2002 semester, The Creekside Math CIA Committee collaborated with university faculty to develop a grant proposal that ultimately funded a part time math coordinator in 2003-2004. The Math Coordinator provided ongoing professional development and classroom support for teachers to implement differentiated math instruction and active mathematics learning strategies.

Literacy Resource Center Supporting Literacy in Students' Homes and at the School

A new family literacy center (FLC), funded through both the Georgia READS literacy grant and Partnership Initiative, was formed to improve literacy achievement in grades kindergarten through three (because grant funding only covered students in grades k-3, students in grades four and five could only receive assistance if they have siblings in the lower grades). The FLC provided programs and support services for students and their families to promote literacy in the family and to bridge the economic and cultural gaps between home and school. The literacy coordinator provided support and assistance to families in need and worked with adults on parenting skills and resource coordination. For instance, the FLC coordinator organized GED courses and a school to work training program to help parents make the transition into the workforce. In addition, the literacy coordinator worked with the school counselor to develop a program called, "Parents as Teachers." This program was designed to train parents how to use strategic questioning and conversation through shared reading experiences at home, to encourage children's critical reading strategy development.

Visits to Innovative Schools around the Country

The Partnership funded several site visits to other community learning centers and innovative schools around the country. Select Design Team members, pilot school administrators, community representatives, counselors, teachers, and staff, visited schools with

family resource centers (FRC) and consulted with school faculty who successfully integrated research-based instructional and family-focused programs into their schools. Several faculty members expressed that these visits were critical for understanding how to transition these programs into Creekside and for seeing the purpose these programs can serve for students and families.

Art Enrichment Collaborative Project

Dr. Rita Underhill, a professor in Art Education at The University of the South (U of S), worked with Creekside teachers to construct grade-level appropriate art activities for all grade levels. Pairs of pre-service art teachers (two to three per class) spent an hour each week teaching art lessons to Creekside students. Grade appropriate lessons were based on drawings by a local artist and designed to integrate art into the curriculum. As a culminating activity to this project, the local artist visited the school to talk to students about his art, which included paintings, drawings and lithographs. The student-created projects were hung in the cafeteria, covering the cafeteria walls throughout the 2002-2003 school year.

U of S Faculty and Students Providing Psychological and Counseling Services for the School

A one-year Partnership grant funded the university's School Psychology Program to provide counseling for Creekside students with severe emotional and/or behavioral problems. Dr. Nancy Milledge, a professor in the Department of School Psychology, supervised the program, which offered parent workshops, student consultations, and teacher consultations throughout the year. During the first semester of 2002-2003, school psychology doctoral students conducted individual interventions with children in need of individual therapy and consultation. Students volunteered to speak with teachers about problem solving and classroom management issues.

After School Enrichment Programs

The Department of Recreational and Leisure Studies (RLST) under the direction of Ellen Carlisle, U OF S Assistant Professor, worked with the Hillside County After-School Program to conduct enrichment programs for Creekside students. Creekside students participated in the Future Problem Solving Program (FPSP) and a program called "Successful Recipes," where students used role-plays and discussions to teach skills for coping with future challenges.

Partnership Mentoring Program

Two representatives from the Department of Counseling and Human Resources Development and HCSD high school met with male students from Creekside to conduct the Partnership Mentoring Program. This program aimed to establish mentoring relationships with students to model appropriate behaviors and empower the younger males to strive for excellence in and outside of the classroom.

Classroom Assistance Offered Through Early Childhood Certification Program

Early Childhood Education students worked with teachers at Creekside beginning in May 2002. Two university faculty members coordinated the ECCO (Early Childhood Certification Option) program with Kathy Evans, a teacher at Creekside. The program provided a classroom practicum and student teaching experience for students enrolled in the program. Students were able to observe and work in multiple classrooms and participated in professional development activities at the school.

Summary

The Partnership successfully implemented eleven major initiatives at Creekside during the 2002-2003 school year. Faculty across the university supported the school's attempt to transition into a community-learning center, including professors from the School of Education,

School of Business, School of Social Work, and the School of Arts and Sciences among others. The College of Education allocated money to support faculty and student involvement in the school. University graduate and undergraduate students volunteered to work with Creekside faculty and students through teacher and school counseling practicum courses, the intersession day camps, after school enrichment programs, and tutoring programs. The Partnership Design Team worked with the Hillside County School District to redistribute funds for a year-round calendar schedule, and community organizations provided various types of support to Creekside through intercession day camps and after-school programs.

The above list of initiatives reflected the Partnership's attempt to bring together the University of the South, the Hillside School District, and the Hillside community to share responsibility for improving educational outcomes for Creekside students. Next, I rewind to the 2001-2002 school year and explain how the school faculty experienced the Partnership planning process.

The Impact of Three Milestones on the Partnership Reform Initiative at Creekside

Although the Design Team's was successful in meeting its goals in 2002-2003, the Partnership planning process, which occurred in 2001-2002, ultimately divided Partnership stakeholder groups and influenced low levels of reform implementation. Creekside faculty interpreted the Design Team's initial collaborations with the school as a top-down decision-making process that silenced the school faculty and discredited teachers' expertise. Subsequent Partnership decisions sustained conflicts between the school and Design Team and prompted almost half the faculty and staff to resign from their positions by the end of the 2001-2002 school year. A Partnership retreat facilitated processes for ground roots change at the school; however, the retreat led newly hired teachers to form unrealistic expectations for the school's transition

process. Despite the retreat's success in facilitating school involvement and increasing teacher buy-in, conflicting interpretations about how plans should be carried out divided the school and prompted some teachers to resist reforms once the 2002- 2003 school year began.

Below, I use three milestones to explain how the Partnership planning process mediated Creekside's interpretations and responses to reforms and created unintended consequences for Partnership stakeholders. Milestones include (1) the initial selection of the Partnership Schools (spring, 2001), (2) the change from a traditional school calendar to a new year-round calendar (fall 2001-spring 2002), (3) a Partnership Retreat, where several Partnership stakeholders introduced Creekside faculty members to the Partnership Reform Initiative and facilitated their development of a new school mission and covenant (summer 2002).

The Initial Selection of Creekside Elementary as a Partnership School, Spring 2001

One of the first accomplishments of the Design Team was to select two Partnership Schools that would become community-learning centers. The Design Team envisioned these centers to be responsive to the needs of the community by providing integrated services for students and families with the goal of improving student learning and development. The factors that went into choosing the two schools included the following: state and district test scores, language issues, location within the Hillside community, access to technology at home, transportation to and from school, the number of families needing health insurance, student mobility rates, The Department of Family and Child Services' (DFACS) involvement in the school, the number of referrals to the school's Student Support Services Team (SST), family/guardian involvement, school retention rates, SES/poverty/free and reduced lunch rates, out of school suspension rates, counselor/social worker referral rates, student grades, and student attendance, among others. After considering the factors indicated above at each HCSD elementary school, the Partnership Design Team chose

Creekside and Eisenhower to be Partnership Pilot Schools, which were respectively located on the town's east and west sides. Creekside and Eisenhower Elementary Schools ranked among the lowest achieving schools in the district[14] and became the major reason for the Design Team selecting these two schools to participate in the Partnership Initiative. According to one Design Team member, "We could have chosen from many different schools" that met the criteria, as several schools in the Hillside district performed well below state standards in key areas when the decision was made.

During the spring of 2001, Olivia Nash and Kathy Packard[15] met with the Creekside Elementary School faculty to announce that their school had been chosen as a Partnership Pilot School. After this meeting, a few Creekside teachers expressed their initial excitement about the possibilities of working with university faculty.

> I liked the idea of the Partnership from the very beginning. I was very excited, and when I first heard [Kathy and Olivia] talking about [their ideas], in my head I was thinking, 'I want to be a part of this' (Kamille, faculty member, fall 2002 interview).

Other teachers were upset that the university imposed their own agenda without consulting anyone in the school.

> I remember it was not pleasant, and I'm glad that I can't remember some of the details now because there are some things we don't need to remember, necessarily. I remember some people feeling offended professionally that no one had discussed this with us (Karla, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

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[14] School achievement in this case was determined by examining scores on state standardized tests, including the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, and the state's writing exam.
[15] Dr. Olivia Nash was the district's Executive Director for Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Kathy Packard was the Director of Academic Initiatives at the University of the South. Both were members of the Nuts and Bolts Team and the Partnership Design Team.

Creekside teachers' ambivalence increasingly turned to fury as Nash and Packard continued discussing the implications of being a Partnership School. Many became "professionally offended" that no one had asked them to contribute their knowledge and expertise to this major school reorganization that was now being imposed on them. Only a select few were excited about the idea that research-based processes and practices would pervade teaching and learning in the school, seeing it as a tremendous opportunity for professional development.

Nash and Packard indicated to teachers later in this meeting that everyone, including the school principal, would be asked to interview for positions at the school the following year. In addition, Nash and Packard told teachers that if they were hired to work at the school, they would be asked to make a five-year commitment to the school. The fact that the faculty would be guaranteed a job in the district, regardless of whether or not they were hired to work at Creekside, did nothing to comfort teachers, particularly veteran teachers. In addition, many teachers were unwilling to make a five-year commitment, especially considering the uncertainty regarding Partnership programs and expectations for teachers working in the Partnership Schools.

One veteran teacher illuminated her feelings of resentment toward the Partnership Design Team, as she explained how the initial Partnership selection process reinforced teachers' perspectives that district's central administrators could not be trusted.

> The biggest issue was what they told us initially. They said that we didn't have a job. Everyone was going to have to reapply and interview for his or her position here. They told us that no one had a job here next year, even [the Principal]. And teachers, if they wanted to stay, would have to sign a contract and make a five year commitment…we

were told that we would be placed in another school and we were guaranteed a position in the district, but they didn't even let us give options for schools when this first came out (Charlotte, intermediate teacher, spring 2003 field notes).

Several teachers indicated that they were professionally offended by such policies, interpreting them as evidence that the district did not value Creekside teachers' contributions to children's learning and disregarded their expertise as professional educators.

The design team was already formed. We were told… we at Creekside were told that we were one of *the* schools. And my words are bitter. We were told. We were not asked. We were not consulted. We were told… None of us in that building had any input into any of the processes leading up to that choice (Karla, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

Nuts and Bolts members could not answer many of the questions that began to emerge among school members at this meeting. While the Partnership Vision contained specific components to be implemented at Creekside (i.e., see Partnership action plans, p. 98-99), the specific plans for determining *how* such components would be implemented was to be negotiated among Partnership Stakeholders, including school faculty, parents, university faculty, and district administrators. Thus, Nuts and Bolts members were unable to provide the school with specific information pertaining to the reform process and expectations for the Creekside faculty and staff. For instance, the Nuts and Bolts members announced at this meeting that a new year-round calendar *might be explored* at the Partnership schools, along with other possible changes that would become part of Creekside's transition into a community-learning center. Nuts and Bolts members could not answer questions regarding a new calendar structure, such as the number of additional school days and teacher-planning days to be added, as well as changes in how

vacation days would be distributed throughout the year. Nuts and Bolts members left many questions unanswered at the end of this meeting. As a result, teachers and staff were left with a tremendous number of uncertainties regarding the Partnership's influence on the school. The overall vision and specific changes to be implemented at the school was not clear to many.

> They said the calendar might be different, but that's all they really said. For a while it felt like there were so many unknowns. They said, 'there might be an extended calendar. There might be other things done differently, but it was vague (Kathy, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

These uncertainties, combined with a perception that the selection decision came "from the top-down" and was imposed on teachers without consultation, eventually influenced almost half the school faculty (21 of 45 faculty members) to transfer schools, retire early, or resign from their positions.

The Design Team announced that one representative from each Partnership School could participate in ongoing Partnership reform planning and implementation. The day after the initial selection meeting, Creekside's Principal called an impromptu meeting to discuss issues and concerns involving the school's new Partnership status and to announce that Creekside could send one person to represent the school at Design Team meetings. After discussing this issue, the school faculty and staff collectively decided that one representative was not enough to ensure that teachers' voices would be heard at Design Team meetings. Instead, the faculty decided to send three school representatives to the meeting, instead of the one that was recommended by current members of the Design Team.

> [Faculty representatives from Creekside] were quite vocal at the [Design Team] meeting and had very definite stand on where we thought we stood in it. We wanted our voice

heard. And we refused to have only one member on the Design Team, and consequently

we had three because we felt that the teachers are the vast majority of the people involved

in the partnership, therefore we should have a higher percentage of voice (Paula, special

area teacher, fall 2002 interview).

The Design Team accepted Creekside's demand for three representatives to serve on the

team at a meeting held later in the spring 2002 semester. Creekside requested that the Design

Team begin immediately to explore ideas for implementing a new year-round calendar, as many

faculty members were most uncomfortable with the unknowns surrounding the Design Team's

plans. The Design Team agreed to develop a Calendar Action Team to look into these issues and

make recommendations to the Design Team. After this meeting, many Creekside faculty

members became confident that Design Team member heard their concerns. Despite the

meeting's success in developing consensus between Design Team and school stakeholders,

interviews with six Creekside teachers and support faculty indicated that several faculty

members remained wary. Two new teachers and one faculty member expressed their enthusiasm

for the reforms in these interviews; however, each of the three remaining classroom teachers

commented that they and those with whom they worked remained suspect of the process through

which the Design Team developed reforms. Not all Creekside teachers were convinced that the

formal implementation process would become a "mutually-beneficial partnership where

leadership, resources and accountability are shared" with Creekside's faculty and staff

(Partnership Vision Statement, 2001).

Throughout the spring 2002 semester, several collaborative discussions between the

school and Partnership Design Team led Creekside faculty members to increasingly perceive

positive changes in the ways in which decisions were being made. Design Team members

became vocal about opening their meetings to anyone at the school interested in attending and contributing to decisions being made during the Partnership's initial planning phase. With three representatives from each pilot school on the design team, the school faculty became more confident that their ideas for change would be heard and considered. The Design Team opened their meetings to all Creekside faculty members, which led to a new Design Team membership. Ultimately, it was decided that teachers at the pilot schools should be given the choice to stay at their respective school or transfer to another school in the district. The following quotes illustrate teachers' budding confidence in the shared decision-making Partnership reform process.

> And eventually [the Design Team] decided that, yes, you should be able to decide if you want to stay here or not. And if you're going to leave you should be able to give a choice of three schools that you would like to go to. It doesn't mean that you would get those schools, but at least, they were trying to work with us (Kathy, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

In summary, the Partnership's initial selection process and implementation policies sparked initial distrust between Creekside and their external Partners. Eventually, this distrust led many teachers to resist reform implementation. After several follow-up meetings and discussions between key Design Team members and Creekside representatives, the Design Team reconsidered many of their initial plans. As a result, Creekside faculty became more willing to cooperate in the Partnership Reform Initiative and began to recognize their status as equal partners.

Year-Round School Calendar Planning, Fall 2001-Spring 2002

The Partnership's Vision for Community Learning Centers includes an extended year calendar that operates under a quarter system. On August 1, 2002, Creekside Elementary School began classes under the new schedule. The calendar has 195 days instead of the traditional 180. The month of July constitutes summer vacation, with three separate two-week breaks taken in mid-October, late December through the first week in January, and late March through the first week in April. The 15 school days added to the school year were split into three one-week sessions, with normal activities replaced by specialized educational activities that focus on remediation and enrichment. Hillside County Leisure Services worked in conjunction with the University of The South to provide activities for students during these intercessions.

With the change to an extended school-year calendar, several faculty and staff members decided to leave Creekside Elementary School. In total, twenty-one school faculty and staff members resigned from their positions, requested transfers to work at another school in the HCSD district, or retired. Faculty members who stayed at the school through 2002-2003 stated that the calendar change was the primary reason for the high turnover rate last year. One teacher reported, "It was the single biggest emotional issue for the staff, and that's why we lost so many people." Interviews with four faculty members and conversations with classroom teachers during the fall 2002 semester indicated that a number of faculty and staff members did not agree that a year-round calendar was the most effective use of limited resources. These faculty and staff members once again felt silenced throughout the calendar planning process, and several resigned after key Design Team members from the community, district and university did not listen to their concerns. Others felt more comfortable teaching in a school with a traditional calendar. A local newspaper article supported faculty members' comments that a few teachers

had children who attended schools that operated on the traditional calendar schedule. These teachers left Creekside and found jobs at other schools to stay on the same schedule as their children.

Although Creekside faculty was not convinced that a calendar change was necessary, three Creekside faculty members agreed to represent the school on the Calendar Action Team. Throughout the calendar planning process, the school's sense of empowerment once again dwindled. Although most were not against spreading the school days out more evenly to shorten the summer break, faculty members became frustrated that their specific concerns were not being considered or addressed.

> The research results were very equivocal. Some research found that there were differences, and some found there weren't differences, and some found there were differences with certain populations (Kamille, faculty member, fall 2002 interview). It seemed that the shorter summer was the most critical thing with low-income children. Not so much having more days, but having the shorter summer where there wouldn't be so much down time without instruction (Kathy, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview). Of the three people who were on the calendar committee, two have left Creekside. Now the fact that they were on the committee would be an indication that they were interested and excited about the changes of the Partnership, and now they're gone. And [the school faculty and staff] felt that they were not listened to and their ideas were critiqued, put down, smooshed, whatever else, in those meetings (Karla, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

With a limited amount of funds, the Creekside faculty was not convinced that increasing the number of school days was the most effective way to spend a limited budget. In addition, those

who read the research on lengthening the school year did not buy into the idea that a longer school year would improve student achievement. Some were dubious of Partnership Design Team members who claimed that money to pay for additional calendar days was not an issue. One teacher who was actively involved in the calendar planning process expressed concerns about the district using their limited resources to add extra calendar days.

> We were told all along, 'don't worry about the money. Don't worry about the money.' And we kept saying, 'how can you not worry about the money?' There's only a limited amount. And I thought there were better ways to spend the money than [increasing calendar days] (Kamille, faculty member, 2002 interview).

Several factors influenced most teachers' view that calendar planning process was another "top-down" initiative that silenced teachers and ignored their expertise. First, the superintendent was previously involved in an organization devoted to promote year-round schooling. This news led teachers to believe that the calendar change was going to happen regardless of their concerns. One teacher expressed her frustration that teachers felt silenced during the calendar planning process.

> Our superintendent was a past president of the year-round school association. So why are we surprised that we weren't heard? A bunch of teachers were saying, 'Well, why did we go through all this nonsense? Just let him tell us." And see, and this was one of my frustrations about the process is that it was supposed to be teacher driven, but the first thing you do is so top down (Karla, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

Second, three faculty members who participated in the calendar planning process indicated that a few Design Team members were convinced that adding three weeks to the school year was critical for increasing student achievement. As a result, Creekside faculty met

several times outside of formal Design Team meetings to develop alternative calendars in an attempt to compromise with these Design Team members. Despite Creekside representatives' efforts to reconstruct several proposed calendar options, the Calendar Action Team did not accept these options, defending their stance with research literature on year-round schooling. Third, four Creekside faculty members commented that a few calendar action team members outside the school, including university, district, and community representatives, were more vocal about their ideas than school representative team members. This left Creekside's Design Team representatives feeling that their ideas were silenced in calendar meetings. Fourth, one teacher commented that the Calendar Action Team presented several calendar proposals that neglected to include teacher-planning days. Informal conversations with other teachers throughout the semester indicated that teachers felt this was a critical component that should not have been left out. They perceived the omission as evidence that members outside the school did not understand that adequate planning time is critical for teachers' classroom effectiveness. After several months, the calendar planning process left teachers feeling silenced and powerless:

> The calendar meetings [were] a mess for such a long time. It seems like there were three [calendar proposals] that had been presented to us, and they were all a mess in our opinion. Different people worked on proposals to be considered. We were asking for consideration, and there were certain factors that we felt might have been overlooked. But they [The Design Team] wouldn't listen to us (Kathy, primary teacher, fall 2002 interview).

> There were some very strong people on that committee. And a lot of people were saying that [a year-round calendar] was what the superintendent wanted. So why even talk

about this because we would have gotten it anyway (Paula, special area teacher, fall 2002 interview).

The calendar planning process resulted in a permanent change in school days. Many faculty members who decided to stay at Creekside for the following school year made a conscious effort to move forward with the Partnership reform effort, despite their disagreements with the Design Team's decision to implement the new calendar schedule.

Several parents pulled their children from the school. A local newspaper article published during the summer of 2002 indicated that parents who worked full-time found the traditional calendar schedule more conducive for finding childcare assistance, particularly during the summer months. In addition, families with children attending different schools wanted to keep their kids on the same calendar schedule. Later in the school year, the principal commented that although student numbers at Creekside were excessively low up to the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year (especially in pre-k and kindergarten), student enrollment eventually increased and stabilized near the previous year's enrollment.

Partnership Retreat, Summer 2002

Observations at Design Team meetings during spring 2002 semester indicated that the Nuts and Bolts team took the lead in organizing a Partnership Retreat for faculty and staff at both Partnership Schools during the summer of 2002. The purpose of the retreat was to bring together the Partnership pilot school faculty and staff to discuss critical issues involving both schools' transitions into community learning centers. The Design Team appointed a Retreat Committee to survey Partnership pilot school teachers and administrators and to determine topics around which to center the retreat. After the Retreat Committee determined retreat topics, they sent an agenda to both Partnership schools. Retreat participants represented new and veteran teachers at

the Partnership schools, Partnership school support faculty and staff and school administrators, HCSD district administrators, and professors and other faculty from the University of the South. Eight university faculty members spoke at the retreat, addressing issues around school reform, curriculum and instruction, cultural diversity, service learning, and democratic learning. School faculty and staff met in small and large groups and focused on team building, curriculum enrichment development for the fall and spring calendar intercessions, enhancing cultural diversity; implementing service learning into the curriculum; and brainstorming lists of resources, fieldtrips, and other innovative ideas to support instruction.

The retreat was a venue that facilitated teachers' excitement and diverse expectations for the coming school year. New Creekside teachers became excited about working in a school that would be implementing progressive, research-based teaching and learning practices. Many new teachers envisioned cultural and structural changes to take hold within the first year of implementation. These teachers wanted to be a part of something that had potential to transform how school is carried out at Creekside, which they believed would eventually spread into other HCSD schools. For new Creekside teachers in particular, a "balloon of hope" was inflated at the retreat that they believed would sustain the excitement, collaborative decision-making, and progressive pedagogical changes that were planned for coming year.

> I went to that retreat, and I was so excited. I thought, 'service learning.' And I was trying to think about how I could fit what we're doing in with service learning because I thought we were headed there. I was so excited, and I thought that teachers would be talking to students at the very beginning of the year and coming up with wonderful ideas of how they can serve the community. And they'll pick something and integrate it into the curriculum. Oh, it was great (Tamara, faculty member, fall 2002 interview).

And the retreat was very successful. A lot of people were kind of sitting on the fence. I think it kind of nudged them over to the partnership side (Kamille, faculty member, fall 2002 interview).

While a few teachers with prior experience at the schools were excited about the proposed changes that came from this retreat, others approached the coming year with trepidation about the tremendous differences between last year's realities and the coming year's envisioned plan for the school. Although many teachers left the retreat with a renewed sense of hope for what could be accomplished during the coming school year, some continued to resist the Partnership's plans for change. One teacher commented, "There were people who weren't excited. They were writing grocery lists and passing notes." Another teacher began to resist after implementing Partnership initiatives after the retreat, as she felt that too many external Partnership stakeholders did not respect her opinions about instruction.

I think we have too many people trying to tell us what to do. And what I mean with the Partnership is, and even with everybody else, is sometimes, like we're professionals and we went to school for four years. If I don't know what's good for my children, then I don't need to be teaching. And I don't like somebody telling me that I can't do worksheets. I think some of the people from the Partnership had strong ideas about this (Patricia, intermediate teacher, fall 2003 interview).

Later in the summer, a Creekside teacher representative from each grade level and other teacher support personnel met with the school principal and a university faculty member to develop a new school covenant. Covenant Committee members believed the covenant was the backbone of the new school's philosophy for learning and decided that it should be used to guide the school's decision-making processes. The committee concluded that all reforms would need

to be consistent with the new covenant before being implemented in the school. All decisions would be held up against the covenant before final decisions were made. Covenant Committee members believed that the covenant symbolized the kind of school Creekside would become in the coming year. The final draft of this covenant was submitted to the school early in the fall 2002 semester. A copy is provided below:

> The Creekside Community Learning Center is made up of parents, students, teachers, and community and university partners. Our goal is to nurture responsible citizens who make contributions to the community. We are working together to provide a secure and challenging environment where all learners are encouraged to:
>
> 1. Ask questions, explore, and make connections
>
> 2. Develop the skills to search for answers
>
> 3. Clearly and honestly communicate knowledge, ideas, and feelings
>
> 4. Confidently take risks and make mistakes in our continuing desire to learn
>
> 5. Show respect for themselves, each other, and the environment
>
> 6. To inform and continuously improve our efforts we will create ways for learners to publicly demonstrate their growth, progress, and involvement.

In November 2002, Dr. Karen Burton, Partnership co-director and U of S faculty member in the Department of Language Education, facilitated a meeting with the entire faculty and staff to develop a school mission statement, which was intended to be a one-sentence statement that reflected the covenant. A copy of this mission statement reads as follows: Helping hands and growing minds = responsible citizens (Creekside mission statement, developed in November, 2002).

Barbara Tolken, a Covenant Committee member and Creekside Elementary teacher, announced that a new covenant had been developed for the school at the "welcome back to school" meeting on July 26th, 2002. As part of her announcement, Ms. Tolken added, "This is no longer Creekside School. This is now a community learning center." Ms. Tolken announced that the document represented the guiding principles for how to treat and communicate with children at the school. One teacher suggested hanging a few larger copies around the school as a way to communicate this new covenant with parents and students. Ms. Tolken and the school Principal reminded the faculty that the covenant was just a start and could revised. The Principal asked teachers to read through the covenant in their grade level teams and provide feedback for potential revisions.

Despite the work of the Covenant Committee and the announcement that the covenant "represents the guiding principles for how to treat and communicate with children at the school," several teachers perceived no changes in the ways that teachers communicated with children. In addition, the demands of the classroom prevented many from finding the time to make the changes discussed during the Partnership's planning phase and refined during the Partnership Retreat. The following quote illustrates how classroom realities created barriers for many teachers to focus changing their classroom and the larger school culture:

> It was hard the first few weeks of school for [classroom teachers] and administration because kids were filtering in for at least two weeks until the rest of Hillside County started. So we started school earlier, but [teachers] had to keep moving desks and chairs around for two weeks, redo name tags on things, and go over rules again for each new couple of kids that came in each day. And then kids were moved out of rooms too. And now they're talking about adding other sections to different grade levels, so there's still

this sense of 'okay, it's not final yet.' We don't even know which kids we're going to have all year. That can be frustrating, and you have just so much paperwork to deal with everyday, keeping track of kids coming in and going out, and who's being pulled for different things. You can't get anything else done. You can't think about 'wouldn't it be nice if…' because you're so burdened with tedious paperwork kinds of things (Frances, special area teacher, fall 2002 interview).

Time was not set aside to address the changes proposed at the retreat, nor was it set aside to discuss the new covenant and its implications on school-wide beliefs and practices among faculty, staff, students, Creekside families, and the broader community. As a result, the school faculty did not internalize the school covenant or utilize several implemented Partnership initiatives.

The school covenant was not mentioned outside of private circles until the school's first Leadership Committee (SILC) meeting in late October prompted the leadership committee to question its purpose within the school. A conversation among the School Improvement team, which at this time consisted of school administrators, teachers, staff, and two community members, represents how Creekside's symbol was forgotten.

Member 1: We should have the school covenant (with us).

Member 2: Has that been approved yet?

Member 3: Our team loved it.

Member 1: We sent this back with the team leaders and asked for additions or deletions, but nobody sent it to me.

Member 2: So we should have that (the covenant) in our hands and use it when we do our profile.

Member 4: We have a book with examples that will give us a way to start the profile. The original school covenant presented at the beginning of the school year was up for revision; however, a discussion of its implications for the school did not occur. Thus, the school never made revisions to the original document. The faculty eventually ignored the symbol developed to guide school change. New teachers' initial excitement turned to regret and disappointment, as the Partnership's vision for change was lost in a sea of paperwork and day-to-day challenges that drained the school's capacity for change. A small number of new teachers mentioned that they had never heard Creekside referred to as a community-learning center. While those involved in the Partnership's planning phase heard these words, they were still unclear about implications for practice contained within the Partnership's community-learning center vision.

Summary

The Partnership planning process led faculty members to interpret the Partnership Reform Initiative in very different ways, particularly between Creekside's new and returning faculty members. These diverse interpretations led to conflicting responses when the 2002-2003 school year began. In particular, the Partnership's initial selection process reinforced the distrust and resentment that many returning teachers already harbored against the HCSD central office. The Design Team's failure to include Creekside faculty members during the Partnership's planning phase, prompted school faculty and staff to distrust the Design Team's intentions to share decision-making and accountability with the school. The school resented the Design Team's plans to require all faculty members to re-interview for their positions and sign a five-year commitment, interpreting such plans as top-down reforms that failed to recognize faculty members' commitment to the Creekside community and professional expertise. In addition, the Nuts and Bolts members were unable to provide Creekside with specific processes and

procedures through which reforms would evolve and become implemented. Such uncertainties developed into Creekside's nebulous vision for change, which increased anxiety and distrust between the school and the Design Team.

The calendar planning process and Partnership retreat represented two processes through which the Creekside faculty constructed a clearer vision for change in the coming year. Despite this clearer vision, the calendar planning process divided the school and participating Partnership groups. The calendar process silenced the faculty and reinforced their resentment and distrust toward diverse stakeholder groups, ultimately contributing to a near 50% attrition rate by year-end.

The school's high attrition rate brought many new faculty members to the school with a fresh perspective on the Partnership Reform Initiative. Several new teachers transferred to Creekside primarily because they wanted to be involved in the Partnership Initiative from its inception. The retreat represented newly hired teachers' first experience with the Partnership Reform Initiative, leading them to construct very different perspectives about the Partnership change process from returning teachers. New teachers were excited about working in a school where money apparently would not impede planned changes. Furthermore, the retreat influenced newly hired faculty's recognition that a shared commitment to change was evolving between the school, the Design Team, and supporting stakeholders.

Interviews and observations during the 2002-2003 school year showed that new faculty members came to the retreat without a real understanding of returning faculty members' interpretations of the Partnership Reform Initiative to this point. Because they had no previous experience working at the school, new faculty members were unable to account for the traditional school culture when constructing expectations for change in the coming year. In

addition, these teachers did not foresee the day-to-day realities that would keep them from implementing reforms. Several new teachers brought philosophical and pedagogical views about teaching and learning that were consistent with the Partnership's vision for reform. Such views clashed with returning faculty members' philosophies and pedagogical beliefs, which members did not recognize until after the school year began.

New and returning faculty members' diverse Partnership experiences led to very different interpretations for how change would occur throughout the school year. These diverse interpretations divided faculty members, which prevented change from taking hold in the school. The enormous barriers encountered throughout the Partnership's first semester of implementation ultimately deflated the balloon of hope that sustained new teachers' enthusiasm for reform.

The school's experiences implementing a new covenant illuminate the barriers that prevented real change from occurring during the 2002-2003 school year. Those involved in development of a new covenant constructed unrealistic expectations that failed to account for the barriers encountered when a school attempts to alter traditional norms and practices (Sizer, 1984, Fullan, 1991). Specifically, differences in individual faculty members' beliefs about the pace of reform and the practical implications of ideas contained in the new school covenant sparked conflict that divided the faculty. Although everyone approved of the covenant, the diverse individual practices of teachers and the traditional school culture mediated the reform process and prevented the school from implementing reforms at high levels (Olsen and Kirtman, 2002).

In the following chapter, I begin by introducing the GA READS Literacy Grant, which represented a second major reform initiative implemented at Creekside in 2002-2003. While the district's School Improvement Process was designed to facilitate a grass-roots process to

integrate the Grant and Partnership Initiatives into one coherent school improvement plan, factors emerged that prevented real and lasting change from taking hold. Major themes and categories are presented to illuminate the school's culture and explain how teachers interpreted and responded to the multiple reform initiatives implemented in 2002-2003.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

The School Faculty's Experiences of the Partnership Reform Implementation Process

The complex challenges schools face when implementing reform initiatives are well documented (Desimone, 2002; Comer, 1980; Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002; van den Berg, Vandenberghe, and Sleegers, 1999). Teachers' feelings of uncertainty and concerns during innovations and the increased demands on the faculty's time can often make reform efforts seem overwhelming to those involved (Berends et al., 2002; Comer, 1980). The Partnership Reform Initiatives outlined in chapter five sparked both progress and areas of concern at Creekside Elementary during the year, as multiple reforms were planned and carried out. Being immersed in change brought a renewed sense of hope and indications of progress, while intensifying the conflict among faculty with different beliefs about the how reforms should be carried out. The impact of several Partnership Reform Initiatives, including the HCSD School District's school improvement process, a new year-round school calendar, and a new school literacy program funded by the federal GA READS grant, left teachers and support staff overwhelmed and exhausted. The looming threat of government takeover added to their anxiety, as pressure to improve student achievement on standardized tests created the impetus for change in a high stakes environment. It was in this context that teachers and staff worked toward improving their practice and the educational experiences, options and outcomes for all students at Creekside Elementary School during 2002-2003 (Partnership Vision Statement, 4/30/01).

Several themes emerged during the 2002-2003 school year, which illuminate the impact of the 2001-2002 Partnership planning process and subsequent reform initiatives on the school culture. In this chapter, I rely on the following forms of data to present thematic findings: (1) nine interviews conducted in 2002-2003,[16] (2) field notes from 60 observations and informal conversations conducted with the school principal, support faculty, teachers, and staff, and (3) a faculty and staff survey administered during the spring 2003 semester. I begin the chapter by setting the context for literacy in the school, as a large federal grant and the looming threat of government takeover influenced the school to focus on developing a coherent literacy program in 2002-2003. Teachers' pedagogical differences in literacy created a tense environment that divided the school and prompted some teachers to isolate themselves and resist reforms. Next, I turn to the issue of time and its impact on the school's capacity to change. Creekside's attempt to concurrently align and implement Partnership and grant-related reforms into an overall plan for school improvement proved to be an enormous task for everyone. I follow this with a description of district and school leadership practices and explain how these practices impacted school school-level decision-making and communication. School organization and climate impacted how faculty interpreted the reform implementation process. I continue this chapter by explaining how school decision-making structures led faculty members to perceive a select group of faculty and staff making key decisions. In addition, conflicting teacher-student communication practices divided the faculty and led certain teachers to isolate themselves from others in the school. I conclude with a discussion of the school's process for building a professional development plan to address changes in curriculum and instruction. In chapter eight, I narrow my focus into the

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[16] Seven participants were interviewed at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year. One participant was interviewed two additional times throughout the year.

classroom, using interview data with ten teachers to show how the changes implemented during the 2002-2003 school year impacted teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices.

Developing a Coherent School Literacy Program

Multiple programs were implemented at Creekside over the past several years to improve literacy instruction and student achievement. Models for teaching reading such as Success for All, America's Choice, Open Court Phonics, a reading fluency program started by a previous U of S professor, and other teacher-developed programs impacted teachers' literacy instruction in very different ways. To support their development of a coherent school-wide literacy program and improve students' literacy achievement, Creekside applied for a Georgia Reading Excellence Grant (GA READS) in 2001-2002. In spring 2002, the state awarded approximately $800,000 to Creekside over the next two years to implement a comprehensive literacy program in kindergarten through grade three. Below I provide a brief summary of the GA READS program and purpose, followed by a description of two school-based committees designed to oversee the school's literacy program.

The Context of Literacy at Creekside Elementary School

The Georgia Reading Excellence Program is a reading initiative that includes phonological awareness, explicit, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension. In 2001, the state of Georgia proposed the Georgia Reading Excellence Act Demonstration Sites (GA READS), a comprehensive three-year plan that includes reading improvement, tutorial assistance, and family literacy. The first year was designed for planning and disseminating best practices in scientific based reading research followed by two years of implementation for grantees. GA READS is authorized to carry out the following purposes:

1. Teach every child to read by the end of third grade

2. Provide children in early childhood with the readiness skills and support they need to learn to read once they enter school

3. Expand the number of high-quality family literacy programs

4. Provide early intervention to children who are at risk of being identified for special education inappropriately

5. Base instruction, including tutoring, on scientifically-based reading research

The GA READS grant was awarded to Creekside Elementary School and targeted resources for literacy improvement in grades kindergarten through three. The grant stipulated that schools who participated in the program were required to advance reading reform in their school by doing the following:

1. Improving the reading instruction practice of teachers and other instructional staff through professional development based on scientifically based reading research.

2. Carrying out family literacy services, including parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult training, and parent education.

3. Providing early literacy intervention to children experiencing reading difficulties, including kindergarten transition programs.

The GA READS Grant proposal outlined specific procedures for teachers to follow in their reading and writing instruction. As part of the grant, teachers in grades kindergarten through three agreed to combine Open Court and Readers workshop in their reading instruction, while those piloting the Open Court Program agreed to implement all components of this program through the 2003-2004 school year. Second grade teachers planned to continue using

the Reading Fluency Program started by a professor at the University of the South. All teachers agreed to implement a writing workshop model, based on the America's Choice model that teachers used during the previous school year. The school included specific procedures for using assessments to track student learning and for differentiating instruction. In addition, teachers agreed to attend an ongoing professional development course, where they would learn guided and shared reading strategies to implement in their classrooms.

Two literacy coordinators were hired with grant funds to assist teachers and staff in implementing grant components, including a classroom literacy coordinator, or "coach," and a family literacy coordinator. Responsibilities of the literacy coach included monitoring teachers' implementation of components written into Creekside's grant proposal and providing classroom support and coaching for teachers in grades k-3. The family literacy coordinator represented the link between the school and its families. The family literacy coordinator's responsibilities included placing interested parents into GED and/or ESL classes, coordinating school-wide literacy sessions for parents and their children, offering parent workshop sessions, and brokering resources with community resources to assist families in need. In addition, Even Start, which was a district-sponsored program established to support the district's families, worked with the literacy coordinators to assist the school's families and streamline services offered through the GA READS and Even Start programs.

Establishing a School Literacy Team to Support Reading and Writing Workshop Strategies

Beginning in the fall of 2000, staff began implementing the America's Choice model for school improvement, which carried with it an already established curriculum and well-defined program for implementing a readers and writers workshop into the school day. Included in the

America's Choice model was a school-based design team made up of school administration, literacy coaches, and teachers. Under this model, the school's design team oversaw implementation of the America's Choice program and provided classroom support and assistance to teachers in both reading and writing. Toward the end of the first year of implementation, the school decided not to continue implementing the America's Choice design. Instead, they applied for and received the federal GA READS Grant. While the school did not continue implementing the America's Choice model, they decided to keep parts of the readers and writers workshop portion of the program and wrote this into the Georgia READS grant proposal. After receiving the grant, the principal and other members of the design team agreed that they should continue using the design team structure as a way to work together to provide ongoing training and support to teachers implementing readers and writers workshop. Thus, during the 2002-2003 year, the design team became the Literacy Team, or Literacy Committee.

The Literacy Team is made up of the principal, the assistant principal, two literacy coordinators, the family literacy coordinator, and a university faculty member. Throughout the year, the Literacy Team monitored and oversaw progress in teachers' implementation of readers and writers' workshop and other instructional strategies written into the grant. In addition, the team made decisions about how leadership and the literacy coordinators could best support teachers in their classrooms as they implemented GA READS program components and the workshop approach.

Establishing a School Governance Board to Support and Oversee Grant Implementation

As a participant in the Georgia READS program, Creekside established a Governance Board to ensure that grant components were implemented in all kindergarten through grade three classrooms. HCSD central office representatives, Creekside administrators, teachers and support

staff, Creekside parents, Hillside community members, and one faculty member from The

University of the South all joined together to monitor and oversee progress in teachers'

implementation of all grant components. Without successful implementation of all grant

components, the school risked forfeiting the funding awarded through the grant. The Governance

Board had the same general purpose as the literacy team, except that their purpose was focused

solely on assuring that grant components were being implemented.

Division Emerging Through Teachers Conflicting Pedagogical Beliefs about Literacy Instruction

Early in the year, teachers' conflicting pedagogical beliefs prompted questions regarding

whether teachers should have to implement readers and writers workshop in their classrooms.

Several teachers in the school were participating in a pilot program to test the effectiveness of the

Open Court Reading Program, which utilizes instructional strategies very different from those in

readers and writers workshop. Initially, state evaluators who awarded the school a Georgia

READS Grant approved teachers' continuing the Open Court pilot program. In addition, second

grade teachers agreed years earlier to implement a reading fluency program in their classrooms,

which was developed by a professor from the University of the South. Like Open Court, this

program was being implemented before Creekside was awarded the grant, and it represented

another program that state evaluators approved when awarding the school its grant. Second grade

teachers and those piloting the Open Court wanted to continue implementing these programs

through their entirety to obtain more meaningful results about each program's impact on

students' reading abilities. Thus, many teachers were reluctant to implement the Readers

Workshop program component.

Despite approving the school's grant proposal, state evaluators later began pressuring

grant literacy coaches to facilitate uniformity in instructional strategies throughout their schools.

Toward the end of the first semester of 2002-2003, grant evaluators communicated their expectation for the school to implement all components of the six pillars of literacy in all classrooms, kindergarten through grade three. Specifically, the state recommended that school leadership work with literacy coordinators to enforce teachers who were originally given approval for teaching the Open Court program exclusively, to now begin phasing in components of the six pillars of literacy and differentiated instruction, by including readers and writers workshop in their reading programs.

The grant mandated that teachers implement certain strategies, and the literacy coordinator was given the charge of seeing these changes through in individual teachers' classrooms. However, six teachers uncomfortable with certain components of Readers Workshop resisted these changes and the support that came from the literacy coordinator. As the literacy coach was hired and employed by the state, she was obligated to follow through with the changes being recommended by state grant evaluators. Teachers became angry when the literacy coordinator began asking them to implement Readers and Writers Workshop, particularly because the state originally approved teachers' continuing other programs. The following quote illustrates the frustrations these teachers experienced as a result of the state's pressures to modify their instruction.

> This year being one of the Open Court pilot classrooms has not been a pleasant experience. It has to do with people not being sure. I think I'm supposed to be doing this and someone comes in and tells me something different. No wonder our children never master anything. We never stick with anything long enough for it to make a difference (Alice, primary teacher, Spring 2003 fieldnotes).

The k-3 literacy coordinator was placed in a very difficult situation. On one hand, she was being pressured by state evaluators to implement programs in all k-3 classrooms and facilitate the development of a more consistent curriculum across these grade levels. On the other hand, these six teachers never bought into these changes and resisted new grant-mandated programs. The literacy coordinator recognized teachers' resistance to new programs, as she struggled to implement state-recommended reading and spelling programs during the spring 2003 semester.

> I'm afraid they'll come after me with pitchforks if I try to implement this [new spelling program] in their classrooms… There are some teachers now who do not want me in their classrooms at all. But can I go in their rooms and say, you will do this? Will they learn from me if I force strategies and grant components upon them? I don't think so. I tried through grade level meetings to soften things, but many teachers see me as a state level person coming in and mandating things. Some teachers have implemented these approaches through [the professional development] course. They are implementing these things because when I observe, I see these things in the classroom. But they don't want me in the classroom. I do tell them that the state is looking for certain things, and if you're implementing these then this is good (Tamara, literacy coordinator, Spring, 2003 fieldnotes).

As the literacy coordinator continued trying to work with teachers, some teachers resisted help by explaining that they were given permission to do things differently when the grant was originally approved.

While both of the school's literacy coordinators pushed teachers to change by discussing grant-related strategies at grade level meetings and modeling the workshop approach to be

implemented, they ultimately lacked the power to enforce changes written into the grant. The school's leadership did not openly insist that teachers change, nor did they provide incentives or sanctions for those who followed through with changes. Thus, teachers uncomfortable with readers and writers workshop and other strategies written into the grant, successfully resisted many of these mandated changes. Toward the middle of the school year, many perceived the governance board talking in circles, as teachers were either slow to change or virtually completely resistant to many of their recommended changes. Select members of the Governance Board became concerned that the school would be given low scores when state evaluators arrived to assess the school's progress in implementing grant components.

> [When] the state comes back to [evaluate the school], they're not going to be happy with our progress or the way things are being done (Beth, primary teacher, 2-07-03 fieldnotes).

> Low implementation scores threatened to result in sanctions such as the state keeping

remainder of grant funds currently designated for the school. Although this did not occur in 2002-2003, low implementation levels may have influenced the state's decision not to award a similar federal grant for which Creekside wrote a proposal in 2003-2004.

Faculty Attrition Impacting Teacher Buy-In to Literacy Reforms

The high number of new faculty and staff hired before the 2002-2003 school year impacted the way in which GA READS program components were carried out. In total, twenty-one new faculty and staff, including eleven new classroom teachers[17], were hired before the start of the 2002-2003 school year. A few new teachers were not aware they were required to use Open Court Program components when they began their new positions and never agreed to use it

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[17] New classroom teachers represent those teachers who were new to the school in 2002-2003. Three of the eleven new teachers hired came to Creekside with no prior experience as classroom teachers. The eight remaining teachers had previous teaching experience in other schools before teaching at Creekside in 2002-2003.

in their classrooms. Other new teachers were willing to use the Open Court program, but did not

receive the support they needed from company representatives.

It has been difficult to get support from Open Court this year. Prior to this time, there was

someone who would come in and train teachers and answer questions. But teachers are

not getting the support they had last year. We had support from someone, but we don't

know what happened with this person. Our contacts were just lost (Rita, special area

teacher, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

So if you were a first year teacher using Open Court, then you've had no training on how

to use it (HCSD administrator, 3-12-03 fieldnotes)?

We had one training session at the beginning of the year, but then we lost our contact. I

requested for [the company representative] to come back, but we don't have that contact

anymore. We've had trouble contacting anyone from the company (School administrator,

3-12-03 fieldnotes).

Even our calls about materials are not returned (Rita, special area teacher, 3-12-03

fieldnotes).

Some faculty members perceived pedagogical conflicts occurring between new and

veteran teachers at the school. Although this perception does not capture the various

circumstances that divided the school faculty across many diverse groups and in complex ways,

several reasons explain how this perception emerged. First, the literacy coordinator provided

intensive and ongoing reading workshop support to all willing teachers. New teachers tended to

be more receptive to implementing reading and writing workshop strategies. In addition, new

teachers were more likely to attend the grant-sponsored professional development course and

work with the literacy coach to implement reading and writing workshop strategies in their

classrooms. Second, two new teachers did not agree that Open Court strategies were the most effective way to teach reading and refused to implement the Open Court program in their classrooms. Third, first-year teachers and those with little knowledge of the Open Court program received little support from Open Court representatives. As a result, first-year and new teachers adopted strategies recommended through the readers workshop approach, and a few chose to disregard Open Court altogether. Fourth, veteran teachers received a great deal of support from Open Court representatives during the previous year, and most continued to successfully implement Open Court components this year. Fifth, select veteran teachers who piloted the Open Court program became comfortable using this approach and perceived real advantages in terms of its effects on children's reading improvement.

In addition, several new teachers and faculty members were not involved in the Partnership planning and decision making that occurred during the 2001-2002 school year. Eleven new teachers and approximately ten more faculty and staff members were new to the school this year, and the only direct experience that many had with Partnership stakeholders prior to the start of school was at the summer retreat. It was here that many new faculty became very excited about the prospect of transitioning the school into a year-round community learning center. The excitement and planning that occurred at the retreat created lofty expectations for the Partnership and the school among new teachers. Many believed the plans they developed during the retreat, including the integration of service learning into the curriculum, creative field trips, and an overall cultural change driven by a new mission statement and covenant, would occur during the first year's implementation phase. However, six new teachers explicitly reported that their vision for the school and plans for school change during the 2002-2003 school-year did not take root.

Using the School Improvement Process to Find Common Threads Across Literacy Programs

Teachers and staff communicated their different ideas about how reading should be taught to children at their school during several school improvement meetings throughout the year. A common thread emerged throughout the school's ongoing conversations about reading instruction. While teachers expressed very different ideas about what their reading program should look like, virtually all teachers agreed that the school needed a consistent and coherent program that built on earlier years, beginning when students entered school and continuing through fifth grade. Faculty agreed that a consistent curriculum across grade levels would contribute to student learning by helping children see the connections and purpose of instructional programs from year to year.

> We really need to look at our reading program in this school. I have said our children are confused. We need to choose one thing, do it well, and stick with it. It's time that we decide- what is it that we want to do? Do we just want to piddle around or do we want to make a change (Alice, primary teacher, 4-23-03 fieldnotes).

> Teacher consistency in the curriculum is a big problem. Going from grade to grade in the same school, teachers are doing different things. Some of my kids are just now getting the hang of what we're doing. And then next year they'll have to start over again (Judy, intermediate teacher, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

The School Improvement Process created a forum for discussing teachers' multiple views about reading instruction. Despite these conversations, the faculty experienced tremendous challenges in reaching a consensus about what to include in their reading school improvement plan. The following quotes from a literacy coordinator and a teacher illustrated stark differences

thinking about how reading should be taught and what programs are most effective in teaching reading.

> If you want students to be critical thinkers and leaders, and not have their learning mandated, but have a voice and a choice, then you'll want to have a workshop approach. I don't think every class has to look the same, but when they're so oppositional, we need to make some choices [about these two competing program]. We are asking teachers to change by leaps and bounds. And it comes from a philosophical difference from teachers as authoritarians or teachers as facilitators (Tamara, support faculty, 4-23-03 fieldnotes).

> Our reading program is a big issue. Open Court is in our improvement plan, and we need to decide if we want to do this. If we don't decide, then we get back to teachers doing their own thing and inconsistency again. And I don't think we want to go back to Success For All, where we're all doing exactly the same thing at the same time. That's at another end of the continuum (Karla, primary teacher, 4-23-03 fieldnotes).

Despite having developed and turned in a School Improvement Plan, teachers remained uncertain about the school's overall literacy plan for 2003-2004. Although the Open Court program was included in the school's reading plan, reading study group members discussed rewording their plan to include phonics, but not being specific about using Open Court. The wide variation and strong opinions on both sides of the Open Court vs. Readers Workshop debate made it extremely difficult for teachers to make decisions about the school's reading program. A few teachers did not believe these programs could be effectively used in combination in the classroom, while most indicated that they could live with certain components of both programs. Cassandra Erlbaum, Director of Instructional Support for the Hillside County School District

(HCSD), spoke to the faculty about the school improvement plan and it's implications for teachers during 2003-2004.

> What you write in your action steps become the expectations for you as you teach here. You cannot opt out of them. For example, if Accelerated Reader is to be used x number of times per week and I don't like Accelerated Reader, it doesn't matter. I still have to do this. You need to think about this when you interview teachers and when you're thinking about coming back next year… Next year, there will be a dialogue once a month between the school and a support team made up mostly of district people. If a school is in corrective action, the support team must visit the school at least once a month. They will ask, 'Are you doing the things that were written into your School Improvement Plan?' They will also ask you, "What support do you need to implement your plan? Do you need more time, resources, etc.?" View this team as a support because by law you must have these plans implemented by next year. Districts have responsibility to schools in improvement. As a district, we're responsible for your implementing these action plans (Cassandra Erlbaum, HCSD administrator, 4-9-03 fieldnotes).

Cassandra Erlbaum's clarification of the school improvement plan's implications for faculty next year ignited concerns among teachers and prompted them to rethink the components written into the reading plan. A special area teacher expressed these concerns:

> I don't think people fully understood the importance of this school improvement plan until [Cassandra Erlbaum] said, 'If it's in the plan, then you're doing it' (Rita, special area teacher, 4-23-03 fieldnotes).

The literacy coordinator worked with Karen Burton, Partnership Co-Director, to analyze reading assessment results in classrooms using different reading approaches. Their goal was to

see whether these assessments showed a significant difference between those using Open Court and those using Readers Workshop. Despite their efforts, no significant differences were found. Regardless, one teacher expressed her doubts in this approach to determining program differences during a faculty meeting. This teacher questioned whether results would be meaningful, given a low sample size and the fact that some teachers are currently using components of both programs in their reading instruction.

District-Level Organization and Structure Impacting Literacy Program Consistency at Creekside

During late spring 2003, the Hillside School District proceeded with a plan to implement a more consistent reading curriculum when they mandated that all elementary schools adopt and administer the same phonics program beginning in the 2003-2004 school year. Each of fourteen elementary schools were given materials for two phonics programs, including Open Court and Fountas and Pinell, which was a program used by several other elementary schools in the district. The district requested that each school evaluate both phonics programs and collectively turn in one vote to declare which of the two programs each school requested for implementation. The district announced that they would use these votes to consider which program they would ultimately require all schools to use.

Kindergarten through second grade teachers at Creekside met before the school day began in late spring, 2003 to discuss these programs and submit their vote. Teachers' were unable to reach a consensus about which phonics program the school would choose, and the final vote resulted in an eight to two decision with most favoring Open Court. Creekside's school vote for Open Court was submitted to the district office. Ultimately, a majority of the schools across the district favored Fountas and Pinell, and the district later mandated that all elementary schools implement this program beginning fall 2003. This mandate required teachers to revise the

school's improvement plan, which declared that the school would use a variety of different resources, including Open Court, in their phonics instruction. The majority of teachers expressed frustration over this mandate, as it represented an additional alteration in teachers' practices that threatened to further engulf teachers who were already overwhelmed with change. This district mandate temporarily disrupted teachers' efforts to construct a consistent curriculum across grade levels through the School Improvement Plan. The majority of k-2 teachers who were comfortable using the Open Court Program perceived this new Fountas and Pinell program as a top-down mandate that required additional and unnecessary work to implement.

> I think the superintendent made his decision [about adopting Fountis and Pinell] before we ever voted on this. Now it's just going to be one more thing that we have to change, and most people don't even want this [phonics program] (Lucy, primary teacher, 5-28-03 fieldnotes).

Requiring all elementary schools to implement the Fountas and Pinell phonics program was part of the district's overall plan to achieve greater curricular coherence across schools. In 2002, Phi Delta Kappa's International Curriculum Management Audit Center conducted a curriculum management audit of the Hillside County School District. In the report, auditors discussed the district's need to provide a centralized direction, forging stronger connections between the central office and school sites and integrating administrative departments to function as a more cohesive unit. Specifically, the audit recommended tighter linkages between curriculum development, assessment, program evaluation, staff development, technology, and budget development. According to the audit, the district's previous site-based management initiative prevented a centralized process from taking hold, creating multiple and inconsistent curriculum and programs both within and across school sites (Hillside County School District

Audit Report, Jan. 2003). Stakeholders at all levels, including faculty at Creekside, experienced

the consequences of these programs on student learning. Stakeholders representing the school,

the district, and the university discussed their concerns during the spring 2003 Partnership

conversation day.

> The district has to do something. Kids are moving from school to school and required to
>
> learn different things. I know it's something [we] are trying to address. It is a big
>
> problem, and going from grade to grade in the same school, teachers are doing different
>
> things. Some of my kids are just now getting the hang of what we're doing. And then
>
> they'll have to start again next year (Robert, intermediate teacher, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).
>
> The audit addressed the district's problem in having so many programs. There are so
>
> many programs. Now is a good time to talk about this as a district (External Partnership
>
> stakeholder, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).
>
> We do need to have consistency between schools. We're at the point where we will have
>
> a focus for what each grade will teach and frameworks, and a lot of this will be done over
>
> the next three years (HCSD administrator, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

The district began to address these problems in 2002-2003. According to one central

office administrator, the district plans to finish aligning local HCSD benchmarks and

assessments to state QCC (Quality Core Curriculum) objectives before the beginning of the

2003-2004 school year. By developing a more comprehensive set of curriculum guides linked to

state and local assessments, more effective curriculum monitoring can take place to build and

maintain cohesive programs across the district (Hillside County District Audit Report, 2003).

While aligning district benchmarks to state benchmarks provided a clear sign of improvement,

these changes did not impact teachers until the 2002-2003 school year. The district and

Partnership recognized that centralizing operations at the district level would take several years to accomplish. In the meantime, ongoing district-level inconsistencies prompted uncertainty about whether the district would hold the school accountable for implementing the school improvement plan, or mandate subsequent changes that would once again require teachers to change their practices.

In the following section, I examine how time impacts the change process. In 2002-2003, Creekside school faculty attempted to concurrently develop a comprehensive school improvement plan, implement components of a new literacy program, implement Partnership Reform initiatives, and adapt to changes from a longer school year, all in the midst of a high stakes environment where the day to day realities of school alone often seemed overwhelming. Below, I discuss Creekside faculty members' perspectives on how time impacted their capacity to concurrently develop and implement these reforms.

<center>Time Limiting the School's Capacity to Implement Reforms</center>

The school faculty spent the 2002-2003 school year immersed in a high-stakes environment where intense pressure to change current practices and improve student achievement existed at all levels. While a cultural change of this magnitude can take several years to accomplish (Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002; Cuban, 1984; Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Wichterle, 2002), new federal and state initiatives pushed schools such as Creekside to show immediate and lasting improvements. Thus, time was a valuable resource of which there never seemed to be enough.

Despite a number of Partnership implementations during the year and a frequent and high level of presence among a few university faculty and students at the school, many teachers did not perceive the HCSD-U of S-HC Partnership having much impact this year. In the survey

administered during the spring of 2003, almost half of the 24 faculty and staff members who responded indicated that they weren't clear about the types of programs and assistance offered through the Partnership.

> We need to be more informed about how this Partnership works and how it benefits the students. I see it as something that looks great on paper, but is not really helpful to the students. Who is involved and what programs are being offered? What is their role? (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

> The Partnership is not what I thought it would be. I cannot see any differences except for more meetings and less planning time for us (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

The perceived lack of Partnership impact among faculty can be explained by looking more closely at the large number and kinds of Partnership and non-Partnership sponsored programs being implemented at the school, as well as the way in which most university stakeholders offered their services this year. First, several changes were required of k-3 teachers through the GA READS grant, which changed the way teachers taught literacy and assessed students' literacy progress. As many teachers were unfamiliar with several of these strategies, learning to implement them in their classrooms took a great deal of time. In addition, the PACT (Parents and Children Together- lessons designed to encourage literacy in the home) program and other new grant-related instructional strategies to be implemented in the classroom kept several teachers from focusing their attention on Partnership initiatives and utilizing Partnership resources. Added to these grant- related programs and strategies was the School Improvement Process, which mandated that teachers spend time after school developing their school plan for

improving student achievement. As a result, little time was left to learn about the Partnership and take advantage of the plethora of opportunities.

University faculty and students were careful not to impose any of their ideas or practices on teachers or staff. Many university stakeholders approached teachers and staff through whole faculty meetings, and then waited for faculty to invite them into the school. As a result, they did not establish a presence at the school. Although several faculty members discussed university related services at faculty meetings, these resources faded from the school faculty's memory as they became increasingly enmeshed in learning other programs and keeping up with state and district mandates. Despite frequent reminders from Karen Burton, Partnership Co-Director, about resources available to help teachers with specific and individual challenges they faced, teachers saw many of these opportunities as extra work for which they didn't have time. Even university stakeholders, such as graduate assistants in language education and math education who regularly approached teachers to offer assistance, did not receive invitations to return to several teachers' classrooms. One teacher said she was reluctant to utilize university support because she was afraid she might over-commit herself. Other teachers avoided those involved in the Partnership's efforts primarily because of perceived limits on their time to take on more than what was already being required of them.

Several faculty and staff members perceived the art enrichment program as the only Partnership-related program that was fully implemented at the school. In this case, two teachers at the school worked with the university faculty member in charge to implement the program throughout the grade levels. In addition, this program took virtually no extra time from teachers' already busy schedules, as students and faculty from the university developed and taught all the lessons throughout the semester. In short, this program became successful through two teachers'

leadership and program support, combined with the small time commitment required of most teachers to make the program work.

Time for Reform Development Limiting Faculty Collaboration and Influencing Isolation

It took a significant amount of time for teachers to learn new reading strategies, apply these strategies in their classrooms, and work through the inevitable problems that emerged when teachers tried to meet the academic needs of all children in their classrooms. Multiple school-level initiatives were set in motion during 2002-2003 that demanded a significant amount of teachers' time and energy. First, the School Improvement Process required a significant amount of time and energy from teachers in 2002-2003 to develop a school improvement plan. Second, teachers were required to learn and implement several strategies as part of the GA READS grant, including after school reading (PACT) activities, Open Court and/or Readers Workshop, and use multiple formative assessments to differentiate instruction. Third, teachers were asked to attend and implement strategies learned through the grant-sponsored reading course, over and above the normal district-sponsored professional development courses. Fourth, teachers were asked to partner with university faculty and students to implement several Partnership initiatives. Added to teachers' stress was the pressure to improve test scores on state mandated assessments to prevent state sanctions and the looming threat of state officials taking over the school. The demands on teachers' time were tremendous this year. Thus, teachers found it difficult to take the time to apply new and unfamiliar strategies, whether Open Court or Readers Workshop, setting off a pedagogical split among teachers preferring Open Court vs. those preferring Readers Workshop and dividing the faculty. Similarly, grade level teams found little time to work collaboratively through problems they experienced with various reading programs.

The multiple reforms to be implemented required faculty and staff to spend much more time at school than in the past developing plans for school change, learning new instructional and assessment strategies, and implementing various school, grant and Partnership-related initiatives. Developing plans and learning new strategies required the faculty and staff to participate in several extra meetings, which often took away from other important activities such as planning, teaching, and analyzing student assessments.

In addition, scheduling conflicts began to occur, as School Improvement and Partnership meetings, combined with grant and district- related professional development workshops, had to be planned alongside the school's regular staff meetings. Below, a support faculty member and a classroom teacher commented on how the unusual number of school improvement meetings limited their capacity to deal with their day today responsibilities.

Meetings are going on at the same times, and some of these supercede others. SST [Student Support Team] meetings are conflicting with School Improvement meetings that are now planned for after school. You can't just call a parent and cancel an SST meeting. This shouldn't be happening (Barbara, special area teacher, 2-12-03 fieldnotes).

I'll wake up at nights and I'll think, when are going to have that meeting. How am I going to meet the deadline, because the district doesn't care that we can't find a time to meet. I finally got [administration] to okay a date for [an upcoming] meeting, and I'm ready to fight for it! (Patricia, support faculty, 3-5-03 fieldnotes).

Teachers and staff struggled to find necessary planning time to implement new instructional strategies and other Partnership initiatives. In particular, teachers did not always have time to review individual assessment information for differentiating their classroom instruction. They often did not find adequate time to discuss new reading and math strategies

gleaned from professional development courses, or to utilize university faculty and student assistance offered through various grant and Partnership initiatives. Many teachers and staff recognized the value of the meetings, courses, and other types of support in accomplishing their objectives; however, they fought a constant battle to balance time between district, Partnership, and school-level meetings; grade-level meetings; and group and individual classroom planning.

It's hard to plan when we have all these meetings. It's hard to be involved in school-wide stuff and classroom stuff. By the time I leave, I just think about going home and going to bed (Gina, 3-05-03 fieldnotes).

I recently put together a list of 'to do's' so I could realize why I'm losing my mind. I'm frustrated because with all the other things we have to do, we don't have time to teach (Grace, primary teacher, Fall 2002 fieldnotes).

With the abundance of meetings in 2002-2003, grade level teachers often had to find time during the school day to meet. Typically, grade-level teams scheduled meetings once a week to plan for field trips, discuss students and benchmarks, or make decisions about various school improvement and curriculum issues. However, these planning times were often during times when special area teachers could not meet with grade-level groups. Because it was difficult to find common planning times and coordinate different schedules, special area teachers did not meet with grade level teachers as often as they believed was necessary. Instead, special area teachers often found themselves tracking down teachers to discuss lesson plans and individual student needs at random times throughout the day. Impromptu meetings and infrequent collective planning times among grade level and special area teachers contributed to a segmented set of programs in the school.

I can never find a time to meet with ----- grade level as a team, and that's frustrating. The

way it is, we're staying three times a week [many of us], and nobody wants to stay

another day (Frances, special area teacher, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

In summary, the perceived lack of time in the school day often prevented faculty from

implementing both school and classroom level programs and strategies. By mid-year, many

teachers and staff felt as though the school was "treading water," as no one seemed to be taking

the initiative to move forward with things. One teacher explained that on several occasions she

had talked with faculty about moving forward with various programs, but couldn't find the time

to follow them through to fruition. "Sure, we'll meet with you. Yeah. And it just floats out there,

but nobody does anything about it" (Beth, primary teacher, fall 2002 fieldnotes). A few faculty

members maintained the status quo as much as possible, while making only necessary changes to

prevent from drowning in a sea of "to do's."

As the faculty discussed the School Improvement Plan, special area teachers occasionally

prompted teachers to think about how they might work more closely with special area teachers

when these ideas were left out of the plan or inadequately addressed. The faculty eventually

addressed communication gaps between teachers in the school improvement plan when they

wrote into the plan that specials teachers would meet quarterly with grade level teams to

integrate instruction in 2003-2004. In addition, professional development included workshops on

integrating instruction and working collaboratively with specials teachers to develop thematic

units.

Excessive Testing Requirements Impacting Teachers Classroom Practices

Assessment requirements written into the GA READS grant prompted several teachers to

change the way they utilize assessment information in the classroom. Beginning in 2002-2003,

teachers at Creekside used running records to help them differentiate instruction and to provide

focused assistance for students with diverse instructional needs. While all teachers recognized

the value of these instruments for targeting individual student needs, some structured their

classroom environments in ways that made it difficult to administer and use these individual

assessment tools. Compounding these challenges was the excessive number of assessments that

teachers were required to administer. Many teachers struggled to find time to understand and

implement strategies for integrating assessment administration and analysis into their normal

daily routines. Thus, instead of informing instruction, some teachers' perceived individual and

group assessments as a time-wasting process that prevented them from teaching children and

contributed to classroom behavior problems.

> My biggest concern is with the assessments we give. We do so much assessing and it is
>
> true that we don't have time to look at data and do what it shows because the time you
>
> take from teaching to do this…kids just get crazy and don't do this well (Sandra, primary
>
> teacher, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

> There seems to be a void in our thinking about instruction and assessment, and it's
>
> frustrating because we are not understanding the foundational pieces (District central
>
> office administrator, Fall 2003 fieldnotes).

> There is no time to look at all the assessments we give because we give so many. So they
>
> all become useless. I need somebody to show me how I can give all these tests and still
>
> have time to teach my children. And if I have to give all these assessments, when do I
>
> have time to teach? If you walk down that hallway, you'll find a lot of teachers who are
>
> trying to figure out how they can fit in all this testing we have to do (Alice, primary
>
> teacher, 2-14-03 fieldnotes).

Many [of us] are not looking at our reading test results after they're administered, so not much is changing with instruction. And there's a lot of lecturing and whole group instruction going on, so [we] don't see the connection (Tamara, support faculty, 2-07-03 fieldnotes).

The school's leadership recognized this need early in the year. Mildred Smith, Creekside Assistant Principal, planned to continue working alongside the school's instructional coordinators and teachers to develop strategies for using assessments in meaningful ways. The Assistant Principal communicated her goals for the faculty during the March 12, 2003 day-long conversation held with Delores Taylor, Louis Cruz, and Karen Burton.

I think my focus should be helping teachers to understand the importance of assessment. District-wide this is becoming more important. I see my job as helping teachers to gather information about student learning and put it in a useful format. I can meet with them, look at the information, and say, 'this is what I'm seeing with your students.' Then the literacy coach can help teachers implement these things (Mildred, Assistant Principal, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

Ms. Smith's greatest challenge this year was finding time to address teachers' assessment questions, as administrative and other clerical duties did not allow her the time she wanted to spend with teachers on assessment issues. Smith, Taylor, Cruz, and Burton spent some time brainstorming possible ways to overcome these obstacles during spring, 2003.

Faculty used the School Improvement Process to discuss their challenges integrating instruction and assessment in ways that complemented the learning process. As a result, they decided to include assessment training as a primary area for professional development during the 2003-2004 school year. To complement the support Ms. Smith and the instructional coordinators

planned to provide, the school improvement plan included a whole-day faculty in-service reserved for learning strategies for using assessments to guide instruction.

Intensive Focus on Literacy Limiting Time to Focus on Mathematics

The School Improvement Process provided the impetus for Creekside faculty to develop a comprehensive plan for mathematics. While the school improvement plan addressed long-term goals and action plans for faculty and staff, the Partnership provided immediate instructional and professional learning support to the school. A university faculty member and student offered their support and assistance to school faculty and staff during the 2002-2003 school year. Dr. Ernestine Newman, a professor in mathematics education, provided professional development seminars in math curriculum and instruction for teachers during the year. In addition, she acted as a consultant to mathematics study group members who were responsible for developing the school's math improvement plan. Amy Reed, a U of S graduate student in math education, began working with teachers last semester to assist with mathematics curriculum development, develop a materials inventory for each grade level, and provide other support services as requested by faculty and staff.

Despite the extra support, many teachers struggled to take advantage of Partnership resources. At the beginning of the year, Ms. Reed spent much of her time seeking out teachers, offering classroom and instructional assistance to become part of the school fabric. Although more teachers began seeking her assistance at mid-semester, Ms. Reed's efforts were focused in only a few classrooms. Several teachers found themselves unable to utilize Ms. Reed's and Dr. Newman's' services, as meetings and program implementation of other initiatives connected to GA READS, the Partnership, and the School Improvement Process took precedence. Others were satisfied with their current ways of teaching math and chose not to work with them. As the

year progressed, teachers and staff became aware that they needed to be spending more time on math.

> I'm concerned that we're not spending enough time on changing our instruction in math… we need to spend more time on improving low math scores. We're not addressing math as much as reading, but we're in school improvement because of math (Karla, primary teacher, Fall 2002 fieldnotes).

Ms. Reed continued to offer advice and assistance to teachers throughout the year. In addition, she worked with Dr. Newman to present professional development courses to teachers and staff after school. While some teachers took advantage of this support, most felt they were being pulled in too many directions.

> I really want to work more with Amy, but it takes time to plan the lessons and prepare my children for these types of activities. With all these assessments we have to give and the grant and guided reading strategies… plus professional development, district in-services, and everything else, there's no time left (Alice, primary teacher, 3-05-03 fieldnotes).

> Teachers are trying to become better in both [reading and math], and I think it's too much. All the support [in both subjects] is wonderful, but when we're all trying to learn these new methods at once, it's just too much (Tamara, support faculty, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

During the March 12, 2003 conversation day, three teachers expressed a need to focus improvements in one area, instead of spreading themselves thin by trying to implement changes in both math and reading. By working on several components in both domains, teachers found themselves unable to focus their efforts and maximize instructional improvement in either area. At this meeting, Cruz (District administrator), Burton (Partnership Co-Director), and Taylor

(principal) discussed possible ways to integrate professional development for math and reading. Dr. Cruz suggested applying a workshop strategy in both domains, where whole group instruction is followed by several small group workshops to focus on specific skills. In this case, teachers would use various formative assessments such as running records and daily assignments to track student learning and identify areas of need. By using complementary teaching methods and applying them to different domains, the school might overcome perceived limits in what they can accomplish. Although a workshop approach was written into the reading plan for school improvement, faculty did not specifically indicate this as an approach to be used in math. Later in the semester, faculty and staff discussed ways to integrate instruction through the School Improvement Process. The faculty wrote into the School Improvement Plan specific strategies for using active learning strategies and manipulatives, as well as integrating math into other subject areas.

Reform Process Limiting Student Support Team Services

Demands on teachers' time and the high attrition levels during 2001-2002 influenced the way in which the school delivered services to students with special needs. Below, I describe the context of the Creekside Student Support Team, which was developed to address students and families' special needs. I follow this description with an explanation that illustrates how the reform implementation process limited the Student Support Team's ability to deliver adequate levels of support for students and families.

The Student Support Team (SST) is a school-based team made up of the Principal, school counselor, regular education teachers, and special education support staff. It is designed to support students experiencing significant academic, behavioral, or emotional difficulties. Typically, when a teacher notices a student experiencing academic or emotional difficulties in

school or observes student behaviors that indicate a need for outside support, she will refer the student to SST. Once the child is referred and after the teacher and support staff completes the necessary paperwork, the SST conducts a meeting with the child, his/her parents, teachers, and other relevant support staff who have contact with the child throughout the school day. The team discusses issues that are causing the child to struggle in school and develops an action plan to help the child achieve success.

The SST often provides critical assistance to a child and/or the child's family to ensure that s/he has a better opportunity to achieve success in school. However, several Creekside teachers mentioned that they did not use the SST process as much as they could. Referring a child to SST was often so filled with questions and extra paperwork that many teachers and staff did not follow through with the procedures necessary to take their child through the process. In addition, help was often delayed when the necessary paperwork was "lost on someone's desk" (Cynthia, intermediate teacher, 2-12-03 fieldnotes). A few teachers perceive those in charge of taking children through the SST process at Creekside were not clear about their individual responsibilities and did not follow through with these responsibilities in a timely manner. The ambiguities and subsequent delays in the SST process prevented students from getting the support and assistance they needed.

> None of these [students'] problems ever get solved because no one seems to want to take responsibility for anything. When I see someone about [a problem], they'll say, 'Well I can't do anything about it. You need to see so and so.' And that person sends you to someone else, and they send you to someone else. So nothing ever happens. One of the children I recommended for SST had already been recommended by another teacher last fall. I asked --------- why nothing has happened yet and -------- said it's because the

child's folder is sitting on someone's desk and they haven't done what they are supposed

to do with it before [he/she] can proceed with [his/her] job (Frances, special area teacher,

2-12-03 fieldnotes).

Many of us (teachers) need to change the way we think. A [grade-level] student was

having problems and I mentioned to the teacher that she should refer the student to SST.

But then there's all the paperwork you have to go through. Weren't we going to

streamline the process (Rita, special area teacher, 1-15-03 fieldnotes)?

It is important that all faculty and staff who work with the child participate in the SST

meeting. This way, everyone has the opportunity to consider the perceived factors impacting the

child's success in school and contribute to a plan that will be most effective in supporting his/her

success. If one or more of the student's teachers are not part of these discussions, important

information necessary to help the child may be left out of the child's plan. At Creekside,

miscommunications about when SST meetings were to take place for certain children, prevented

several support staff from being part of these meetings. Hence, these teachers did not have the

chance to communicate issues they felt were important when considering a plan for their child.

There are so many communication gaps with SST and IEP meetings. We shouldn't be

finding out about them until after they happen, especially when they're with my students.

And if you're a teacher of these children, how can you *not* be involved in coming up with

these decisions (Diane, special area teacher, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

The Student Support Team cut their meeting times from one per week to two times per

month this year, partially due to the excessive demands on the faculty's time. As a result, SST

meetings ran later into the evening than in the past. In addition, SST often was unable to address

other family and community issues impacting student achievement, such as parent education and

job assistance, GED and ESOL classes, and medical, dental, and other general health-related support.

During the second semester of the 2002-2003 school year, the Leadership Team discussed ways to take some pressure off SST. One faculty member suggested creating another committee to take on the non-academic issues that arise in school, specifically by offering services and providing resources to children and families in need. Ultimately, the Leadership Committee decided not to create this committee and elected to continue addressing non-academic and family-related issues through SST. The primary reason for doing this was to prevent another committee from being formed, which would have required more time than most people had to spare in the building. Another idea was to recruit parents at the school to act as liaisons between the school and community, contacting the school when people from the community needed assistance. A third team member suggested recruiting students from University of the South and using Partnership resources to assist families and provide extra counseling and support to students and their families. The school counselor and Family Literacy Coordinator scheduled focus groups with parents beginning in mid-May to determine community needs and brainstorm better ways for the school to address families' needs.

In spring 2003, after consulting with the School Leadership Team (SILC), the school counselor and family literacy coordinator recruited parents and U of S students to assist the school and its families. Two U of S interns worked at the school in 2003-2004 to provide counseling and support services to families and students at the school. In addition, the counselor and family literacy coordinator worked with two parents to develop a Parents Council, in which parents at each grade level acted as liaisons to help the school address parent or student concerns.

By the end of the fall 2003 semester, one U of S counseling intern remained at Creekside, and

two parent liaisons were continuing to work with school personnel to build the Parent Council.

<p style="text-align: center">District and School Leadership Practices Impacting School-Level Decision Making</p>

In the following section, I examine how leadership practices at the district and school

levels impacted reform planning and implementation. I begin by examining how district-level

norms impacted Creekside faculty members' interpretations and responses to the decision-

making process. Next, I move to the school level to examine how school leadership practices

impacted decision-making and communication. I follow this section with an analysis that

interprets how existing school organizational structures and diverse communication styles

impacted reform planning and implementation. I conclude with a discussion about how the

school improvement process enabled teachers to build a plan to address the need for ongoing

improvements. Such plans will become particularly important in chapter seven, as I examine

how such plans impacted teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices.

Two teachers who worked at the school for several years discussed reasons for not

participating in discussions and playing more of an active role in decisions that were made. One

reason involved the multiple and inconsistent changes that the district imposed on teachers. Past

experience taught some veteran teachers that changes come from the top-down, and active

involvement in trying to influence central office decisions was a waste of time. For instance, a

number of teachers maintained strong positive beliefs in the impact of the Open Court Reading

Program on student achievement. As stated earlier, components of the Open Court program were

used by a few teachers in the school and written into the GA READS grant proposal. The

superintendent sent samples of two reading programs to all the elementary schools in the district

for feedback, one of which is Open Court. To reduce the district's inconsistent curriculum and

large number of different programs, HCSD adopted and mandated schools to use one of these two reading programs' in all elementary schools. Two veteran teachers discussed this mandate.

> [A top central office administrator] told us to look at the materials for both programs and give the district feedback about which one to use. But we heard that the decision was already made ----------, so why waste our time? It's not going to do any good to tell [central office administrators] what we think. The superintendent's already made the decision (Rita, special area teacher, 4-30-03 fieldnotes).

In addition, some teachers did not see the value in investing a great deal of energy in decisions that they believed would ultimately be made by an administrator at the district's central office. While most teachers agreed that certain "big" decisions should be left to the faculty as a whole, they indicated that "small" decisions were often addressed by forming a new committee or discussed at whole school faculty meetings. The extra time at meetings discussing seemingly inconsequential details prevented some teachers from becoming more involved in making decisions at the school. At times, while sitting in a faculty meeting, teachers would ask, "why are we talking about this? What's the point? Why don't they just tell us what to do and get it over with?" Typically, "they" in the previous sentence referred to the district office, whose mandates often overruled building level decisions, making teachers feel as though time was wasted making decisions that someone from the district office would eventually mandate anyway.

> There are several people that feel that shared governance has been presented to us just to get another committee going. But we know we have to jump through certain hoops. You know, if somebody wherever is requiring these committees, then we have to do what we have to do. It's just, a lot of times it feels like it's excessive (Paula, special area teacher, Fall 2003 interview).

District-Level Attrition Impacting Teachers' Buy-In

Over the past twenty years, the Hillside County School District has had five different superintendents. Particularly over the past decade, high turnover in HCSD superintendents often led to new policies and mandates handed down to teachers with each new team of administrators. This not only shaped the way that some veteran teachers responded to decisions, it shaped how teachers viewed reform initiatives. Those who taught at Creekside for a number of years experienced several focused and comprehensive efforts to reform the school in one way or another. However, reforms tended to be ushered out when top central office leadership left the district, and new reforms arrived with new leadership. After so many changes throughout several years in the district, teachers attributed student underachievement to program instability. They stopped working so hard to implement changes that seemed to disappear every few years. With each new program change and its subsequent replacement, teachers began to tire of implementing new initiatives that resulted in little or no change in student achievement.

> We are constantly being asked to change what we're doing and there's no consistency from year to year. Every year things change and we're doing something different. We need to come up with a plan and then stick to it. That's part of the problem. We start something and then the next year we try something different. This year it's the grant. And we've had other grants too. Plus, we had America's Choice, Success For All… and there was a whole language fiasco that occurred [years ago]. It's been like this for the past seven or eight years. We need to keep the things we're doing that are working and build on that (Charlotte, support faculty, 3-05-03 fieldnotes).

The inconsistent and unstable programs throughout the past decade prompted some teachers to isolate themselves, develop their own plans and stick with what worked in their classrooms.

Many teachers perceive programs and initiatives, including those being pushed through the Partnership and grant, as temporary responses to address underachievement in the school. While these programs had their merits, some believed they would most likely not be around in another couple years. Certainly this is true for the GA READS Grant, which expired in June, 2004. The school board committed five years to the Partnership's efforts; however, even this commitment could be cut short if compelling results don't justify the cost of sustaining the Partnership. Thus, these teachers created stability and consistency by isolating themselves in their individual classrooms, instead of participating in decisions and changing programs and practices that sustained ongoing changes.

District Unresponsiveness to a New Calendar Schedule Impacting Student Support Services

During the fall 2002-2003 semester, questions arose about the district's role in the Partnership and their commitment to Partnership Schools. The district invested close to $500,000 in both schools to cover expenses associated with keeping school in session an extra 15 days. Despite the additional monetary support for lengthening the calendar, several faculty members voiced concerns that the district was not communicating information about key dates or sending materials in a timely manner. For instance, materials such as Student Support Team (SST) referral slips were distributed to pilot schools at the same time as other schools. In addition, the district sent reminders to HCSD teachers regarding dates on which parent teacher conferences should be scheduled. These dates were inaccurate for the Partnership schools, as Creekside and Eisenhower Elementary Schools were on intercession (fall break) when other district schools conducted conferences. Miscommunications such as these led to administrative frustrations at Creekside and made it appear as though district personnel were not aware of the pilot schools' different schedules.

One particular experience illustrates how district-school miscommunications directly impacted the quality of instruction for Creekside students, and led several faculty members to question the value of having extra school days. In this case, the district delivered critical assessment information for making Education Intervention Program (EIP) personnel decisions at the same time as other schools. Because other schools began the school year two weeks after the pilot schools, and because the principal needed close to two more weeks to find and hire qualified EIP teachers, faculty was without necessary EIP support for close to a month. Below, I set the context for EIP services at Creekside and examine how district processes impacted school-level instruction.

The Education Intervention Program was designed to provide extra support for children at risk of academic failure. Test data from the previous year's standardized test scores was used to determine children who qualified for EIP services, with Title I funds allocated to a school based on the number of students' scoring at or below 300 on the state's CRCT exam in reading or math. After the Hillside County School District central office analyzed and organized standardized test information, they sent the test data to the school principal to make EIP hiring decisions. During the spring and summer months of 2002, the principal estimated the number of EIP teachers she would need for the following school year to ensure that students received the support they needed when school began. Once the appropriate test data was received in early fall 2002, the principal made final decisions about her students' EIP needs. Typically, when the principal's estimates are off, s/he may have to hire more EIP teachers during the first few weeks of school.

This year at Creekside, unforeseen issues related to the new school calendar prevented the school's from providing adequate support to EIP students and contributed to setbacks in the

implementation of certain key reforms. Creekside began the 2002-2003 school year earlier than other schools in the district, due to the new year-round calendar schedule. Some parents with children attending different schools, who wanted their children on similar school schedules, pulled their children out of Creekside and enrolled them in a non-partnership HCSD schools. Other parents pulled their children because the calendar schedule was not conducive to their lifestyles. For instance, the local Hillside newspaper reported several parents who did not approve of a year-round school schedule, as difficulties finding consistent child care throughout the summer, scheduling family vacations, and other personal and family issues made such a schedule unfavorable (Hillside Newspaper, Nov. 5, 2001). Other circumstances, such the state's evaluation of and label for Creekside' CLC as a school that "needs improvement," influenced some parents' decisions to enroll their children a different school. As a result, Creekside student numbers were well below average just two weeks before school began.

Over the next month, the school experienced a significant increase in the number of school registrations, due to parents signing their children up for school at the last minute. Other parents were unaware that school began earlier at Creekside this year and did not enroll their children until after school was in session. The new school calendar and late registrations made predictions about EIP services much less certain than in previous years and as a result, initial EIP estimates for the school were off target.

Teachers at Creekside began the school year two weeks earlier than other schools in the district. However, the district delivered critical test score information to Creekside at the same time as other schools. Because the number of students needing EIP support was significantly higher than expected, the principal found herself scrambling to hire more EIP teachers well into the first month of school. Several teachers became angry that critical test score information was

not provided to the school earlier in the year, which left the school uncertain about EIP student information. The subsequent shortage of EIP teachers during the first half of the semester prompted teachers to question the value of extra school days when students' instructional needs were not being met.

> Our kids had longer time without services than other schools- including EIP services and others. Extra days don't do us any good when we can't use them to the fullest (Karla, primary teacher, Fall 2002 fieldnotes).

Teachers became frustrated with EIP teachers' continuous and frequent schedule changes. As EIP teachers were hired, administration changed EIP teachers' schedules to better accommodate students and comply with legal mandates related to the time EIP teachers must spend with students and the number of students EIP teachers must serve per day. A few faculty members at Creekside were asked to temporarily assist teachers and assume EIP duties until the principal could find new EIP teachers. Working around EIP teachers' diverse schedules was difficult, especially considering that many EIP teachers continued to take on other responsibilities in the school. EIP scheduling challenges required almost daily EIP schedule shifting at one point in the school year. Thus, EIP teachers would often arrive in teachers' rooms to pull children for extra assistance at inconvenient times, and teachers were unable to plan around these times to ensure that students received critical classroom instruction.

In early October, the principal asked the two literacy coordinators to temporarily assume positions as EIP teachers until she could find and hire more qualified EIP teachers. While this change helped to reduce the number of students in need of EIP services, the literacy coordinators' were unable to continue following through with their primary responsibilities. In particular, both coordinators were unable to help oversee and support teachers in implementing

key grant-mandated components into their reading and writing instruction. Placing the literacy coordinators in EIP positions kept them from assisting teachers in the beginning of the year, when instructional procedures are implemented and habits are formed. Thus, much of the coordinators' work with teachers was lost, as they found themselves retraining teachers who reverted to teaching in ways more familiar and comfortable to them. In addition, teachers found themselves behind schedule and overwhelmed, trying to catch up students who enrolled after school began. As teachers struggled to stay on schedule and provide extra support to students who started school late, their enthusiasm for learning and implementing new literacy strategies waned.

Concerns related to EIP support continued throughout the school year, as other issues surfaced that impacted how this support was delivered to students. Despite the principal's hiring more EIP teachers, the students in need of EIP support far exceeded the number of teachers hired to provide assistance. The way in which Title I funds were allocated and spent at the school prevented the principal from hiring more EIP teachers, as not enough funds were available. Thus, many EIP teachers at Creekside worked with such large numbers of students that they were unable to provide the necessary assistance to most students.

> There are a lot of kids who qualify for EIP services that we're not serving right now because there aren't enough teachers… I'm pulling 14 kids for [subject area], and three of them have behavior disorders. I'm trying to teach all these kids, and then I have a few with behavior disorders who constantly act out and take up my time. These kids also interrupt and distract the other kids in the class, so no one gets anything out of it (Frances, special area teacher, 2-12-03 fieldnotes).

One teacher recommended working with special education teachers to develop more effective ways to deliver instruction to all students. By combining behavioral and academic assistance to students who are underachieving academically and working on managing their emotions and/or behavior in school, special education teachers could assist EIP teachers and reduce the load they currently carry. One EIP teacher recommended streamlining services that EIP teachers and special education teachers provide students. This meant changing the way in which instruction was delivered at the school. For instance, EIP and special education teachers might coordinate the instruction and special services they deliver to particular students in those students' regular classrooms. Time prevented teachers from implementing these strategies in 2002-2003.

District administrators addressed Creekside's additional concerns about receiving critical assessment information in a timely manner. At the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting, Helen Carter, Assessment Director for HCSD, announced that every effort would be made to distribute important student decision making information to the pilot schools as soon as possible. However, due to the state's policy that mandates when schools can take state tests, as well as the subsequent time it takes testing companies to score tests and analyze test data, the earliest the district was able to distribute the information was at the end of July. Although the pilot schools began the 2003-2004 school year at the end of July, faculty at the meeting understood the district's limitations in getting these results out faster. District administrators responded to the pilot school's other concerns by distributing important resources and materials to the pilot schools before the 2003-2004 school year began.

Fear of Retribution From District and School Leadership Impacting Decision Making

Four faculty members commented that they chose not to be vocal participants in the decision-making process because they were afraid that retribution from central office administrators or the school principal might follow potential disagreements. Those with several years' experience in the district reflected on past administrative decisions to justify this fear. Two faculty members reflected on the day when they realized that Creekside was chosen as a Partnership school. The Nuts and Bolts Team's announcement that everyone at the school would have to interview for their jobs and sign a five-year contract fueled the mistrust that some faculty already harbored. Others were upset that no one from Creekside was on the original Design Team, yet they had no say in becoming a Partnership School. In addition, key district and university Design Team members stressed that shared governance would drive all school decisions, despite the school having very little impact over what happened to that point. Later, the process of determining a new school calendar left many teachers feeling silenced and powerless, as most faculty did not believe that more school days were the best way to spend limited resources. Of the three original Creekside representatives on the Calendar Action Team, two eventually left the school because of disagreements and frustrations that Partnership and district administrators did not listen to the voices of teachers. This finding is of particular importance, as several Creekside faculty members reported that the calendar representatives who left the school were initially enthusiastic about the Partnership. Eventually, over twenty faculty and staff left at the end of the Partnership planning phase, as most were disappointed with how plans were being decided and perceived a "top-down" approach to reform.

Most faculty and staff members perceived little influence in making past decisions. While shared governance is held up as the ideal, most did not believe that school, district, or

Partnership decisions were been made this way. Similar to the experiences above, faculty witnessed several occasions when they expressed opinions that ultimately cost them in one way or another.

> What is it they say? If you walk past a dog and he bites you- if you keep walking back, eventually he's going to bite you again. That's why some teachers won't talk. And it's not so much the university as it is the district. The ones who have been around a long time have been through enough to know that you better keep your mouth shut or it'll come back to get you (Charlotte, support faculty, 3-05 -03 fieldnotes).

The overall culture of distrust explains why over half the staff cut off codes that were written on Partnership surveys. Two mentioned still being nervous about turning in their surveys even after cutting off their code, fearing that the district or university faculty would identify and track specific teachers' responses. As a result of the mistrust between some faculty and staff members and the district's central office, some teachers did what they were told and, for the most part, stayed out of most decisions.

These distrustful perceptions held true at the school level as well. Teachers and staff expressed "fear of retribution" from the school principal if they voiced their opinions. Some teachers and staff indicated that they were uncomfortable with the way in which the principal handled conflict in the school. Specifically, teachers and staff said that the principal ignored concerns that were brought to her attention. Despite several requests for a response, the principal often never addressed their concerns. In addition, these teachers later reported that the principal either ignored them or displayed visual signs that they interpreted as cold and unwelcoming. During the March 12 conversations, one faculty member spoke directly with the Principal about these issues.

Some people feel there will be retribution from you if they voice their concerns. You're

the leader and one in position that controls what happens to them. I've heard comments

like, 'I know she's been upset with me, but she won't let me know what it is.' Some of

this [may be due to] personality, but some of these teachers talk a lot and have a very

strong presence. I don't know how to counteract this except to say this exists. I don't

think we've addressed this issue openly. Everyone knows it exists but we don't talk about

it. There is a general fear that if they say something then you may be upset with them

(Melissa, support faculty, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

The Principal reported that she was unaware this was a common perception among school

faculty and staff. Concerned and very aware that these perceptions must be impacting both

decision-making and the overall school climate, Ms. Taylor decided to bring in an outside

facilitator to help the faculty and staff feel comfortable about bringing these concerns to the

surface. Her decision to do this came from discussions with Louis Cruz and Karen Burton, as

they discussed some of the comments they heard during the day, as well as those from the

survey.

Leadership Communication Methods Impacting Classroom Practices and Silencing Faculty

In the surveys, faculty indicated that leadership needed to send out notices and reminders

in a timely manner. Often, important dates about student activities, school convocations, and

after-school meetings were not communicated until the last minute, making it difficult for

teachers to plan for and around these events. In addition, teachers recommended that leadership

give advanced notice about important grant, school improvement, and other administrative

deadlines.

> We need more notice for school-wide programs, including reminders two to three days
>
> before a school event. Sometimes [the principal] changes plans at the last minute, and
>
> only a few teachers know about it (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring
>
> 2003).
>
> I wish we knew what was going on ahead of time. I don't know how many times I found
>
> out about important due dates and procedures at the last minute. And you tend to hear
>
> rumors instead of someone taking charge and telling us (Response, Creekside faculty and
>
> staff survey, Spring 2003).

Teachers expressed frustration when the principal temporarily suspended the calendar meeting

schedule until the faculty completed the School Improvement Plan. Initially, several faculty

members were unaware that the calendar schedule was temporarily suspended, resulting in many

absent teachers at the following study group meetings. While a few teachers were not aware of

the study group meetings, others did not have enough time to reschedule previously planned

meetings and engagements. Miscommunications such as these resulted in less than half the

faculty showing up to at least one study group meeting. Throughout the spring 2003 semester,

Creekside faculty continued to refer to the calendar-meeting schedule, and they planned for and

attended meetings at times posted on this schedule. However, the Principal frequently cancelled

these regularly scheduled meetings, as other meetings superceded those on the schedule.

Teachers were often not notified of scheduling changes, which kept them guessing about whether

particular meetings were actually going to happen on the scheduled date. Several times a week,

teachers were found in the office asking those around whether a meeting for that afternoon was

still scheduled.

In the spring faculty and staff survey, four faculty members expressed concerns that leadership did not always communicate a willingness to listen to new ideas and consider different opinions. In addition, eight faculty members felt that leadership was not supporting the Partnership's efforts at the school. These faculty members perceived school leaders as the ones ultimately responsible for communicating Partnership resources and opportunities and overseeing their implementation at the school. One teacher was particularly disappointed when she heard an administrator say that she was just "trying to hang on and get through this year." Those perceiving little change in teachers' instructional practices and communication with children, the Partnership's impact, and the overall school culture, blamed leadership for not communicating programs and facilitating the faculty's follow through with grant and Partnership-related implementations.

> We spend way too much time talking about things that an administrator is paid to handle. We need administrators to be clearer about roles and to take more action.
>
> Who makes the final decisions? (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

Delores Taylor joined Karen Burton and Louis Cruz during the March 12, 2003 conversation day to listen to the faculty's concerns. A few faculty members expressed their disappointment in the lack of perceived changes during the year, which they felt resulted from communication gaps among teachers and between school leadership and faculty. Taylor, Burton, and Cruz partially attributed these communication gaps to the overall school climate and feelings of distrust between school faculty and school leadership. As discussed earlier, Taylor scheduled a facilitator to meet with the faculty and staff to discuss issues related to school climate and leadership concerns. Through these discussions, the school developed actions for leadership and

school faculty to implement during the 2003-2004 school year. These discussions resulted in the school documenting more clearly defined roles for school leadership and recommending procedures for providing sufficient follow through with planned changes. Despite these recommendations, not much changed in 2003-2004 (see Chapter 7).

<div align="center">School Organization Impacting Decision-Making and Communication</div>

Although most in the school would agree that the School Improvement Process facilitated more shared decision-making, they saw much room for improvement in how decisions were made and carried out. Eleven faculty members commented that multiple committees, formed out of programs of the past, took decision-making power from the faculty and placed it the hands of a select few. Two of these teachers questioned the purpose of having a Literacy Committee, beyond the writing and reading study groups that were formed through the School Improvement Process. As stated above, the Literacy Committee evolved out of a school-based design team originally formed to oversee implementation of the America's Choice model. The Literacy Committee made decisions about how leadership and the literacy coordinators could best support teachers in their classrooms as they implemented grant components and the workshop approach. Initially, the literacy team decided to meet at 1:00 pm on Tuesday afternoons and invited teachers and support staff to attend and support the team when possible. However, several teachers voiced concern that they were not able to attend these meetings, as they were scheduled during the school day when teachers were with their students. Teachers wanted more input into any potential decisions being made by the Literacy Committee. After discussions among team members and teachers, the literacy team began meeting every other Tuesday after school so that more teachers could participate.

While the new Literacy Committee schedule made it possible for more teachers to participate in these meetings, some faculty and staff members questioned whether this committee should have existed at all. The Governance Committee was designed to make decisions regarding the grant's implementation and oversee necessary classroom changes from state-mandated grant revisions. The three School Improvement study groups were formed to develop plans for the three-year school improvement process, which began in 2003-2004. Having the Literacy Committee was unnecessary, since all literacy-related decisions could be made through the previous three committees. Furthermore, the extra Literacy Committee created the risk of pulling decisions from the school as a whole because it facilitated school improvement dialogue among a small circle of people with similar ideas about how reading and writing should be taught. Some teachers believed these conversations needed to occur in study group meetings, so that all study group participants representing the entire school's interests could participate. Doing so would increase the likelihood that everyone serving on the Literacy Study Groups would have equal opportunity to participate and influence decisions. In addition, the Governance and Literacy committees, combined with the reading and writing study groups, created four literacy-related decision-making bodies for the school. As a result, many teachers attributed literacy miscommunications and ambiguity regarding literacy programs and instruction to the overabundant number of literacy committees.

> I see the issues of communication and decision-making as linked. Because of the plethora
> of programs at Creekside, we are in a muddle. There are so many different committees,
> teams boards, and groups, that it is hard to know who is doing what or why. In response
> to the demands of the grant we have a Governing Board. In response to the demands of
> the School Improvement Process we have Study Groups. Because of the Partnership, we

have Action Teams. As a vestige from America's Choice we have a Literacy Team, and all this in addition to the standard school committees…all these different programs have exacerbated the very human tendency to guard turf and seek power. We again need to put the needs of the school as a whole above the needs of any one group or program (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

The inordinate number of committees created confusion among faculty about how decisions were made in the school. Because of overlapping responsibilities within different committees, conversations tended to move in circles and important issues were often left undecided. Many believed this happened because the school's leadership did not take an active role in making teachers accountable for implementing school-based decisions. For instance, decisions made in committee meetings and mandated through the GA READS grant, such as procedures for teaching reading and writing in the school and action steps developed out of task forces, never took hold in the school, and many faculty attributed this to the lack of follow through by the school principal. The lack of enforcement by leadership led to confusion among faculty about how decisions were made and who decided what happened in the school.

We need leadership that is enthusiastic and committed …there is no follow through with what we start. After meeting for entire planning days about integration, communication, and classroom climate, nothing has changed or happened (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

Our discussions go around in circles… who's going to make the final decision? You tend to hear rumors instead of someone just telling us [what has been decided] on certain issues (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

In addition, eleven of twenty-four surveys indicated that decisions appear to be made by a select few people before issues are discussed as a group, leading many faculty to feel silenced.

> We talk about things so long that people get anxious to go. The people who always make the decisions are the only ones still paying attention… The important stuff should be a whole-school decision, but let's not waste time over the little things. We need more clear roles and more action on the part of the administration (Response, Creekside faculty and staff survey, Spring 2003).

These concerns were particularly prevalent among new teachers and staff. Early in the year, the Principal decided to merge the School Improvement and Leadership Committees to create one overall body in charge of making school level decisions (now referred to as the SILC committee). After this occurred, a new teacher expressed concern at a faculty meeting that there was not enough new faculty representation on this committee. During the following SILC meeting, members discussed how to recruit more new teachers to join the committee. Several suggestions were made, and the Principal encouraged those on the SILC committee to let others in the school know that "This isn't a secret society. Anyone can come." Despite her words, the Principal did not publicly announce her open invitation to faculty who wished to participate in SILC meetings. Furthermore, many new teachers were not satisfied with an invitation to participate, as they perceived this as very different from being an actual committee member. One teacher indicated that she was told the meeting was closed to new members after the Principal made this announcement. Thus, confusion about how to become involved in SILC and how to include new members persisted throughout the school year. The ambiguity associated with committee membership was never made clear by the Principal or others on the SILC committee at whole school meetings, despite the confusion. No new members ever joined the committee

after this discussion either. Currently, four of the twelve members representing the school are new to the school this year, including the assistant principal, music teacher, literacy coach, and family literacy coordinator.

New teachers were unfamiliar with many of the previous school policies and programs, making it difficult for some to feel comfortable participating in school improvement discussions. Programs and procedures mandated for teachers in the grant were never made clear to new faculty when they began the school year. Often, new faculty spent their time in meetings trying to figure out what people were talking about when they referred to previous reform programs such as "Success for All" and "America's Choice." The uncertainties about how previous instructional programs connected to grant mandates and other literacy issues discussed in faculty meetings, often kept new teachers from participating in whole school decisions. In addition, many faculty members perceived a few veteran teachers, who were both familiar with past programs and vocal about their opinions on issues, having much more influence in decisions regarding plans for school improvement. Thus, these select few veteran and vocal faculty members, who served on several committees, were often perceived as the ones who ultimately made the decisions for everyone.

Conflicting Teacher-Student Communication Styles Influencing Faculty Division and Isolation

The school addressed conflicts among the way in which teachers communicate with their students. Some faculty members were uncomfortable with the way in which select teachers disciplined their students, causing "friction and frustration" among those with conflicting styles. As stated above, a task force was formed during the fall 2002 semester to address issues regarding the overall school climate. One issue that this task force initially planned to address was the conflict among teachers in regard to different styles of teacher-student communication.

The Principal and school faculty addressed this issue at the end-of-year whole school meeting with an outside facilitator.

While teacher-student communication issues represented a major school-level concern throughout the year, some faculty did not recognize this was an issue until after it appeared on the Partnership Survey Summary Report. At least three faculty members, at three separate times this year, spoke privately with other faculty and staff members who they felt used harsh tones and disrespectful language while correcting student behaviors. As these private conversations remained private, a few teachers were surprised to find out that teacher-student communication at Creekside was a paramount issue for other school faculty and staff members. A conversation during the March 12, 2003 conversation day illustrated the different perceptions in regard to teacher-student communication being a major concern dividing the faculty:

> Kim, intermediate teacher: I wanted to address differences in teaching styles. What does this mean? Is it negative talk, or…
>
> School administrator: How teachers talk to children and how teachers sound. There's a way to discipline children without sounding disrespectful. There's a way to do that. We talked about mutual respect between teachers and children. Do we respect children? Sometimes we talk down to them.
>
> Kim, intermediate teacher: So this has caused friction among the faculty?
>
> School administrator: Yes.
>
> Olivia, intermediate teacher: Will that be addressed in any way so that people know? I think this needs to be said at a meeting.
>
> School administrator: Is that a suggestion?
>
> Olivia, intermediate teacher: If it's a global thing, I think this would be better.

External Partnership stakeholder: We've had several suggestions today, from an in-service… to taping yourself and watching and listening to yourself. Other strategies have to do with teaching in-services about talking.

Annette, intermediate teacher: I think just mentioning this to get it out there would help (3-12-03 fieldnotes).

Two reasons explain how some faculty did not recognize this as an issue, despite its impact on the overall school climate. First, a few veteran faculty recognized this as an issue in previous years and addressed their concerns privately with other faculty and staff members. However, teachers new to the school represented the majority of faculty who recognized and considered this a major concern. This year, almost half of the faculty and staff were new to the school, creating the impetus necessary to bring these issues to the forefront.

Second, teacher-student communication, despite being an issue in private circles, was not publicly addressed as a major concern during the 2002-2003 school year until the survey findings were distributed to the entire school. Even during the fall semester, the task force in charge of brainstorming solutions to teacher-student communication issues never publicly stated that teacher-student talk was an issue, nor did they directly address solutions to this concern. Instead, faculty discussed teacher-student talk indirectly by presenting a list of actions to address "school climate." At the faculty meeting in November (see Appendix C) the task force recommended a speaker visit the school to discuss "behavior management issues" and "teacher attitudes." Before the survey summary was distributed, this was the closest anyone came to publicly stating that teacher-student talk was a major concern at the school.

Teachers and staff isolated themselves from most others in the school community this year. Factors such as teacher-student communication conflicts; pedagogical differences;

pressures to implement reform initiatives and increase student achievement scores; and a perceived lack of time to accomplish what has been required of faculty this year; created pressure and division among faculty members that prevented collaboration and group cohesion from taking hold in 2002-2003.

> I don't get a sense of group cohesiveness. It's on a feel level. I've noticed more people this year that are isolating themselves and don't seem happy to me. Teachers sat with others in the past but now more than ever they eat in their own rooms. I wonder- do they feel a lack of connection in this community? People don't seem comfortable getting things out in open, and it's affecting the energy we have to contribute to children. I hear a lot grumbling, and the negative energy in the school is getting people more upset and doesn't help (Melissa, support faculty, 3-12-03 fieldnotes).

Because faculty didn't collaborate effectively, conflicts sustained themselves and prevented a close-knit community from developing at Creekside. The large proportion of new faculty and staff contributed to the isolation and division that grew, as teachers outside their grade level groups had few opportunities to get to know one another and develop friendships. Developing relationships and learning how to collaborate takes time, which was a scarce resource for everyone at Creekside in 2002-2003. Many faculty members mentioned the summer retreat as a significant time when faculty came together and began developing a close community. There was time at the summer retreat for faculty and staff to discuss issues and collaborate, which facilitated anticipation and excitement for the coming school year. After school began, "things just took off," leaving little time to build on the foundation for change that began during the summer. As a result, the budding relationships and overall sense of community wilted. As one faculty member put it, "We don't know each other."

Several members suggested having another retreat during the summer to discuss conflicts and work through some of the issues that divided faculty and staff this year. However, others did not want to meet during the summer, as the new calendar schedule already limited the amount of time they would have to refresh and reenergize. Ultimately, the faculty did meet and discuss these issues during the externally facilitated end-of-year meeting. Upon reflection, some faculty admitted that they did not have a realistic view of what it would take to change the school's culture. These faculty members were concerned that more time needed to be set aside if such a massive task was to be realized.

Using Partnership Resources to Develop a School Improvement Plan

I conclude this chapter by explaining how the School Improvement Process facilitated the school's development of specific goals to improve student achievement at Creekside. University and district partners worked closely with the school to help them develop concrete plans for utilizing and aligning Partnership resources with GA READS Program components and the school's new vision for improvement. As the above sections indicate, faculty members constructed very diverse interpretations as they proceeded through the school improvement process during 2002-2003. As chapter eight will describe, conflicting interpretations impacted teachers' diverse levels of commitment to the school improvement plan, as well as their individual responses toward implementing the components contain within the plan.

Developing Plans to Improve Communication Across Stakeholders

Although many faculty members did not perceive much impact from the Partnership in 2002-2003, a few teachers worked hard to represent the school at Nuts and Bolts and Design Team Meetings during the 2002-2003 school year. These faculty members took the faculty and staff's concerns to the larger Design Team to ensure that Creekside had a voice in the decisions

being made during the year. Representatives demonstrated their devotion to Creekside faculty and the Partnership during the spring 2003 semester, when the Design Team worked to create a new calendar schedule for the following year. Design Team teacher representatives at Creekside met several times with other teachers and staff to revise this year's schedule. They scheduled a meeting with the entire staff to propose the Design Team's new calendar schedule for the partnership schools and get feedback from faculty to present at the following design team meeting. Through this process, the Design Team teacher representatives played a critical role in ensuring that the new calendar schedule gave teachers more instructional time before state standardized tests. They helped persuade the Design Team to reorganize the school's intercession and vacation days.

At the May 5, 2003 Design Team meeting, members discussed possible ways to address problems in communicating information about Partnership programs and resources to the pilot schools. Members decided to write into the minutes bulleted summaries of key decisions and topics discussed at meetings. Doing this would make it easier for pilot school faculties to stay up to date with new Partnership programs and changes, as many faculty members did not read lengthy Design Team minutes. The Design Team recommended adding Partnership news and information as part of every faculty meeting and placing a box and paper in the main office for teachers to document their Partnership-related questions or concerns. The Principal agreed that both suggestions were needed to promote the Partnership initiatives and increase the low levels of Partnership implementation; however, she did not announce either suggestion in school leadership meetings and both suggestions were soon forgotten.

The Design Team discussed procedures to ensure that both pilot schools maintain ongoing representation at Design Team meetings. The Creekside Nuts and Bolts teacher

representative emailed teachers and asked for their feedback in regard to maintaining ongoing

teacher representation in Design Team meetings. Several Creekside teachers responded. From

this feedback, the Design Team teacher representative communicated that Creekside would like

to continue having at least two faculty members on the Design Team. The school decided to

rotate representation, with one experienced representative and one new representative serving on

the Design Team each year.

Developing Plans to Integrate and Differentiate Instruction

The above discussions and recommendations illustrate how the Partnership Design Team

provided support to Creekside. University and district stakeholders such as Karen Burton, the

Partnership Co-Director, and Dr Louis Cruz, Hillside's Executive Director for Instructional

Services, used whole school conversation days to discuss effective instructional strategies and

professional learning opportunities available for teachers and support staff at Creekside.

Interactions among university and school faculty about best practices, combined with the school

community's own conversations and reflections, led to the development of a school

improvement plan that included integrating instruction across subject areas. Throughout the year,

teachers' ongoing discussions about how to use thematic units and other integration methods

generated questions about the kinds of training necessary for teachers and staff to implement

such a plan. Specifically, the faculty pinpointed two areas in which they need more training.

The first area had to do with grade-level teams working collaboratively with special area

teachers[18] and other support faculty and staff[19]. Several faculty members and support personnel

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[18] In this case, specials teachers include those teaching physical education, music, art, technology, special education (including Education Intervention Program teachers), ELL, and gifted education.

[19] Support faculty and staff encompasses specials teachers and includes all faculty and staff who support teachers and students in the school. This term includes administration, the school counselor, social and psychological services staff, literacy coaches, certified teacher support, para-professionals, and all other hired staff working in the school to support teachers and students.

expressed a need for regular classroom teachers, special area teachers and support staff to learn

how to collaboratively implement thematic units across the curriculum.

> We as a school aren't [knowledgeable] about how to use [special area] teachers to build
>
> on themes. For staff development, maybe someone could come in and train us a little
>
> more, and train the teachers. We need to address how to work together to integrate
>
> instruction (Grace, primary teacher, 2-14-03 fieldnotes).
>
> Teachers need to attend workshops on integrating instruction and meet quarterly with
>
> [special area] teachers to integrate subjects (Leah, special area teacher, 2-26-03
>
> fieldnotes).

The second area in which faculty perceived a need for more training was in differentiating

instruction.

> Most teachers here admit that they don't differentiate instruction for [all] kids. They
>
> either don't know how or don't have time. It's like we're teaching to one kind of kid and
>
> if you're above and below then…well, sorry (Frances, special area teacher, 3-03-03
>
> fieldnotes).

Several faculty members indicated that some of the professional development seminars

and workshops they are required to participate in did not meet their specific training needs. In

particular, special area teachers requested more autonomy in choosing the types of training

sessions they attended. They wanted the district administration to allow them more freedom in

determining what kinds of training would be best for their individual needs, as well as the needs

of the school. The faculty included in their School Improvement Plan workshops to learn more

about instructional integration and instructional differentiation. The plan indicated that teachers

would attend workshops on instructional integration and work with special area teachers to

implement strategies for doing so. The faculty included specific professional learning workshops in their plan such as continuing the U of S Reading Endorsement course, math professional development workshops, and grade level meetings with the literacy coaches, all of which were supported through Partnership and GA READS Program initiatives. In addition, faculty documented that they would "participate in professional development for differentiated instruction" (Creekside School Improvement Plan, Spring 2003). By stating their intent to differentiate instruction broadly, teachers planned to target specific professional development workshops that addressed their individual goals as well as the school's goals.

Developing Plans to Expand the Family Literacy Center

Added to these instructional needs, the faculty discussed the need for more training in how to implement and support a Family *Resource* Center (FRC) in the school. As part of the GA READS grant, the school cleared out a large classroom early in the school year to be used as a Family *Literacy* Center (FLC). The FLC is similar to an FRC in that it serves to support parents and families in the school. However, the FLC focuses only on promoting literacy and literacy-related activities for children and families in grades kindergarten through three, as this center is entirely funded through the GA READS grant. Eventually, the school plans to expand the services they offer by developing the FLC into an FRC. The FRC would have the capacity and human resources necessary to work with all families in the school community, providing a range of services for families that extend beyond literacy. For instance, the FRC coordinator might help a family by assisting them with their basic survival needs, or by putting them in touch with the appropriate community member when parents have legal, medical, psychological, or other questions. The coordinator might offer GED, ESOL, and parenting, and other courses for parents and families, similar to the FLC.

As the faculty looks toward the future, they hope to continue expanding the services offered through the FLC. Over the past two years, the university and district have funded trips for faculty members to visit FRC's in schools around the country. These faculty members were able to see first hand how the school manages an FRC and how parents access services. In one case, Creekside faculty members talked with the superintendent, the principal, and the FRC coordinator about the benefits and challenges associated with an FRC and gained tremendous insight into building such a center at Creekside. Several faculty members expressed an interest in learning more about FRC's from those who participated in these site visits. They recommended that more time be set aside to learn about FRC's and ask questions of those who traveled to FRC sites. This way, everyone in the school has access to information about FRC sites and can more fully appreciate its function within the school.

In the spring of 2003, Delores Taylor, Creekside Principal, traveled to Kentucky with several other principals, teachers, and HCSD administrators to visit schools with very successful FRC's. The insight gained from these trips prompted Creekside faculty to include more FRC and school site visits in their School Improvement Plan. They added site visits to community learning centers and schools with family resource centers (FRC), to develop a more comprehensive picture about what services are included in an FRC and how school faculty work together to ensure that services reach students and their families.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Creekside Elementary School faced several challenges during the 2002-2003 school year. The GA READS Grant, which began in 2002-2003, required K-3 teachers to implement a new comprehensive literacy program. Partnership stakeholders provided extensive resources to (1) support implementation of GA READS Program components; (2) to support implementation of

additional initiatives designed to transition Creekside into a community learning center; and (3) to support Creekside's development of a School Improvement Plan, which was intended to align these initiatives with the Partnership's overall vision for improvement. Accomplishing these three objectives proved to be an enormous task for the school.

Different pedagogical philosophies created a great deal of tension, as faculty and staff interpreted their expectations to implement GA READS Program components in very different ways. Teachers who piloted Open Court and other literacy programs were frustrated when the state later mandated changes that were not consistent with what was written into the original GA READS proposal. State evaluators recommended specific changes to promote program consistency within and across grade levels, and they expected the school literacy coaches to facilitate teachers' implementation of these changes. While a few teachers worked closely with literacy coaches to implement GA READS Program components, others resisted assistance and continued using Open Court curriculum and instructional strategies. Most teachers agreed that literacy program consistency needed to transcend their conflicting beliefs and instruction practices; however, issues involving time to concurrently develop a School Improvement Plan, implement the GA READS Program, and implement additional Partnership initiatives prevented the school from implementing a consistent literacy program and various other Partnership initiatives in 2002-2003. Specifically, the school improvement planning process and an excessive number of assessment-related requirements left teachers with little time to collaborate with their grade level colleagues and special area teachers. Teachers were concerned that the school's intensive focus on literacy improvement, combined with other district and school requirements, limited their ability to focus on instructional improvements in mathematics and to provide adequate support services to Creekside students and families.

Other factors influenced the reform implementation process, including district and school leadership practices, school organization, and school communication. Frequent district leadership changes over the past 20 years, a top-down decision-making structure, and the district's unresponsiveness to Creekside's new calendar schedule contributed to low levels of commitment to the Partnership Reform effort across the school. Several faculty members feared potential retribution from district and school leadership if they expressed conflicting opinions and recommendations regarding existing school programs and policies. School leadership often communicated information about important school functions and meetings without enough time for teachers to adjust their schedules. These communication delays along with overlapping literacy decision making committees, led several faculty members to perceive only a few key personnel making major school-level decisions. Conflicting teacher-student communication interacted with the high stress levels associated with such a massive reform effort, which kept the school divided throughout most of the year, prompted several teachers to isolate themselves from school, and led to low reform implementation levels in 2002-2003.

Despite Creekside's low implementation levels, university and district partners worked with the school faculty and staff to develop a School Improvement Plan. Ongoing conversations with university and district partners helped the school faculty to clarify a collective vision for improvement, align GA READS Program components and Partnership initiatives into this vision, and establish specific procedures for implementing improvements during 2003-2004. An external facilitator worked with the school during an end of year meeting to help them work through the problems that divided groups and isolated individuals throughout the year. As a result, several faculty and staff members expressed a renewed sense of unity and common purpose across the school at the start of the 2003-2004 school year. In particular, teachers

commented that the school-wide improvement process helped them develop a coherent

instructional plan, streamline assessments, and establish specific plans for improvement.

In the next chapter, I focus my attention on the classroom. I rely on interviews with ten

classroom teachers to describe how the resources and support mechanisms written into the

School Improvement Plan impacted teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices. Findings

indicate that teachers began the 2003-2004 school year with a renewed sense of unity and a

common purpose; however, an ongoing district budget crisis impacted the district's decision to

reduce the number of school days in both Partnership Pilot Schools to the traditional 180 days. In

addition, other district mandated changes disrupted the school's initial sense of stability when the

2003-2004 school year began.

I begin this chapter by examining how the Partnership Reform Initiative, the GA READS

Grant, and smaller grant-funded reforms impacted teachers' perspectives of their classroom

practices. Teachers' instructional practices at Creekside did not change much, despite the

inordinate amount of resources and professional development support. Inconsistent state and

district policies, combined with teachers' ongoing uncertainties about the Partnership Reform

Initiative, prevented the School Improvement Process from activating coherent program changes

in teachers' classroom practices.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS

Teachers' Perspectives of the Impact of Reforms on their Classroom Practices

During the first semester of the 2003-2004 school-year, ten teachers participated in open-ended interviews to share their perspectives on the impact of the Partnership Reform Initiative and other influences on their classroom practices. The data used for this chapter consists of these interviews, along with continuing school observations conducted at Creekside during the fall 2003-2004 semester. Several themes emerged to represent the major sources impacting teachers' classroom practices, including Partnership initiatives, state and federal grants, and district mandates. Teachers interpreted these reform initiatives in very different ways, which ultimately influenced very different levels of implementation across grade levels and individual classrooms. While all teachers reported experiencing some level of change in their classroom practices, the sources that teachers credited with these changes varied.

Findings suggested several factors influenced low levels of reform implementation, which prevented a cultural transition from taking place in the school. The School Improvement Process enabled teachers to integrate Partnership and grant-related reforms and focus resources to support a more coherent instructional plan across the school, particularly in reading and language arts; however, grant mandated changes combined with existing district and school structures to constrain teacher decision making and prevent actual change in teachers classroom practices that focused around a collective vision. Thus, teachers' pedagogical differences sustained ongoing divisions among faculty in 2003-2004 and prompted diverse levels of

commitment to sustain reforms written into the School Improvement Plan. In addition, teachers reported ongoing uncertainties about the university's role as partner in the reform process. Communication gaps across Partnership, district, and school-level committees prevented teachers from co-constructing reforms and buying into the Partnership Reform Initiative.

The GA READS Grant Impacting Changes in Teachers Classroom Practices

The GA READS Grant provided extensive resources to support comprehensive changes in literacy for kindergarten though grade three teachers. The grant allocated over $800,000 for K-3 teachers to purchase supplies and materials to implement reading and writing workshop strategies, increase field trips to help children connect authentic literature to real world experiences, establish a family literacy center to support literacy development in the home, and receive intensive and ongoing professional development to support and sustain instructional changes across K-3 classrooms. Teachers interviewed, including intermediate grade-level and special area teachers, discussed both positive and negative influences of the GA READS grant on their classroom practices.

Using Field Trips to Enrich the Curriculum and Facilitate Meaningful Learning Experiences

Teachers expressed the impact of resources in diverse ways across the school. Each of the four teachers interviewed in kindergarten, first, second, and third grade discussed the benefits these resources provided for teachers professional development and children's learning experiences. For example, students in grades K-3 averaged one field trip a month last year, which enabled children to gain unique experiences that would otherwise be unavailable to them. Three teachers commented that the increase in field trips provided them with common experiences to help children make meaningful connections between literature and the real world.

Gina described one field trip to an authentic Hispanic grocery store as a shared experience that helped her bridge connections between classroom lessons and the local community.

> I experienced some new things too, and when I went there it got my mind going because we saw all these new things. So I need to make sure my kids know what all these things are. That makes me a better teacher, a better bridge for them so they can make those connections (Gina, primary teacher).

Similarly, Linda explained how the field trips provided opportunities for children to broaden their experiences and interact with people in different settings and environments. These trips gave children and teachers common experiences to reference in writing workshop, which prompted some to demonstrate a greater interest in writing. Another teacher was surprised to find out that her children were learning new words and building their vocabulary through these trips. "[Students] used words I wouldn't think were in their vocabulary…but I knew they [learned] them from our trips."

Purchasing Classroom Materials to Enhance Literacy Instruction

The grant gave K-3 teachers extensive resources to implement reading and writing workshop strategies. For instance, teachers purchased enormous amounts of materials to support guided reading strategies, including authentic texts, "big books," easels, dry erase boards, chart paper, literature and phonics games, and bins for organizing leveled books. One teacher described these materials as "basic resources needed in the elementary classrooms." Similarly, Margaret discussed how the grant gave teachers the critical resources needed to use reading and writing workshop strategies in the classroom.

> The grant has been wonderful to us this year. We have received so many books. My library was so diminished. I didn't really have anything, but now I have tubs and bins of

books, and they gave us big books for our book room. [The grant] gave us funding for

bins to put the books in and funding for literature games that we need to help us

implement guided reading. The grant has been like Santa this year (Margaret, primary

teacher).

Three K-3 teachers interviewed said that they would not have been able to implement reading

workshop strategies in their classroom without the grant, as the school did not have the resources

or materials needed to implement them.

Complementing Literacy Training with Sustained Classroom Support

Grant resources funded one literacy coach to support literacy development in K-3

classrooms. This freed up existing school resources and allowed the school to hire an additional

coach to support literacy in grades four and five. Teachers across grade levels discussed the

tremendous impact of these two literacy coaches on their instructional practices. While the K-3

literacy coach experienced multiple setbacks when implementing grant mandates in 2002-2003,

the 2003-2004 school year ushered in a School Improvement Plan that included implementing

reading and writing workshop across grade levels. Thus, teachers began the 2003-2004 school

year intending to implement reading and writing workshop and used the literacy coaches to

support this transition. Teachers discussed specific kinds of support to help them implement the

workshop approach in their classrooms. For instance, the literacy coaches placed labels on texts

so that teachers could easily identify each book's reading comprehension level. Coaches

organized texts by level and placed them in a "book room," which enabled teachers to easily pull

several appropriately leveled books. Organizing texts by comprehension level became critical, as

teachers would have had to give up critical planning time to complete such a laborious task.

Five teachers found the sustained classroom support especially helpful for learning how to effectively implement reading and writing workshop components. Literacy coaches supported the implementation process by modeling mini-lessons, various small group activities, and other writing and reading workshop components for teachers. Coaches worked with teachers to administer and use assessments to guide their instruction and establish small groups for teaching specific reading skills. One teacher described how the literacy coach supported her transition from using a basal to using workshop approaches for teaching reading.

> Whenever I feel that I'm not moving forward, I call on [the literacy coach] to model a lesson, either for guided reading, writing workshop, phonics, whatever program I need help with, and they'll model. Last year, all my… experiences had been the basal and not guided reading. For the first two weeks of school, [the literacy coach] team taught with me, and modeled a lot, so I really felt like I was trained to do it. And now, when I have students that I can't quite figure out what I need to do for them, she'll come in and observe and let me know what I'm doing well or how to make it better. It's constructive criticism, rather than just, you're missing these things, you need to do it. She also helped me find materials (books, games, etc.) that would fit what my kids needed (Gina, primary teacher).

In addition, resources funded a full-time literacy coordinator, who worked with the literacy coaches to develop various activities designed to support family literacy and reading in the home. The literacy coordinator and literacy coaches worked with teachers to implement activities, called PACT (Parents and Children Together), which were designed to encourage parents to read with their children. As part of the grant, K-3 teachers developed one reading lesson a month designed to encourage families to read together. Teachers invited parents into the

classroom during this time to read and complete various literacy-related activities together. While literacy coaches often planned these lessons for teachers, the literacy coordinator planned and coordinated a "literacy night" once a month for the same purpose. Teachers included PACT activities in the School Improvement Plan, which required fourth and fifth grade teachers to implement these lessons as well.

Grant funds paid for Dr. Kathy Redding, a university faculty member, to teach a reading course at Creekside Elementary. Although scheduling conflicts prevented several teachers from attending the majority of after-school course sessions in 2003, Dr. Redding met with individual grade level teams at least once during the fall 2003 semester to provide targeted assistance to grade-level teams. Two teachers reported implementing lessons, which they learned while attending these courses. Lessons included strategies to engage reluctant readers and integrate trade books into science and social studies curriculum. Beth, a K-3 teacher, discussed the impacts that resulted in her instruction after her grade level team met with the grade level team above them. After listening to teachers in a higher grade level discuss how they teach phonemic awareness, Beth's team decided to spend more time teaching this skill. Dr. Redding trained teachers on how to use running records to determine students reading levels and guide further instruction. K-3 teachers mentioned this training as particularly helpful last year when they began using the Rigby assessment.

The grant supported professional development opportunities including seminars, workshops, and teacher visits to schools implementing family resource centers and reading and writing workshop strategies. Although no one who was interviewed perceived the state-sponsored seminars and workshops as helpful, three teachers found site visits to be especially meaningful experiences. For instance, Evelyn expressed her initial reluctance to implement

workshop strategies, until the grant paid for her to observe the workshop approach in action. A site visit to an elementary school outside the district helped her understand how to effectively implement workshop strategies. In addition, Evelyn was able to talk with teachers about their reasons for implementing the workshop approach during this visit. These discussions ultimately convinced her to implement the workshop approach in her classroom.

GA READS Program Unintentionally Impacting Teachers' Classroom Practices

While the grant provided teachers with extensive resources to support professional development and enrich students learning experiences, several unintended consequences emerged as well. Below, I explain how the grant's assessment procedures, combined with district and state assessments, required teachers to administer an excessive number of tests which eventually overloaded teachers and created adverse experiences for students. In addition, I examine how the GA READS Program's shifting requirements challenged the school's efforts to establish a consistent literacy program, and how the program's focus on K-3 students formed divisions between primary and intermediate grade-level teachers.

Grant Overloading Teachers with Assessment Requirements

The grant required teachers to administer several assessments, which state evaluators used to track the school's progress and teachers used to inform and guide instruction. While teachers found certain assessments helpful for these purposes, the excessive number of assessments during 2002-2003 cost them valuable instructional time and became emotionally overwhelming for some children. On average, the grant alone required K-3 teachers to administer four separate assessments for comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency, with each administered multiple times during the year. In addition, these tests had to be administered individually, one at a time for each child. This list does not include other

state-mandated tests administered to children, such as the Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and the state writing test, which are administered each year during the spring semester. District benchmark assessments compounded challenges associated with excessive testing, as teachers were required to administer several benchmark assessments one at a time with each student during 2002-2003. Teachers were required to continue administering each district benchmark assessment to a child until s/he mastered the skill. Thus, some children found themselves taking the same test three or four times during the year. After accounting for tests mandated by the state, the GA READS grant, and the district, along with additional daily quizzes, chapter tests, and end of unit examinations, both students and teachers found themselves overwhelmed with testing.

School administration worked with school faculty and district administration to streamline the overwhelming number of assessments that teachers were required to administer last year. This year for instance, teachers administer tests such as the Rigby Running Record to determine students' reading level, reserving the GOLD test (phonemic awareness) as an assessment to be used with students on an individual basis. Literacy coaches administered additional tests, which did not provide critical information above and beyond the Rigby running records. The district contributed to the school's increased efficiency in testing when they revised the Benchmark Assessments, which are now only administered three times during the school year. In addition, a district staff member now summarizes benchmark results and provides support for intermediate grade-level teachers to more efficiently target specific areas of weakness.

In addition, the school used the School Improvement Process to establish assessment procedures and clarify how tests would be administered and utilized during the 2003-2004

school year. Creekside's Assistant Principal distributed an assessment chart, which clarified test requirements at each grade level at the beginning of this year. Clarifications in the school's testing procedures, district benchmark revisions, and additional district support have contributed to a more streamlined assessment process, enabling teachers to minimize time for testing, increase testing efficiency and utility, and maximize instructional time.

Despite the positive impacts that resulted from streamlining assessments at Creekside, teachers discussed unintended consequences that continue to impact their instruction and adversely affect students. For instance, two teachers described frustrations associated with having to spend valuable instructional time teaching children how to fill in bubbles, being required to administer tests that provide little additional information, or administering tests and never seeing the results.

A lot of time is spent on testing, either through pull out or in class, whole class activities… and it stinks when you're mandated to do something that really doesn't help [students], that's what's frustrating………. I was required to do the [assessment] whole class for children who didn't know how to bubble in. That's a skill that you have to teach- how to take a test. And with the [assessment] I haven't heard one thing. I have no idea what that does or why we had to do that (Gina, primary teacher).

Four teachers expressed concerns that the inordinate number of assessments adversely impacted children by masking children's unique strengths and sending repeated messages of failure.

There are too many tests. We need to get rid of some of these tests, but I don't think that's going to happen. And I think it's really crushing for these kids to have to take these tests and know they don't do well. My kids kept saying, 'I'm going to fail, I'm not going

to [advance to the next grade], and it's just crushing. If you do it five days in a row, at least three times a year, I mean you're getting that message banged into your head over and over again, you can't do it, you can't do it, you can't do it, you can't do it (Olivia, intermediate teacher).

Grant Requirements Prompting Program Inconsistencies

K-3 teachers recognized grant resources as the critical component in supporting teachers' transition from a basal-centered literacy approach to a workshop approach; however, many questioned whether they could continue implementing workshop strategies without the continuous flow of resources that the grant provided. Relying on large grants such as GA READS to support instructional programs became problematic, as state evaluators changed their requirements over time and challenged Creekside to maintain a consistent and sustainable curricular program. At Creekside, this was evident during 2002-2003, as grant evaluators pressured the school into changing several program components written into their original proposal. For instance, grant evaluators originally approved Creekside's plan to use the Rigby Running Record as a formative reading assessment tool, but later mandated that they add an additional assessment. Evaluators approved the school's implementation of the Open Court Reading Program, but later pressured the literacy coach and pilot program teachers into implementing reading workshop.

In fall, 2003, Creekside considered applying for a federal Reading First Grant, as the GA READS grant expired after the 2003-2004 school year. SILC (School Leadership Committee) discussed whether to write a Reading First Grant proposal during the fall semester, and teacher leaders took questions and concerns back to their grade level teams for consideration and feedback. Several teachers discussed concerns in faculty meetings regarding whether they could

maintain a consistent program with the Reading First Grant, or face more changes that would potentially disrupt their School Improvement Plan. If the school received the grant, not only would they have to implement two additional assessments, they would be required to adopt and use a basal reading program. The phonics program, which was in its first year of implementation in 2003-2004, would be replaced with a different phonics program. While the assessment requirement alone was enough to prevent some teachers from voting to write the grant proposal, the latter two requirements convinced several other teachers that doing so would once again entrap the school in a state of constant change. Other teachers believed that the additional resources the school would receive were worth making these changes. One teacher expressed her ambivalence over the issue, illuminating the complexities involved with being awarded such a large grant.

> This year the county mandated that we use the Fountis and Pinell phonics lessons… and it was a lot of work at the beginning … For some teachers, it's been a huge change…….. and I'm kind of worried because now I've heard that the district may change its program again next year………. If we get the Reading First Grant, then it may change again, and then it won't be guided reading, it will be something else. It will be a basal of some sort, because you have to [adopt a basal program] with the Reading First Grant………..I voted yes [for the grant]. I was told in a faculty meeting that without the Reading First Grant, there would not be funds to pay for [the K-3 literacy coach] and possibly [the grade 4-5 literacy coach next year. And with as much as I count on [the literacy coach]- one, I couldn't in my conscience make a vote that would lose somebody their job. And two, I've already seen the connections that my children are making through the field trips are amazing (Gina, primary teacher).

Before the school voted on the issue, the district's grant writer visited the school to answer

questions and clarify teachers' concerns. Two teachers who voted against writing the grant

proposal discussed their sense at this meeting that teachers were finally beginning to develop

shared beliefs about their literacy instruction. One teacher discussed how the grant threatened to

once again divide the school.

> Finally, it was like, this is it, this is what last year was about… this is what the hell we
>
> paid, it's paying off because this is it and it's going forward now, kind of thing… and two
>
> of the teachers that had done a pilot program last year, with Open Court, and tried to
>
> [combine] guided reading along side of it, that's when those two teachers said, 'no, you
>
> *can't* [implement a basal program and guided reading simultaneously]. And so then there
>
> was this… quick, heated kind of, 'well, we can't give up guided reading because that's
>
> how we group our kids,' and I suddenly felt a lot of buy-in. I just thought people really
>
> believed in [guided reading]…….. They've tried it, they've lived it, we've developed
>
> it…. And now they're sold on it, and suddenly something like this with this grant, I just
>
> can't see how it can coexist (Beth, primary teacher).

Two days after this faculty meeting, the school voted on whether to write the grant

proposal; 12 voted 'yes' and 11 voted 'no.' The almost equal split among teachers sparked more

conflict and once again swept teachers' conflicting pedagogical ideas to the forefront, as the

major topic after the vote was announced revolved around who voted which way and for what

reasons. Later that same day, I spoke with two teachers who were furious after finding they

found out that two teachers who would have voted 'yes' were out of the building when the vote

was taken. Had these teachers been present to vote, the final results would have been 13 'no' and

12 'yes.' Despite this rumor and the persistent concerns of several teachers, the school proceeded to write the Reading First Grant proposal.

Grant Dividing Primary and Intermediate Grade Levels

Although fourth and fifth graders are not authorized to receive any grant resources,[20] the grant impacted fourth and fifth grade teachers' instruction in meaningful ways. While writing the School Improvement Plan for literacy, faculty and staff recognized that grant-mandated components would have to be included in order to continue receiving grant resources. Thus, fourth and fifth grade teachers became silenced members of the reading and writing committees, unable to influence several major components written into the plan. By excluding fourth and fifth graders from resources and many parts of what is now the school's literacy plan, fourth and fifth grade teachers are required to implement literacy programs that do not address their professional development needs, or the needs of their students and families. Intermediate grade teachers mentioned programs such as PACT, the reading professional development course, reading and writing workshop, and other school-required assessments that they must administer and implement, despite having almost no input into implementation decisions. In addition, intermediate grade teachers are required to implement these programs without receiving any of the benefits that are provided for K-3 teachers. Sally expressed her frustrations over being prohibited from accessing materials and resources that would benefit her students. She felt as though she and her colleagues had become silenced members of the school.

> [Being required to attend the reading workshop] divides us even worse because when we
>
> do those things, we hear about all the things that the lower level teachers are getting. I
>
> know they're working their tails off for it too, and I don't think I'd want to be under the

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[20] Students in grades four and five may receive special grant-associated resources and support, only if they have one or more siblings in lower grade levels.

grant just to get things. But you see, going down the hall, people are carrying all these things to their classroom and you kind of feel left out. You're like, that would be really great, I wish I could- 'whoops! Sorry, you can't touch that. You're not in the grant.' You know, 'I really could help you in the- whoops sorry, you can't have that.' And that's where I see that our school is very torn, just because fourth and fifth grade isn't under the grant, and we're not seeing any of those benefits from that (Sally, intermediate teacher).

Another teacher discussed specific programs that her students needed, but could not access because the grant did not allow for it. From her perspective, the absence of grant support too often failed to impact her instruction and her students' achievement.

Last year I had a student who [could have benefited from working with the family literacy coordinator], but she didn't have sibling that was in the primary grades. That meant that she couldn't work with [the literacy coordinator] because she's in fourth grade. So it's just those little things that have happened that make me feel, are we a part of this or not? (Judy, intermediate teacher).

Two intermediate grade teachers expressed how programs they are now required to implement are not addressing their students or families needs. For instance, students in the intermediate grades only have enough resources for two field trips a year, which limited teachers from being able to make real world connections to their curriculum. In addition, teachers explained how PACT activities did not address important parental needs, such as how to help their children with homework and developing organizational skills. "Just coming in and doing some cutesy little activity doesn't get us where we need to be." Fourth and fifth grade teachers expressed a lack of empowerment to influence changes in the school improvement plan, as the

channels through which to influence program changes funneled from grant evaluators and the district office through the primary grades.

<div align="center">Additional Grants Impacting Teachers Classroom Practices</div>

The Partnership and GA READS Grant sparked initiatives that primarily focused the school's attention on literacy instruction and the implementation of new literacy programs. While the GA READS Grant clearly had the most powerful impact on the school as a whole, a smaller grant began to impact several teachers' mathematics instruction in 2003-2004. Dr. Ernestine Newman, A University faculty member in the Department of Mathematics, Education worked with several Creekside teachers to write a grant proposal for a half-time math coach to support the implementation of innovative instructional strategies in mathematics. The school was awarded the grant at the beginning in 2003-2004, enabling a part-time math coach to work with grade-level teams and model grade-appropriate lessons for approximately an hour each week. Eight teachers indicated that this extra support influenced their practices and increased student engagement in math. Several teachers commented how the sustained classroom support has enabled them to use manipulatives more regularly and implement hands-on activities into their math instruction. Three teachers mentioned that the math coach influenced their decision to implement activities from the math seminars conducted in 2002-2003 by Dr. Newman and Amy Reed (university partners). Teachers described increased levels of engagement among students, particularly when the math coach was present to model lessons for teachers. Students were more willing to use manipulatives to help them work through difficult problems. Two teachers began using math journals in 2003-2004, after the math coach helped them introduce the journals and began providing ongoing support.

State, district, and School Structures Preventing Creekside's Cultural Transition

Creekside faculty and staff worked countless extra hours during the 2002-2003 school year to develop a consistent and coherent school plan, which addressed curriculum and instructional programs, parent involvement, and staff professional development. University faculty, district and school administration attempted to share responsibility throughout this process by (1) consulting with faculty members, (2) providing insight and support to each of three subject-area committees, and (3) facilitating conversations to draw out issues and concerns that fueled teacher isolation, divided the school faculty, and sustained a tense and distrustful school climate. The year culminated with a day-long meeting, where an outside facilitator worked with school faculty to address challenges that beset the school. At the start of the 2003-2004 school year, several faculty members expressed a renewed sense of unity and common purpose across the school, which showed promise that the Partnership Reform Initiative was moving closer to its overall vision for school improvement.

Despite early signs of progress, interviews and ongoing observations throughout the semester show that the cultural transition necessary for real and lasting school improvement has yet to be realized at Creekside. Existing state, district, and school structures were identified as major components preventing teachers from co-constructing reforms, buying into a collective school-driven vision, and implementing reforms built around this vision. The school improvement plan was not developed by teachers from the ground-up as intended. Rather, the school improvement plan was driven by grant mandates that were already in place by spring, 2003. In addition, district mandates continue to sustain top-down structures that undermine and constrain school-level decisions. The Design Team was unable to clarify the overall Partnership vision and purpose to school faculty, prompting teachers to perceive the Partnership Reform

Initiative as doing little to impact their instruction. School leadership did not implement school-level decision-making or accountability structures to clarify how Partnership initiatives could be integrated into an overall school plan, or empower teachers to co-construct reforms.

Grant-Mandated Policies Influencing Changes in Practice

While teachers identified one or more instructional and professional development components written into the school improvement plan as having an impact their classroom practices at some level, eight of the ten teachers interviewed said that the school improvement plan as a whole had no impact on their classroom practices. While this may sound contradictory, it does imply a disconnect between the *instructional plans* written into the School Improvement Plan during 2002-2003, and teachers actual daily *instructional practices*. One explanation for this disconnect can understood by examining the impact of the GA READS Grant on teachers practices. Four of the eight teachers identified above, each of whom taught in K-3 classrooms, said that they were already utilizing and implementing some or all components written into the school literacy plan, such as reading and writing workshop, parent involvement activities (primarily through PACT activities), and literacy coaches. Because many of the components written into the School Improvement Plan were already mandated through the GA READS grant, K-3 teachers were required to implement these same components in 2002-2003. Thus, changes in K-3 teachers classroom practices were originally driven through grant requirements, which teachers later wrote into the school improvement plan.

Four intermediate grade-level teachers interviewed said that changes in their classroom practices were influenced by the grant, not the school improvement plan. In fact, two of these four teachers said that the grant impacted their instruction in negative ways, as they are now implementing components such as PACT and attending grant-mandated professional

development courses that do not address their needs. One teacher never mentioned the school improvement plan or the 2002-2003 planning process throughout our interview. A different teacher questioned me after I mentioned the school improvement process several times. This teacher ultimately interpreted the school improvement process as a meaningless district mandated procedure, rather than a document to articulate a school-wide instructional plan and drive future instructional decisions.

> Why do you keep bringing [the school improvement plan] up? Ever since we wrote it, I have not heard anybody refer to it, except you. It's not been brought up considering this [Reading First] grant. Nobody said, let's look at our school improvement plan and see if it fits. Nothing. It hasn't been addressed. I mean, there's so many different things going on, things are checklisted- oh, we did that, oh, we did that, okay, on to that. I feel like that school improvement plan, for all the preaching that was done about how it's a work in progress, it's a working document, it's what you refer to- blah blah blah blah blah- It's something that's been checked off and pushed aside, and it's done (Beth, primary teacher).

Literacy programs and strategies written into the School Improvement Plan were driven by grant-mandated policies, which most teachers were eventually required to implement during the grant's first year of implementation in 2002-2003. State evaluators worked with the school governance committee to dictate components, which teachers wrote into the School Improvement Plan. Even teachers who participated in writing the original grant proposal later had to comply with the grant-mandated changes described above. The majority of teachers ultimately had very little say into its construction.

District Policies Influencing Changes in Practice

Although the district intended for the School Improvement Process to be a "grass-roots," school-driven initiative, six teachers interpreted the process as a district controlled, top-down process that silenced teachers. For instance, Linda expressed frustration that central office administrators controlled the development of the original framework that dictated specific components for schools to include. From her perspective, this framework was too specific. After the district requested the school make multiple revisions to their original plan, Linda began to interpret the School Improvement Process as a contrived process developed by the district to control school programs and practices.

> The school improvement [plan], that was all mandated. You had to meet and you had to have committees, you had to have outlines, and you had to meet again, and you had to have specific… guidelines on what those proposals look like……. I think a lot of different people were involved in looking at [the School Improvement Plan], but that was all something that had to be done, it had to be done correctly, it had to be done by a certain date and turned in for approval (Linda, primary teacher).

Other teachers interpreted the School Improvement Process as just another one of many district mandates that needed to be completed for the district, but ultimately meant very little to teachers. Several mandates impacted teachers' practices in negative ways, such as the district's proposal to mandate that teachers implement a basal reading program into their reading curriculum beginning in 2004-2005. This proposal left teachers wondering how the district could approve a school improvement plan that included reading and writing workshop and at the same time mandate they adopt a basal reading program. Another mandate required teachers to develop and turn in weekly lesson plans, which contained very specific components. Such a policy took

teachers substantially more time to complete, and several teachers became upset when it pulled them away from organizing materials, planning instruction, and completing tasks that impacted student learning in more meaningful ways. Margaret described how the district's new lesson plan requirements left her feeling that the central office lacked confidence in her teaching abilities.

> Honestly, [teachers] want to spend more time setting up our rooms to teach. We understand that lesson plans are important and that our administration needs to see that we are really sticking through what we're doing. But at the same time, we're concerned about whether it is necessary to be as in-depth as we're having to be on our lesson plans. I feel like we're back in college, where you had to be in-depth and much more descriptive so your professor would understand that you really knew what you were doing. Does the administration think we know what we're doing, or why are they having us write the lesson plans out with so much detail? I personally just feel like it's condescending. It's just going to take more time to write down everything that I actually do (Margaret, primary teacher).

Teachers mentioned other district mandates as evidence that the district constrained school-based decision making, such as a rule that no longer permits teachers to wear jeans at school, and a proposal that will require the Partnership Design Team and school faculty to once again revise the controversial year-round calendar. As several teachers predicted would happen when the calendar was implemented, the district announced earlier this year that they no longer had the resources to continue supporting the extra calendar days.

Teachers expressed disappointment that the district was not more supportive of the Partnership Reform Initiative. While teachers recognized the enormous amount of resources that sustained the extra 15 calendar days, district-level miscommunications and mandates appeared to

contradict the school's new vision for change. Four teachers discussed challenges associated with simultaneously implementing Partnership reforms and operating within a hierarchical district decision-making structure. This year, several teachers expressed that they did not see the value in investing a great deal of energy in curricular and instructional decisions that they believed would ultimately be made either by a grant or the district central office. District mandates such as a new phonics program, benchmark assessment requirements, the proposal to implement a reading basal program and other policies left the faculty feeling constrained in their efforts to develop innovative programs and strategies. One teacher illustrated how the lack of district support for the Partnership and hierarchical structure marginalized teachers and perpetuated deprofessionalization.

> I feel like [the district's silencing teachers] is a cycle. Somebody told me today, 'Oh, you're finally getting it. You're finally figuring this out, about what the M.O. (method of operation) is.' And then suddenly it turns everybody back into this group of teachers, 'well, just tell me what to do. Tell me the basal to read out of. Tell me what lesson I'm supposed to be on' (Beth, primary teacher).

In addition, teachers believed policies such as the school improvement process, which was designed to enable individual schools to develop a school-wide plan, conflicted with policies that further constrained their innovative efforts. Teachers wanted more clarity from the district in regard to their roles and responsibilities in the decision making process and the freedoms and limits that Partnership Schools have, independent of other schools in the district.

School Leadership Impacting the Low Levels of Implementation

At the school level, seven teachers believed that the district handed down policies to the principal, who was then pressured to hold teachers accountable for implementing these policies.

Thus, teachers did not perceive the principal having control over the policies to which she held teachers accountable. Despite teachers' views that the district office, not the principal, controlled the school's governance, four teachers expressed that the school's leadership needed to take a more active role in clarifying the Partnership Reform Initiative and placing accountability measures on teachers to ensure that Partnership resources were being utilized. Three teachers expressed frustration that the principal was not doing enough to involve everyone in the decision making process, particularly through their involvement on school committees. Thus, the same few teachers were present at most major committee meetings and made most school-level decisions.

State and District Control Influencing Isolation and Resistance to Change

During 2003-2004, Creekside teachers identified grade-level team members and isolated decision making as the major influences on their classroom practices. Although grant evaluators and district administrators constrained teachers decision making and dictated reform policies, several teachers resisted these mandates. Instead, they relied on grade level teams for new ideas or isolated themselves and adapted reforms in ways that remained consistent with their pedagogical beliefs. Four teachers across three different grade levels expressed high levels of communication among their team, discussing the emotional support and professional conversations that influenced their classroom practices. For instance, Judy's team developed a curriculum map to clarify learning objectives and ensure that she proceeded through the curriculum consistently with her team members. Judy's team members impacted her instruction on a daily basis. She attributed several specific changes in her daily classroom instruction to the open communication and support among her team members.

We constantly communicate…..we touch base with each other daily during our planning

time, and I might say, okay [team member one], where are you in so and so. I'm

constantly talking with [team member two]. I get feedback from my teammates, as well

as strategies, because we do have a common planning time. So that helps a lot, like we

might say we've got progress reports coming up next week, or we've got our PACT time

coming. What are you going to do? I don't know, what are you going to do? Even with

our pacing with each other (Judy, intermediate teacher).

Other teachers discussed ways in which their team members supported specific changes

that resulted from daily informal conversations, such as reorganizing classroom and small group

activities, using new materials and hands-on activities to help explain difficult concepts, and

handling student behavior issues. For some teachers, team members' emotional support and

presence provided a critical connection for motivating them to continue teaching at Creekside.

I work with the greatest team in this building……..It was one of those days where I had

had enough. I was frustrated, I was tired, and everything was going wrong. So I stepped

out in the hall and I was just very upset. [Team member one] and [team member two]

immediately came over and tried to help me get through this. They came into my room,

they took over, and just helped me get things together (Sally, intermediate teacher).

While some rely on their team for emotional support, other teachers' lack of perceived

empowerment prompted them to develop and change their practices independently from a

school-wide plan. For instance, four teachers explained how they isolated themselves from the

rest of the school and made instructional decisions independent from programs and strategies

written into the school improvement plan. Olivia attributed several changes in her reading and

writing practices to courses and materials that were not mandated by any grants, or even the

district. She described her professional development as being independent from district or school mandates. Olivia did glean ideas and strategies from mandated professional development courses and materials as well, but she did not let the School Improvement Plan dictate how changes should be implemented. Rather, Olivia critically reflected on each professional development experience, implementing strategies and ideas that were consistent with her individual philosophy about how children learn best.

> I don't really work with other people. I talk to other people and I help other people, but I pretty much do my own thing, and it has always been that way. I wouldn't mind, and I [collaborated] with other teachers for a while. The literacy coaches are there and if you need help, then she gives you information and suggestions and book lists and that's helpful, but I really pretty much do my own. And I have a lot of books, and I don't really need to go to the book room because I think I have more books [than the school does], so I'm a little isolated (Olivia, intermediate teacher).

Other teachers began the school year implementing reading and writing workshop, but eventually adapted these strategies to resemble their own traditional instructional methods. Two teachers discussed their concerns that their students were not learning when they attempted to implement the guided reading and writing workshop strategies. Kim attempted to implement the reading workshop, but later adapted this approach to fit her traditional instructional strategies. According to Kim, reading workshop was too unstructured and gave children too much independence over their reading. She struggled to manage small groups and wanted to have more control over students' reading instruction, both to ensure that students were reading and to be more informed about their progress. Kim has temporarily stopped giving her students' individual choices over the literature they read and recently reverted back to whole group instruction. While

Kim did work with the literacy coach and called on other teachers for support, she preferred her independence; "I really don't like other people coming in."

Evelyn stopped using writing workshop with her children, deciding that her students were not learning from these strategies. After several months implementing the workshop approach, she began emphasizing worksheets and small group instruction. Evelyn perceived herself, rather than the collective school faculty and staff, as ultimately responsible for her students' learning.

> If it's something that I don't agree with, I just don't say anything. I come in my room and I shut my door, and I teach my kids because I know that it's going to be *me* on the line if my kids don't learn (Evelyn, primary teacher).

Evelyn described how she felt pressure from the literacy coach to change her instructional strategies. Ultimately, Evelyn resisted pressure from the literacy coach, as she believed that writing workshop was not appropriate for her lower-level students.

Unclear Partnership Vision and Initiatives Impacting Low Levels of Implementation

Teachers discussed specific Partnership-related initiatives influencing their classroom practices; however, such attributions were few in number when the initiatives were not tied to specific grant mandates. In addition, teachers often confused Partnership initiatives with other reforms. For instance, five teachers indicated uncertainty in regard to the specific types of support that the Partnership provided. Four of these teachers asked me for clarification during our interview about which reforms were associated with the Partnership and which reforms were associated with other grant-funded initiatives. Sally described how the lack of specificity about Partnership initiatives prevented her from utilizing Partnership resources in her classroom.

> Okay, what exactly does the Partnership provide, because that's something that's not exactly clear. Because we have the grant, we have the Partnership, we have all these different components, and not everybody is clear on what goes with what (Sally, intermediate teacher).

Two teachers associated the Partnership with the GA READS Grant, as they believed the Partnership initiative was primarily interested in supporting the implementation of specific grant components. In addition, these teachers perceived university support partnering with the state and district administrators to push a specific literacy agenda. In this way, the Partnership and university support became an additional component that pressured teachers to change their practices in predetermined ways. The university's ongoing affiliation with district administrators, their push for teachers to implement reading and writing workshop strategies, the initial pilot school selection, the calendar planning process, and teachers' ongoing uncertainties about the Partnership's specific agenda led many teachers to distrust the university's intentions. As a result, many teachers tended not to take advantage of the instructional support that university faculty offered the school. Judy explained how such factors initially kept her from utilizing Partnership support and led her to question how much trust she should place in university and district partners.

> What are they (Design Team) doing? What are they planning to do? What do we have to give, because nothing's for free. But I guess it's more of a trust issue with me too, because it's like, it's like… [the Partnership] is giving us resources for nothing? (Judy, intermediate teacher).

Two teachers indicated shifts in their pedagogical beliefs that resulted from working closely with university faculty to change their classroom practices. Both teachers discussed

examples to illustrate how the Partnership enhanced their professional working lives and improved student achievement. For instance, one teacher talked about how a university faculty member influenced how she taught literacy and influenced one child's academic progress. These isolated experiences provide clear examples for the kinds of changes Design Team members intended when they began the Partnership Reform Initiative.

> In particular, [university faculty member] has been a big support… she's come into my room several times to teach lessons, and… I just observe and take notes. She's been one of the few people with the Partnership that constantly remains available and is supportive, and she's in the school a lot, she's very visible. She's easy to approach and you feel comfortable asking her to come to your room, because it doesn't feel like this is somebody from the university. It feels like this is somebody who just wants to help with kids. She helped me when I was struggling last year, because I really didn't understand what I was supposed to teach in writing workshop. She taught me what to do with individual students, what would be the next step for that student…… Last year she paired up with a student of mine and came and visited him on pretty much a regular basis, and would write with him and read with him, and he made a lot of gain over the year (Gina, primary teacher).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

While the School Improvement Process was designed to provide a framework for schools to build a grass roots instructional plan, grant mandates and inconsistent district policies constrained teachers' ability to impact change through a school-wide plan. Thus, many teachers did not buy into the reforms written into the school improvement plan and felt silenced throughout the process. Instead of developing a shared plan to drive coherent instructional

programs across the school, the School Improvement Process became another district requirement that meant little to teachers and was eventually put aside and forgotten. A few teachers implemented required programs with resentment, particularly when these programs were not consistent with their traditional practices or failed to meet their students' learning needs. Other teachers resisted implementing specific components altogether, preferring instead to isolate themselves within their grade level teams or individual classrooms.

While Partnership and grant related initiatives did impact all teachers at some level during 2003-2004, the kinds of reforms teachers implemented and the extent to which it changed their practices varied. In mathematics, five teachers began using more hands-on activities and expressed students' increased engagement when the math coach modeled concrete instructional strategies in their classrooms. Three teachers indicated that although their instructional practices in mathematics have not changed much this year, students enjoyed learning through hands-on activities when the math coach visited their classrooms. Two teachers mentioned students' increased willingness to use manipulatives to solve math problems.

The GA READS Grant and Partnership Reform Initiatives emphasized changes in literacy instruction and impacted the school in very powerful and diverse ways. One teacher discussed making a pedagogical transition in her literacy instruction, moving from a more traditional basal reading program to the reading workshop approach. Three other teachers believed that they had already been utilizing practices consistent with grant mandates and the school improvement plan in 2002-2003. Small changes influenced these teachers' practices, such as introducing new materials or occasionally introducing a new activity or assessment in their classroom. Two teachers expressed their frustrations implementing reading and writing workshop and eventually adapted these strategies to fit their traditional practices. Thus,

Partnership and grant initiative had little influence on their classroom practices, other than having access to more professional learning and instructional resources. Two intermediate grade-level teachers indicated that the Partnership and grant initiatives appeared to primarily target improvements in K-3 classrooms. Thus, initiatives did not address their professional needs or the needs of their students and did little to positively impact their classroom practices. In addition, the extraordinary emphasis on improvements in K-3 left them feeling isolated from the rest of the school. Two teachers were interviewed who taught in classrooms other than K-5. Both teachers perceived little to no impact in their instruction resulting from the school improvement plan or GA READS grant. These teachers discussed several ways in which their teaching changed in 2003-2004; however, they both attributed changes to smaller grants and personal professional learning opportunities unrelated to the Partnership Reform Initiative.

The Partnership Initiative experienced low levels of implementation among the ten Creekside teachers interviewed during the fall 2003 semester. Few teachers utilized Partnership resources or bought into literacy changes, which were driven by the GA READS Grant. The school's uncertainty about the overall vision and goals of Partnership Reform Initiative, expectations for teachers working in the Partnership schools, and Partnership resources and support available to teachers contributed to the Partnership Initiative's low impact on teachers' instructional practices. Inconsistent and top-down state and district policies prevented most teachers from buying into the School Improvement Plan and sustained ongoing distrust between the school, the Design Team, and university supporters working in the school. Existing pedagogical divisions across the school led teachers to either resist reform implementation, or adapted various instructional components to fit their traditional practices.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The themes in the present study reveal how policies and practices at different levels of

the educational system interact with the school's existing context to influence how change is

carried out. The following chapter connects these findings to the existing literature on whole

school reform, addressing consistencies as well as discrepancies. Implications for future research

are highlighted, and recommendations for state, district, and school-level decision makers are

provided.

Influences on the Implementation Process

The HCSD-U of S- Hillside Community Partnership was designed to collect and focus

school, university and community resources to improve the educational experiences, options and

outcomes for Hillside County students. Original Design Team members included (1) district

administrators, (2) HCSD faculty and staff, (3) university faculty and students, and (4)

representatives from agencies and organizations located in the greater Hillside community. From

the beginning, stakeholders worked together to develop an internal plan for improvement,

grounding decisions to inform the Partnership's vision and action plans in the local context.

Designing and Developing the Partnership Initiative

The Design Team defined their vision, mission, and goals for the Partnership Reform

Initiative, which initially included transitioning two elementary schools into community learning

centers. While the Partnership vision contained components to be implemented at Creekside, the

specific plans for determining how such components would be carried out was to be negotiated

among school faculty and staff, Creekside parents and students, university faculty, and district administrators. Nuts and Bolts members who initially introduced the Partnership Reform Initiative were unable to provide the school with specific information about the reform process, or expectations for the Creekside faculty and staff. Nuts and Bolts members could not answer the faculty's questions regarding a new calendar structure, such as the number of additional school days and teacher-planning days to be added, as well as changes in how vacation days would be distributed throughout the year.

While the Design Team intended to co-construct the reform effort with school personnel, not including them in the Partnership vision, mission, and goals development process ultimately left the faculty and staff with nebulous ideas about how this process would unfold. Faculty members expressed a need for more clarity regarding the process through which the Design Team selected and placed faculty and staff at Creekside; the consequences that resulted from teachers who later chose not to commit the next five years of professional service to the school; how the Partnership vision and action plans impacted curriculum and teachers' instructional practices; how resources were allocated to support innovations; and how the Design Team assessed teachers' progress in regard to implementing Partnership initiatives. In addition, the initial Partnership structure was complex. The original Design Team developed a structure that splintered into ten separate decision making groups. These groups represented Partnership-level structures, which overlapped school-based decision making bodies and further complicated the school faculty's understanding about how Partnership and school-based decisions were made.

The Partnership retreat, conducted prior to the first year of implementation in 2002-2003, represented progress in terms of communicating the Partnership's vision and decision making process which it informed. The retreat provided a forum through which Design Team members

introduced Creekside faculty and staff to the Partnership Initiative and involved them in a process to develop specific actions for implementation. While the retreat represented the first major step toward clarifying the reform effort for faculty and staff, it fell short of providing them with the capacity to implement reforms once school began. Teachers quickly became immersed in the day-to-day demands associated with the first weeks of school, and a steady increase in student enrollment reflected Creekside families' uncertainties involving the new calendar schedule. Students filtered in and out of teachers' rooms during the first weeks of school, as the influx of new students required school administration to reorganize classrooms. These changes created additional paperwork for teachers and required them to replace instructional time with continuous review of classroom procedures and administrative details.

Other studies have examined how internally developed models influence school change, and key findings from these studies echo those found in the present study. Nunnery's (1999) study focused on locus of development to determine whether reform works best when projects are designed locally or when schools implement externally designed projects. Findings drew upon several large-scale studies of educational innovation involving multiple implementations of educational reforms in various sites. Nunnery concluded that internally produced reforms are less likely to yield substantial change in practice than external reforms because they tend to be less clearly defined at the outset. In addition, locally developed programs ran into implementation problems because faculty did not realize the magnitude of the development task.

While these findings were consistent with the present study, Nunnery concluded that locally developed programs were less ambitious and often faded away over time. This finding contradicts those found in the present study, as district and university stakeholders supported Creekside's implementation of several major reforms across the school. Contrary to operating

unambitiously, Partnership stakeholders focused on implementing such a large number of reforms at once that the school eventually became overloaded with demands, which prevented them from implementing initiatives at high levels.

Other findings support the association between internally developed designs and delays in the implementation process. Bodilly's (1996) study found that locally developed models were less likely to experience early implementation success because teachers lacked sufficient time to conduct development. Similar findings were reflected in the present study, as the large number of Partnership initiatives, combined with the extra time necessary to implement the GA READS Program and develop the School Improvement Plan, overwhelmed teachers and led to low implementation levels. Other unforeseen circumstances associated with the new calendar schedule prevented the district from supporting the school's transition and caused significant delays in the implementation process.

The findings regarding internally developed comprehensive reforms have implications for research. Although many studies have examined the implementation of internally developed models, (Nunnery, 1999; Muncey and McQuillan, 1996; Bodilly, 1996; Berends, 2000; Kirby, Berends, and Naftel, 2001; Geisel, van den Berg, and Sleeger's, 1999), none of these studies has focused on internal development involving multiple institutions. The Partnership Reform Initiative represents the first time that a university, a school district, and a community have come together to develop and implement a model for comprehensive school reform. Over the past decade, educational partnerships have emerged as potential vehicles for improving both teaching and student learning; however, such partnerships have focused primarily on implementing isolated reforms in individual classrooms or across specific subject areas (Jenkins, 2001). Given the current legislation's focus on comprehensive school change, as well as the continued

momentum for districts to collaborate with external agencies to support reform efforts, it appears likely that similar partnerships will soon develop. More research is needed to understand the dynamics involved when multiple institutions collaborate in whole-school change efforts, and how such collaborations impact the implementation process.

Researchers may want to examine the relationship between a design's specificity and teachers' evolving conceptions of their work. Bodilly's (1998) study suggests that highly specific designs tend to be more successfully implemented and are more likely to achieve lasting success. Borman et al (2002) findings showed models such as Direct Instruction and Success for All were among the only CSR models that could be expected to improve test scores across varying contexts and study designs; both models feature a prescribed curriculum and highly scripted lesson strategies. While Borman et al. (2002) acknowledges that CSR is still an evolving field with limited studies supporting the achievement effects of CSR models, several studies researching comprehensive school reforms have found that more specific models demonstrate greater implementation success than less structured models (Borman et al, 2002; Bodilly, 1998; Berends, 2000; Slavin and Madden, 2001). Furthermore, these findings suggest that highly prescriptive models may impact student achievement more than less structured designs, which require higher levels of teacher expertise and collaboration.

The emerging impact of these highly structured models threatens to further deprofessionalize the teaching profession, which began with first and second wave reforms. First wave reforms, implemented after the 1983 "A Nation at Risk" report, were criticized for implementing prescriptive policies and performance measures. Wave two reforms attempted to make teachers' roles more professional by pulling them out of the classroom and giving them more control over school governance; however, these policies ultimately deprofessionalized the

teaching profession, as teachers found little time to plan creatively and implement innovative lessons. Teachers began to rely more on external technologies and services to provide them with pre-packaged school programs, curriculum and assessments (Hargreaves, 1994).

Today, the impact of highly structured reforms may point to a similar deterioration in the teaching profession. Datnow and Castellano's (2000) study found that teachers who implemented the highly scripted Success for All model, commented that the model did not enable them to utilize their own expertise and creative energies. Concerns emerge with such findings, as research has not uncovered how CSR models impact teachers' conceptions of their work. One fruitful avenue for future research includes examining the influence of CSR models, extending the continuum from highly structured to highly unstructured, on teachers' evolving perceptions of themselves as professionals and the purpose of their work. Studies such as these may help educators uncover the impact of different comprehensive reform models on teachers' working lives.

Design Team Practices

Design Team members recognized that for successful implementation to occur, school faculty and staff would need to (1) share similar pedagogical beliefs, (2) buy into the Partnership's vision and action plans for instituting changes, and (3) make a long term commitment to implement and sustain the reform over time (Datnow and Stringfield, 2000; Muncey and McQuillan, 1996). The Design Team attempted to address such challenges by recruiting teachers and staff who expressed a desire to be involved in the Partnership Reform Initiative and to collaborate in efforts to change current practices. The Design Team's original policies included that Creekside faculty and staff reapply for their positions and make an initial five-year commitment to the school. Design Team members believed that these policies would

enable them to establish a new faculty and staff who exemplified characteristics predictive of successful implementation. Existing federal and state legislation threatened severe sanctions and a potential state takeover if Creekside failed to improve student test scores within two years, which pressured Partnership stakeholders to make swift improvements to be sustained over time. The Design Team's original plan to establish a new faculty and staff at Creekside appeared to respond proactively to the inevitable challenges that would emerge once implementation was underway; however, Design Team members overlooked key factors such as including the school in co-constructing the initial Partnership vision and mission, collaborating with school leadership and teachers to develop plans and action steps for implementation, and giving school faculty and staff more control over initial decisions regarding the initial selection process and new calendar schedule. Such oversights prevented the Design Team from securing Creekside faculty's commitment and involvement in reforms.

Findings from this study reflect the existing literature on reform, which emphasizes the importance of active and ongoing participation from all faculty and staff (Darling-Hammond, 1997; St. John et al., 1996; Datnow, Hubbard, and Mehan, 2002). No one from Creekside's original faculty and staff was part of the original Design Team. As a result, the Creekside faculty overwhelmingly perceived the Partnership Reform Initiative as a top-down process that disregarded the faculty's experience and insight. Few faculty and staff bought into the idea that they would have to reapply for their positions and make a five-year commitment. Such policies prompted a high percentage of teachers and staff to become dubious of the Partnership from the beginning, as they were kept out of the original selection and Partnership design process. Furthermore, the majority of faculty and staff who worked at Creekside during the Partnership Planning Phase (2001-2002) did not buy into the benefits offered through a year-round calendar.

Many believed that district funds could be more effectively spent in other ways. Conflicts involving the selection and calendar planning process influenced initial distrust of the Partnership and pockets of resistance within the school, which emerged during the spring 2002 semester. Top-down changes at the front end became particularly damaging to implementation, as initial decisions failed to gain widespread school-level support (see also Smith et al, 1998).

School Capacity for Change

Other issues related to the Partnership's design and the school's capacity for change influenced the implementation process. After the original Design Team selected Creekside as a Partnership school, they invited faculty and staff to participate on the team. While several Creekside school representatives served on the design team in 2002-2003, including two teachers, two additional faculty members, and the school principal, information about various Partnership-related support and initiatives were not effectively communicated to the school. Karen Burton, Louis Cruz, and other school design team representatives regularly distributed contact and resource information to address teachers' questions and support their needs. In addition, Burton, Cruz, and Delores Taylor conducted conversation days twice during the year to communicate new Partnership and district-level developments, listen to the faculty's implementation concerns, and develop plans for addressing these concerns. Dr. Burton coordinated workshops, which she conducted jointly with literacy coordinators to communicate instructional practices supported by the university, district, and GA READS Grant. Other university stakeholders conducted seminars and workshops to support innovative instructional practices in mathematics.

Despite this ongoing support, Creekside teachers and staff mentioned in Partnership surveys and conversations that the art enrichment project and new calendar schedule were the

only programs that impacted the school during in 2002-2003. Attempts to simultaneously plan

for, implement, and streamline multiple initiatives eventually overwhelmed the faculty and staff

and sustained initial communication gaps between the Partnership Design Team and the school.

First, most teachers did not utilize Partnership support or implement new developments because

the School Improvement Process, additional district-assessment mandates, and GA READS

Program requirements consumed their time. University and community partners often only

pursued opportunities to work with the school when invited to do so. Thus, teachers perceived

more work associated with coordinating times for university stakeholder to visit the classroom,

organizing materials and planning for these visits, and later implementing new instructional

practices after university stakeholders left. Given the current demands on their time, teachers felt

as though they were being pulled in too many directions, which led select teachers to isolate

themselves from university and district support personnel and ultimately resist reforms. Although

university and district partners found ways to communicate information, no time was left for

teachers to reflect on and build a shared understanding about the Partnership vision and its

implications for teachers' work. As a result, teachers perceived university resources as requiring

additional work to utilize. Thus these resources failed to provide the strong assistance necessary

for reform implementation.

In addition, issues involving time impacted how teachers implemented GA READS

components and related literacy assessment strategies. For instance, training funded through the

GA READS Program focused on implementing reading and writing workshop, as well as

administering and using running records to make decisions about student grouping and

instruction. Several teachers requested more training in reading and writing workshop

assessments, as they struggled to find time to administer and utilize these assessments in their

daily activities. Although assessment training was offered to teachers during the after-school reading course for k-3 teachers, time conflicts involving overlapping meetings prevented teachers from attending on a regular basis. The abundance of meetings and high stress levels also contributed to low engagement levels during after school training workshops.

The literacy coach provided much support and assistance for teachers to implement GA READS Program components. Teachers that consistently invited literacy coaches into their classrooms to model reading and writing workshop strategies, provide feedback for using assessments to differentiate instruction, and offer resources to help teachers implement workshop components, bought into the workshop approach. These teachers commented that they experienced a pedagogical shift, which led them to implement grant components at high levels. The coach's immediate and sustained classroom training and assistance gave select teachers the support they needed to experiment with new strategies, which ultimately enabled them to recognize how differentiated instruction impacts student learning.

Although teachers commented that specific professional development was both informative and helpful, they expressed a need for more time to work in their classrooms and with grade level teams to implement the big ideas and specific strategies they learned in 2002-2003. The excessive number of school, district, and Partnership-related meetings left little time to focus on actively applying strategies in the classroom. In addition, teachers communicated a need for more time to look at the various assessments they administer to students, in order to focus and individualize instruction. Teachers needed time to administer individual assessments to children and to use the results in meaningful ways.

Other studies have examined how time impacts the level of implementation and teacher's support for particular designs. Finnan et al. (1996) found that the number one complaint of the

original 24 Accelerated School Project pilot schools was that there was not enough time to meet and plan. Similarly, Berends et al. (2002) found that when CSR designs were implemented alongside other district reform efforts, teachers became overloaded with change efforts and were unable to implement designs on schedule. In the case of the Partnership initiative, simultaneously developing the School Improvement Plan, implementing the GA READS Program, and implementing Partnership Initiatives overloaded the school's capacity to effectively implement reforms.

Findings from existing literature support findings in the present study and have important implications for practice. School faculty and staff need to consider ways to make more time available for team planning, integrating professional development into classroom instruction, and making better use of assessment information. For instance, the Professional Development Associate (PDA) Program provided the structure and resources to support teachers' implementation of objectives written into the School Improvement Plan in 2003-2004. The faculty used the School Improvement Process to allocate resources to implement the PDA Program, which provided them with opportunities for ongoing collaboration to implement new programs and instructional strategies.

Models that incorporate coaches in their designs effectively combine outside opportunities for professional development with internally sustained teacher support (Darling Hammond, 1997; Slavin and Madden, 2001). At Creekside, district and university stakeholders provided intensive training through workshops and seminars, while literacy and math coaches were available to provide ongoing support to grade-level teams. Sustained collaboration among grade level teams and subject area coaches can provide extensive support for teachers to execute practices learned through professional development workshops. Coaches are able to model

instructional strategies and provide context-specific feedback to teachers in a timely manner. This type of support makes reform implementation much more likely to occur.

Continuous Evaluation and Data-Driven Decision Making

Findings and recommendations that resulted from the Partnership's evaluation component provided one means for increasing reform implementation levels. Several times during the year, the Partnership evaluation team gathered specific information about the implementation process and provided feedback to Partnership stakeholders. University and district stakeholders used this feedback to facilitate discussions and develop action plans for improvement. For instance, Dr. Karen Burton used evaluation findings distributed in fall 2002-2003 to facilitate the development of three task forces. These task forces implemented strategies to improve the school's governance procedures, communication practices, and effective use of time. Outcomes generated from these three task forces included (1) a school-wide professional development plan, (2) a school-wide calendar to communicate major events, (3) a distributed list of major school programs and key decision makers, and (4) the organization of a year-end planning meeting facilitated by an external consultant, which enabled the school to talk through their differences and establish a plan to address ongoing challenges.

After the initial selection process concluded, Partnership and school-level decision making bodies maintained diverse representation to develop trust levels and increase stakeholder buy in to reforms. For instance, Karen Burton's position on the school's leadership team (SILC) influenced her ability to monitor the school's progress and communicate ideas to address emerging problems involving implementation.

Design Team representatives from Creekside provided critical school-based information to Design Team members and influenced positive changes in next year's calendar schedule. In

addition, these representatives communicated Partnership achievements and areas of concern to the Design Team, enabling Design Team members to track the school's progress and offer solutions to potential setbacks. As a result, the Design Team addressed areas of concern involving the calendar and Partnership-school communication issues soon after they emerged.

The Partnership's evaluation component represented an additional means for illuminating achievements and areas of concern. Bi-annual evaluation reports and survey results, combined with ongoing dialogue between Partnership stakeholders and evaluation committee members, provided stakeholders with formative feedback to influence real and lasting improvements. Stakeholders used findings and recommendations from these reports to address areas of concern sustain effective practices. For instance, the school organized three task forces to address problems with communication, instructional integration, and school climate that emerged from the evaluation reports. University and school-level stakeholders worked together to implement actions that addressed these issues before the end of the 2002-2003 school year. University and district officials used evaluation findings to communicate areas of progress to the school board and secure funding to sustain initiatives that suggested positive impacts on student achievement. For instance, the school used findings to support their request to continue funding literacy coaches and the Family Literacy Center. University stakeholders used findings to communicate inconsistencies between district mandates and school-level programs to key district decision makers.

Berends (2000) found that clear communication by design teams to schools was positively related to teacher support and implementation of the design, as well as teacher judgments about the design's effects on professional growth and student achievement. In fact, schools that reported high levels of implementation in all cases were associated with clear

communication and strong assistance by their design team (Berends, 2000; Bodilly, 1998). Burton and Cruz both represented key decision makers, and both used the conversation days to illuminate evaluation findings and brainstorm solutions to problems. Faculty who spoke confidentially with Burton, Cruz, and Taylor occasionally shared experiences about teacher-student communication or leadership issues, raising tough questions that created a tense and uncomfortable atmosphere for all involved. These tense moments sparked some of the most honest and productive conversations among stakeholders, as members collaboratively brainstormed ideas and documented future actions to improve problems.

These findings have implications for practice. First, CSR models need to embed a formative evaluation component, which establish clear procedures for collecting data and informing ongoing data-based decisions. As time and resources are typically in short supply during comprehensive reform efforts, stakeholders may need to establish data collection strategies that take little or no extra time or resources to employ. For instance, teachers may include time to document areas of concern and suggestions for improvement during team meetings; university graduate students could receive course credit to collect data and write evaluation reports; or the school may form an internal evaluation committee. Second, lines of communication across stakeholder groups must remain open. Key stakeholders need to be present throughout decision making sessions to inform members about what actions are feasible and to support implementation of resulting decisions. Key decision makers need to share decision making control with the entire school community, as this helps to ensure buy-in across the community. Clear procedures for decision making should be written out, with ongoing review and revision practices embedded within the process. Creekside demonstrated clear indications of progress when these components were included in their decision making.

District Leadership Practices

District-level practices sustained the low initial levels of Partnership support within the school. High attrition rates in district-level leadership positions placed Creekside in a state of constant change, as five superintendents over the past 20 years each brought with them a new vision to improve achievement. While teachers expressed a need for program consistency, many of the district's policies prevented them from sustaining a coherent literacy program over time. As a result, several veteran teachers gradually isolated themselves, implementing programs and practices that they believed in and that responded to their students needs. The district's unresponsiveness to a new calendar schedule resulted in Creekside receiving state test score information to make critical EIP hiring decisions two weeks late. Central office staff mailed Creekside critical materials such as SST forms two weeks after school began. The superintendent sent a letter to parents reminding them of parent-teacher conference dates; however, dates included in this letter communicated conference dates for schools on the original calendar schedule only. Although the calendar schedule included more instructional days, intercession weeks created less than the usual number of days before state testing. Thus, Creekside teachers had less instructional days than other schools in the district to prepare their children to take mandatory state tests. Faculty and staff members indicated that miscommunications such as these demonstrated the district central office's lack of commitment to the Partnership Reform Initiative. Instead of committing to the reform, faculty and staff perceived themselves spending much of the first semester putting out fires resulting from the district's unresponsiveness to reforms. These challenges eventually contributed to a low percentage of faculty buy-in to the reform effort.

The district aligned their benchmarks to state standards and reduced the number of assessments teachers were required to administer to students in 2003-2004. Such progress increased classroom instructional time. A district staff member organized and reviewed critical assessment data with grade level teams, providing more time for teachers to use this data to target students' instructional needs. Despite these changes, continuing district inconsistencies and top-down policy mandates sustained skepticism among school faculty in 2003-2004, as district mandates contradicted programs included in Creekside's school improvement plan. For instance, the district's proposal to require all elementary schools to implement a phonics-centered basal reading program was unaligned with the balanced program supported by Creekside teachers and university stakeholders. Mandates handed down from the superintendent created divisions among school-level personnel and district leadership. Enforcing specific procedures for writing lesson plans, and pulling extra days from the year-round calendar schedule represented additional policy inconsistencies.

Existing literature supports findings associated with district attrition, policy inconsistency, and low levels of faculty buy-in. St. John (1996) found that teachers who experienced multiple reforms often became skeptical about whether change could really happen because many had seen multiple reform efforts come and go without changing anything. Berends et al. (2002) found that the unaligned policies handed down from the central office made it difficult for teachers to view CSR design implementation as a district priority. Consequently, teachers were not able to fully commit to programs and strategies promoted through their various schools' CSR designs. In addition, some teachers feared that the NAS initiative, like many others that had been introduced over the years, would fade away in time. The Hillside School District's ongoing top-down mandates, combined with their proposal to require a phonics-centered basal

reading program and their inability to sustain extra calendar days, prevented the school from establishing consistency across district and school-level programs and policies. In addition, these policies appeared to contradict the Partnership's vision to implement shared decision-making and Creekside's new literacy plan.

Avenues for research include more studies that investigate the stability of ongoing state and district-level changes and its impact on teachers' working lives. This study indicates that high levels of teacher resistance emerge within inconsistent and unstable policy environments. Longitudinal studies could look at how state and district-level policy environments influence CSR implementation, teacher and student mobility rates, and teachers' motivation to sustain implementation over time. These findings have implications for practice as well. Schools need to make sure that reform designs are aligned with district policies when they adopt them. Districts can support design implementation by maintaining consistency between their policies and the school's reform plans. In addition, districts can increase program consistency by developing programs and policies that flexible enough to maintain school-based control over implementation, while embedding accountability measures to ensure compliance. As Newmann et al. (2002) pointed out, districts can increase program coherence by reviewing policies to determine whether they have a detrimental effect on schools' program coherence, by helping school leaders and teachers understand sources of incoherence, and by supporting their selection or construction of common instructional frameworks.

School Leadership Practices

The principal plays a critical role in the level of reform implementation a school achieves (Sebring and Bryk, 2000). At Creekside, many faculty and staff members perceived the principal simply trying to get through the year, and few believed that she understood the Partnership vision

and its implications for school-level changes. Delores Taylor was not included on the Design Team that originally developed the Partnership vision. The Partnership was thrust upon her, just as it was thrust upon the rest of the faculty. The philosophical and pedagogical beliefs that informed Taylor's practices over her ten-plus years at Creekside were never shared with Design Team members. In addition, Design Team members initially attempted to push Taylor out of the school, as they announced that she too would have to interview for her position. While the Design Team pursued other school leaders, a sparse field of applicants for the position, combined with the school's overall contempt for the Partnership's application requirements, enabled Taylor to retain her position.

Delores Taylor attended Design Team meetings during 2002-2003; however, her reserved demeanor suggested a quiet resistance to the Partnership Reform effort. Taylor very rarely communicated information from Design Team meetings to faculty during whole-school or leadership (SILC) meetings. When questions emerged during meetings that regarded the Partnership, Taylor looked to Karen Burton or other university stakeholders to answer them. She was not involved in the fall 2002 conversations, and twice during the year when I asked about her absence at Partnership meetings, she responded, "I was not told about that, or I would have been there." Like many of her teachers and staff, Taylor clearly did not perceive herself as an equal member of the Partnership community.

According to Smylie, Wenzel and Fendt (2003), principal leadership is at the heart of school development, and principals increase the authority of CSR efforts through teachers' perceptions of them as experts (Haynes, 1998; Berends, Bodilly, and Kirby, 2002; Desimone, 2000). From the beginning, Delores Taylor faced tremendous challenges. A high attrition rate at the end of the 2001-2002 school year brought in many new faculty, each with their own ideas

about the Partnership Reform Initiative and its implications for school structure, organization, and practice. Partnership stakeholders placed high expectations upon Taylor to facilitate the implementation of new shared governance policies, GA READS Program components, eleven Partnership initiatives, and the School Improvement Process. In addition, No Child Left Behind legislation threatened sanctions such as closing or replacing school faculty if test scores did not improve within two years.

While expectations for Taylor were high, district and Partnership support for Taylor remained questionable. Taylor was unclear about her own expectations when the school year started and lacked the professional development to lead a school through such a major change effort. For instance, she never received GA READS Program training to implement the "six pillars of literacy," which may explain why she did not do more to support literacy coaches or enforce GA READS grant components in teachers' classrooms. Taylor was not a member of the original Design Team, and the school improvement process and GA READS grant may have provided her with very limited time to learn about the Partnership initiatives. In addition, an influx of new faculty and staff and the increased demands associated with reform implementation kept Taylor from developing close relationships with new school community members. Such evidence may explain why select faculty members feared retribution from Taylor if they expressed conflicting opinions about school programs and policies. Taylor's own confusion about the Partnership Reform Initiative and the district's unresponsiveness to school changes may explain how communication delays about school programs and meetings continued to occur throughout the year.

While the present study addresses issues related to school leadership practices and their influence on the implementation process, several questions remain unanswered. Bryk and

Schneider (2003) found that social trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders is a key resource for reform. More research needs to address the conditions that support and build trusting relationships over time and how such relationships evolve. In addition, power relationships that existed between Taylor and Burton, the Partnership co-director, as well as relationships between Taylor and her faculty and staff impacted the reform process. Another fruitful avenue for research includes examining how power relationships influence the reform process in different contexts, particularly when the reform attempts to transition the school from employing more traditional top-down decision making structures into one that utilizes a shared governance approach.

Implications for practice include district support for training principals who attempt to implement comprehensive school reforms. Professional development must occur before the reform process begins and continue throughout implementation. Principal training should address the specific strategies that are embedded in the reform initiative, such as facilitating shared governance approaches and distributing leadership responsibilities, distributing resources to support program implementation, and creating conditions to encourage professional learning communities.

Decision-Making and Communication Practices

The GA READS Program significantly influenced decision-making at Creekside. Tensions emerged when grant components and subsequent state-mandated changes to Creekside's original grant proposal required that teachers change their classroom practices. The state pressured the school to change programs and instructional practices written into the original GA READS Grant Proposal, which contributed to program inconsistencies throughout the year. In addition, components mandated through the GA READS Program influenced the school's

literacy planning process in 2002-2003, which impacted how fourth and fifth grade teachers responded to its implementation in 2003-2004. Specifically, programs and professional development written into the plan did not address intermediate teachers' needs. The tremendous resources provided to K-3 teachers through the GA READS grant left fourth and fifth grade teachers feeling unsupported and marginalized. Intermediate level students were deprived access to grant resources, which they desperately needed.

The present study suggests implications for practice. Current federal legislation provides extensive resources to schools in need of improvement, as large federal grants currently emphasize literacy and community support programs to bridge the gap between home and school. Schools that apply for these grants must critically evaluate whether their policies and practices are tightly aligned with the requirements that are connected to these funds. While the GA READS Program grant provided Creekside with extensive resources to improve their school's literacy program, the programs and practices written into the grant proposal did not align with those recommended by the state. Ongoing changes to the originally proposed grant by state evaluators created divisions among the faculty this year and, in some ways, made it more difficult for the school to implement a stable curriculum for its students. This study provides evidence to conclude that implementation of coherent instructional programs and policies are more critical to a school's success than the amount of resources to which a school has access.

School organization influenced how literacy decisions were made and carried out. Two school improvement study groups, a literacy team, and the grant's Governance Committee were each formed to make literacy program decisions at Creekside. Throughout the year, select teachers became skeptical of the need for so many decision-making bodies, believing that they

pulled decision making responsibilities from the majority and placed it in the hands of a few key stakeholders.

Diverse personalities, conflicting pedagogical differences, and shifts in power influenced decision-making as well. While substantial efforts to facilitate collaboration occurred through the School Improvement Process, many faculty and staff felt silenced. There was the perception that over time, district-level mandates would override school-based decisions. Thus, some faculty and staff members didn't see the point in participating in decisions that the central office would ultimately control. High attrition rates and stressful working conditions sustained surface-level relationships across the school. At a meeting conducted in June 2003, a faculty member announced to the school, "We don't know each other." More vocal and experienced faculty members tended to speak out frequently in meetings. Other members stayed out of decisions, fearing retribution from the principal if they shared conflicting ideas. University faculty members' experience, subject-level knowledge, and district-level decision making impacted teachers' participation as well, particularly when they shared conflicting views. Teacher-student communication conflicts prevented groups of teachers from developing relationships with one another and contributed to high levels of faculty and staff isolation. Together, these influences contributed to low implementation levels in 2002-2003.

Muncey and McQuillan's (1996) five-year ethnographic study of eight high schools implementing the Coalition of Essential Schools Model report similar findings. In this study, the researchers found that pervasive political concerns during the school reform effort made it difficult for teachers to take the perspective of others. Because reform efforts reflect differences in values and deep-seeded philosophies, disagreements and misunderstandings created a sense

that "there were winners and losers among the faculty, that some would benefit from change while others were disadvantaged (p. 282)."

Similar to the stakeholders in Muncey and McQuillan's (1996) study, university, district, and school-level stakeholders may have attempted to remain open-minded about specific plans for change; however, faculty members who were less involved in the reform effort rarely viewed them that way. Tensions were created through stakeholder differences in pedagogy, communication styles, power differentials, and political relationships between diverse stakeholder groups. These tensions often resulted in school leadership and faculty's perception that those who pushed hardest for reform were saying, "What you're doing is all wrong (Muncey and McQuillan, 1996, p. 283)." Significant questions emerge from the tensions that created a stagnated change process at Creekside. What conditions are necessary for diverse stakeholder groups to develop a genuine belief that leadership and accountability for student achievement are shared? How do external reform developers, district administrators, and school personnel work together to develop and sustain collaborative decision-making processes that support continuously improving learning communities? Qualitative studies can uncover how decision-making systems employed through CSR models impact school improvement in different contexts.

Findings related to the impact of CSR models on school-level decision-making represent significant challenges for reform developers who partner with schools. Partnering groups are called upon to develop and "co-construct" models with school practitioners who prefer isolation and share a desire for certainty, yet work in a profession defined by its inherent and endemic uncertainties (Lortie, 1975). The present study suggests that teachers may not be prepared to tackle the challenges associated with internally developed comprehensive school reform models,

which require high levels of teacher participation and decision-making. Colleges of education need to offer courses that educate pre-service teachers about the way schools work. Teachers are increasingly being asked to assume leadership positions within the school. As a result, pre-service education courses should include training on the connections between federal, state, and local policies and their implications for schools in various contexts. In particular, teachers need to understand how schools are funded, how schools generate resources for making improvements, and the impact of federal and state funding sources on district and school operations.

Schools that place their confidence in a shared decision-making system rather than a few select individuals may find that improvements can sustain changes that happen over time. Schools across the country have successfully implemented changes and improved achievement through CSR models with very different ideologies, which inform very different kinds of curricular programs and instructional strategies. These findings suggest that what matters most are not the programs or strategies themselves. Rather, it is a shared commitment to one overall vision, which informs coherent programs and strategies that transcend any one person or group's ideas about how reform should unfold.

Real and lasting improvements may begin by opening lines of communication so that all stakeholders recognize that change is an inevitable and ongoing reality in all schools. Hatch (1998; 2000) points out that conflict is very likely inevitable among diverse stakeholders who attempt educational reform. Such conflict occurs when diverse stakeholders represent multiple organizations, each of whom address many different aspects of schooling in a variety of ways. Thus, rather than trying to agree on a single answer to problems, stakeholders may be better off trying to gain a deep, respectful, understanding of when and why they are likely to disagree

(Hatch, 1998, p. 25). Building these kinds of understandings takes time and requires a great deal of reflection and effort. Often, an external facilitator who has experience dealing with the complex issues of comprehensive school reform can facilitate dialogue among diverse stakeholders and prompt questions to generate solutions in a non-threatening way. Outsiders may help stakeholders to let go of some of their tightly held beliefs and recognize others' perspectives. They can also clarify misunderstandings among groups and provide a non-threatening liaison to promote understanding and build trust.

Conclusion

The findings in the present study suggest that different dimensions of the change process that occur across different levels of the educational system have unique implications for schools that implement comprehensive school reform models. Factors related to comprehensive reform development and implementation are extremely complex and interrelated, and their influence on school improvement are highly dependent upon the context in which they are situated. To better understand the influence of comprehensive school change on teachers' working lives, those who participate in the reform process need to develop an awareness of how these various dimensions of change develop and interact to influence how teachers interpret and respond to reforms. Such an understanding will enable policy makers, external reform partners, and education practitioners to support policies and practices that facilitate school improvement.

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APPENDIX A

CREEKSIDE SURVEY FINDINGS
Administered March 10, 2003

Creekside Elementary faculty and staff turned in *twenty-four surveys,*[21] which the evaluation committee reviewed and categorized. Below we highlighted the major issues and concerns, along with a few suggestions from faculty in regard to the following areas:

1. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
2   Professional Learning
3   Communication
4   Decision Making
5   Learning Environment

We thank you for your willingness to complete the survey, and we hope our findings from these surveys will encourage dialogue among faculty and staff and facilitate development of action steps to address issues and concerns.

Curriculum Instruction and Assessment

More time… (21)[22]

 To plan in the classroom (11)

Professional development has been informative and helpful. We need time to work in our classrooms and with grade level teams to implement the big ideas and specific strategies we've learned this year. We have meeting after meeting, which leaves little time to focus on actively applying strategies in the classroom.

 To assess student learning (6)

We test like crazy, but have no time to look at these assessments to focus and individualize instruction. We need to schedule time to give individual assessments our children. We need to schedule time to use the results in meaningful ways.
 To teach before administering standardized tests (4)

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[21] Faculty and staff turned in 22 surveys on March 10, 2003. Two members turned in surveys after this date, which the evaluation team later analyzed and included with the original twenty-two.

Numbers indicate the number of times issues emerged on the surveys, unless otherwise stated. For instance, time emerged as an issue a total of 21 times. Of these 21 statements, eleven addressed planning in the classroom, six addressed assessing student learning, and four addressed adjusting the calendar schedule to allow for more instructional days before standardized testing.

We have seen improvement in the Design Team's willingness to consider revisions to our new calendar schedule. Adding more instructional days before testing is critical for improving student achievement on standardized tests, which is how we will ultimately be judged.

More consistency in curriculum and school programs (7)

We need to develop coherent programs and curriculum that build on earlier years, beginning when students enter school and continuing through fifth grade. Consistent instruction that builds throughout students' elementary years will save time and enable teachers to become more efficient and effective in their instruction. A consistent curriculum across grade levels will contribute to student learning by helping children see the connections and purpose of instructional programs from year to year. "Students do one thing one year and something else the next year."

A clear focus on specific areas of instruction (6)

We need to stop trying to fix all areas of instruction, prioritize improvements, and focus our improvements in a few areas. We're trying to do too much.

Recruiting assistance from parents and university students (4)

Four people suggested we find ways to utilize parents and university students more effectively in the school for tutoring, assisting with small group instruction, reading/writing workshop, and working with low and high achievers.

Professional Learning

More opportunities to address faculty's diverse needs (5)

Five people suggested that more professional development options be made available for specials teachers and support personnel, as well as teachers in upper grades. Workshops and seminars that are more aligned with faculty's diverse professional development needs will promote more meaningful learning experiences for both faculty and students.

Communication

Between the Partnership and Creekside Elementary School (10)

   Resources available

What are all the resources available through the Partnership, and what's the best way to utilize these resources? We're unclear about the types of programs and assistance offered by university faculty and how we should go about contacting them.

Suggestion: More communication about decisions made at Design Team meetings would be helpful. Two people said they would like Design Team minutes emailed to them.

A liason between the Partnership and the school

It would help to have one person we can approach with all our questions regarding Partnership initiatives and programs. The university needs to take a more active role in communicating services to Creekside.

Between the Hillside District office and Creekside Elementary School (7)

Accommodating the Partnership Schools' schedule

Seven people indicated the district office needed to do a better job accommodating the Partnership Schools' unique schedule. Four teachers offered more specific suggestions to the district, such as providing materials and assessment information in a timely manner.

At the school level (10)

Notices and reminders (5)

Five people indicated they needed more frequent and earlier notice in regard to school-wide programs and due dates. Being given reminders about important due dates and school events a couple days ahead of time would be helpful.

Enthusiasm and openness from administration (4)

Four people indicated that administrators sometimes do not communicate a willingness to listen to new ideas and consider different opinions.

Commit to using previously-developed communication tools

A suggestion was made for everyone to again commit to using the calendar and new meeting schedule.

Decision Making

Leadership (8)

A more active role from leadership

Eight people expressed that leadership needs to take a more active role in the decision-making process. "Our discussions go around in circles… who's going to make the final decision?" Faculty also expressed that more "little decisions" should be dealt with by administration, and "big issues" should be saved as an entire faculty decision. "Let's not waste time on little things."

Shared governance (11)

> *A few people make the decisions*

Although some feel there is more opportunity to express opinions, 11 people indicated that open discussions have not yet facilitated shared governance. Decisions appear to be made by a select few before issues are discussed, leading faculty to feel silenced. "It still feels like our opinions won't make a difference because certain minds have already decided."

Learning Environment

A need to address differences in teaching styles (3)

Three people mentioned that differences in the way that teachers talk with children has caused "friction and frustration" among faculty and staff in the school. In addition, pedagogical differences among teachers are increasingly dividing the faculty.

Lower student-teacher ratios (6)

Six people recommended utilizing more volunteers (parents and university students), placing paraprofessionals in every room, and cutting down class sizes as ways to help teachers and students boost achievement.

For Me the Partnership is…

1) Exhausting
2) Frustrating
3) Exciting

For All of Us at Creekside the Partnership *is*…

1) Frustrating
2) Challenging
3) Time-consuming

APPENDIX B

PHASE ONE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Conducted During the 2002-2003 School Year

Research Questions

1. How do teachers at one elementary school describe their experiences with the Partnership and the comprehensive reform initiatives that it supports?

2. How do teachers interpret the comprehensive changes that have occurred since the Partnership's inception?

Interview Questions

1. How have you been involved in the Partnership thus far?

2. What happened when the Partnership was initially announced and Creekside was chosen as the Partnership school?

3. What have been the most significant events of the Partnership thus far?

4. What were your expectations of the Partnership?

   A. Initially

   B. How have they changed?

5. What aspects of the Partnership do you see working well? What do you see that needs improvement?

6 How are the decisions being made?

   A. Who is making the decisions?

   B. How do you see the school's role in this process?

7. Other suggestions for the Partnership?

APPENDIX C

PHASE TWO INTERVIEW GUIDE

Conducted During the 2003-2004 School Year

Research Question

How do the Partnership's comprehensive reforms affect teachers' perspectives of their classroom practices?

Interview Questions

1. What changes have most impacted your classroom practices at Creekside Elementary School?

    A. Partnership-related changes.

    B. Changes written into the GA READS Grant.

    C. Changes written into the School Improvement Plan.

2. How have these changes affected your classroom practices?

    A. Specific professional development application in the classroom, developed out of GA READS training, Partnership related training, district-level training, and school-level training programs.

    B. Changes in how teachers plan and approach teaching.

    C. Changes administering and using assessments.

    D. Changes associated with gathering student evidence for student retention and progression decisions.

    E. Changes in classroom schedules (posted).

    F. Changes in teaching reading, math and writing, including concept of month lessons and differentiating instruction.

    G. Changes due to instructional integration.

    H. Changes due to adopting different inclusion models (augmented, inclusion, pull-out, etc.) in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years.

    I.   Changes due to FRC collaboration (in-class programs).

    J.   Collaborating in the classroom with EIP, specials, and special education teachers.

3. How have these changes impacted students' school experiences and learning?

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study is to explore the affect of the Partnership and other reform initiatives on teachers' classroom practices. This information will be used to determine a representative sample from which I will interview participants with diverse experiences and perspectives. **Note:** Your name and contact information is required only so I may contact you for a potential interview. All of your responses will be kept confidential.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Ethnicity (optional): _____

Grade that you currently teach: _____

Grade level taught last year (only if you were at Creekside last year): _____

YEARS TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Total years of teaching experience: _____

Years of teaching experience teaching in the Hillside County School District: _____

EDUCATION (Please mark one)

Four-year certification: _____

Masters Degree (Please indicate your major): _____

PhD (Please indicate your major): _____

Other: _____

Please mark an "X" before any committee upon which you served in 2002-2003.

PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEES

Partnership Nuts and Bolts Committee: _____

Partnership design team: _____

Partnership Action Team (If you participated on an Action Team, please specify which one (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Community and Family Involvement, etc):

Partnership Evaluation Committee:_____

Other (Please state the name of this committee and your involvement):

SCHOOL-LEVEL COMMITTEES

Literacy Committee:_____   Governance Committee:_____

Math CIA:_____   School Leadership (SILC):_____

School Improvement Study Group (please indicate which one- reading, writing, math):
_____

Other committees (Please state the name of this committee/task force and your involvement):

Below, please indicate other ways in which you have been involved in reforms that do not match the items above (i.e., Reading fluency study, Open Court pilot program, etc.):

APPENDIX E

CREEKSIDE TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

Creekside Teacher Profiles and Involvement in Partnership and School Committees, 2002-2003[23]

Name	Ethnic. (opt.)	02-03 Teaching Position	03-04 Teaching Position	Total Teaching Exp. (in years)	Teaching Experience in HCSD	Educ.	Partnership Committees	School-Level Committees
Teacher 1	W	Pre-K	Pre-K	16	5	B	NB, DT, CFIAT	SST
Teacher 2	W	Pre-K	Pre-K	11	11	M		SST, Media
Teacher 3	W	K	K	9	9	M+		Lit, Gov
Teacher 4	W	K	K					
Teacher 5	W	EIP- K	EIP-K	27	20	B		Math CIA
Teacher 6		K	1	14	8	PhD	DT, CIAAT	Math CIA, SILC
Teacher 7	W	1	1	23	14	EDS		Gifted
Teacher 8	W	1	1	1	1	B		Math CIA
Teacher 9	B	1	EIP-1					SILC
Teacher 10	B	2	2	14	14	B		Gov
Teacher 11		2	2	4	4	B		Math CIA
Teacher 12		2	2	6	6	B		SILC
Teacher 13		N/A	EIP-2	8	0	B		
Teacher 14	B	3	K	14	3	B		
Teacher 15	B	3	3	3	3	B		
Teacher 16	W	3	3					
Teacher 17	W	2						
Teacher 18	H	N/A	EIP-3	34	2	B		
Teacher 19	B	4	EIP-4-5	2	2	M+		Math CIA, SILC
Teacher 20	W	4	4	3	3	B		Building, Tech

[23] Data collected during fall 2003.

Name	Ethnic. (opt.)	02-03 Teaching Position	03-04 Teaching Position	Total Teaching Exp. (in years)	Teaching Experience in HCSD	Educ.	Partnership Committees	School-Level Committees
Teacher 21	B	4	4	17	11	B		Black History
Teacher 22	B	5	5	17	8	EDS		SILC
Teacher 23	W	N/A	EIP-5	10	0	M		
Teacher 24	W	N/A	5	1	0	M		
Teacher 25	H	5	5	7	1	M+		
Teacher 26	W	EIP-2	Coach 4-5	11	11	M+		Gov, SILC
Teacher 27		N/A	Coach k-3	5	2	M		
Teacher 28	W	Gifted	Gifted	8	1	PhD	Evaluation	
Teacher 29	W	SpEd 3-5	Sp Ed 3-5	10	2	M		Literacy, Tech
Teacher 30		SpEd k-2	SpEd k-2	10	10	B	CAT, PDAT	Building, Sun
Teacher 31	H	SpEd k-5	Sp Ed k-5	1	1	B	CIAAT	Math CIA, SST
Teacher 32	W	N/A	PE	0	0	B		
Teacher 33	W	Art	Art	4	1	M	CIAAT	
Teacher 34	B	Music	Music	1	1	M		SILC