THE TIPPING POINT OF TRANSFORMATION:
ANALYZING SCHOOL REFORM EFFORTS IN LOW-PERFORMING,
HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT
MELISSA A. RASBERRY: The Tipping Point of Transformation:
Analyzing School Reform Efforts in Low-performing, High-poverty Schools
(Under the direction of Dr. Kathleen M. Brown)

In many reform efforts, schools develop strategies for changing discrete aspects of the environment in order to improve student learning. Unfortunately, these efforts often fail because they are attempted within a vacuum and do not account for the impact of the overall school culture. In one southern school district, administrators devised a turnaround plan for five of its neediest schools (i.e. two elementary and three middle schools). Their plan included multiple strategies for reform including teacher and principal recruitment and performance bonuses, staff development programs, additional curriculum resources, and extra personnel. The manner in which this plan was implemented varied greatly across the five schools, although the district provided the same protocol for all to follow.

In this study, the reform activities of the five turnaround schools were analyzed through the lens of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework to assess the extent to which the components were utilized. Once this initial level of analysis was complete, student achievement data were examined vis-à-vis the schools' utilization of the framework components. Overall, schools with above average improvement on the standardized tests demonstrated evidence of more Tipping Point elements than those with average and below average improvement. These findings support Futernick's (2007) assertion that a more robust reform plan is needed to turn around low-performing, high-poverty schools; however, they stop short of substantiating the notion that all nine elements are needed for success.

To my family, I cannot say enough how much your words of encouragement and praise helped me through this educational journey. Ma, you are my biggest cheerleader and I will be forever grateful for your love and patience. I know that Daddy is looking down on both of us and feeling very proud of this accomplishment. Heather and Hailey, thank you for your laughs, your emails, and your kindness. I am very appreciative that you could be there for me on my special day.

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So to all of my families, I say once more … thank you! I close with these words from gospel singer Marvin Sapp:

> I would have lost it all … But now I see how you were there for me and I can say … I'm stronger, I'm wiser, I'm better … Much better. When I look back over all you brought me through … I can see that you were the one that I held on to … And I never … Never would have made it … Oh I never could have made it … Never could have made it without you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In today's world, students must be prepared to tackle complex problems by collaborating with diverse colleagues, utilizing higher-order thinking skills, and embracing change to create innovative solutions. The traditional 3 R's of "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic" have been replaced in the new millennium by "rigor, relevance, and relationships" (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2007). Modern schools are responsible for ensuring that their students receive a rigorous curriculum based upon lessons and activities that are relevant to their lives through a network of genuine relationships with their teachers, administrators, and peers. According to the United States Department of Education's Office of the Secretary (2006), twenty-first century schools must:

> … help students develop the skills they will need to compete and succeed in higher education and the workforce, which are increasingly connected in this changed world. They must develop a pool of technically adept and numerically literate Americans to ensure a continual supply of highly trained mathematicians, scientists and engineers (p.9).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 put measures in place to guarantee that all children, regardless of their zip code, receive the same high-quality education. Using a high-stakes accountability model, NCLB now requires schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress on standardized tests in reading and mathematics for all student subgroups, including the learning disabled, ethnic minority groups, English language learners, and

economically disadvantaged youth (United States Department of Education, Office of the Secretary, 2006). Educators can no longer ignore pockets of their student population who historically have lagged behind their White, middle class, English-speaking peers (McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury & Houser, 2006).

Unfortunately, from the rural Mississippi Delta to the inner city streets of Los Angeles, schools with large populations of high-poverty students continue to struggle under the pressures of high-stakes accountability (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Doherty & Abernathy, 1998). Student achievement is typically only one among numerous challenges that these schools face, however (Kozol, 1991). Many suffer from antiquated buildings, outdated materials, and insufficient learning tools (Peterson, 1994). Their students may lack adequate health care and nutrition, manifesting in medical or dental problems such as asthma and toothaches that can interfere with their performance (Rothstein, 2004). Their communities may be ravaged by high rates of violence, crime, and unemployment (Kozol, 1991). Parents in these neighborhoods may also not take an active role in their children's education due to being addicted to drugs, working multiple low-wage jobs, or feeling unwelcome in the school environment.

Labeled as failures, high-poverty schools turn to a variety of reform initiatives to transform their learning environments and thereby, increase student achievement. With a plethora of choices for reform, many school leaders feel overwhelmed and uncertain about which models would work best for their particular context. Some adopt new literacy strategies or begin tutoring programs, while others create professional learning teams. Still more restructure the school schedule or institute shared governance and decision-making.

Rarely, however, do schools undergo comprehensive turnaround plans to revamp their entire culture (Youngs & King, 2002).

After observing the efforts of high-poverty, low-performing schools in California, Ken Futernick (2007) realized something had to change. In school after school, he witnessed firsthand that even the most dedicated principals and teachers could not turn things around if they followed a piecemeal approach. The introduction of a new curricular model or instructional practice would only address one part of the problem. Futernick (2007) surmised:

> If we look at the vast number of high-poverty schools that continue to fail decade after decade, we must admit that the remedies we've tried are capable of producing only limited results in most cases. No strategy that teachers, administrators, and educational reformers have tried suggests that we know how to produce dramatic and lasting change in the vast majority of these schools. What we haven't tried, it seems, is a full-on, holistic approach that creates a context, all at once, for teachers and their students to succeed. If it really were possible to trigger social epidemics among teachers, and if we were willing to create highly supportive and professional environments for them to work in, then maybe it was possible to accomplish what many of us in California still believe is possible: a systematic (and systemic) turnaround of our low-performing schools into the thriving, high-performing learning environments we wish they could be (p.3).

As a basis for his new theory, Futernick (2007) extracted wisdom from the work of Gladwell (2002). Inspired by the concepts of social epidemics in Gladwell's (2002) seminal book, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Futernick (2007) devised a Tipping Point plan for school reform that enveloped nine components of the school community. The researcher pondered:

> Could we really initiate social epidemics by motivating clusters of highly qualified teachers to transfer to struggling schools? If that were possible and if we offered them the right kind of administrative, community, and *collegial* support, couldn't we jumpstart a process that would transform these schools into healthy and thriving higher performers? (Futernick, 2007, p.3-4).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the actions taken by high-poverty schools to transform from low-performing learning environments to high-performing school cultures (see Appendix A: School Profiles). Does change actually occur? If so, what contributes to a school's success or failure? Do schools vary in their progress, even if they are following the same protocol for reform? To what can this variance be attributed? An extant data set containing interviews and surveys from a sample of administrators and principals at five turnaround schools in one southern school district was utilized for this multiple-case study. Their responses to specific semi-structured interview and online survey questions were analyzed according to a theoretical framework based on Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point strategy for reform.

Given the concrete nature of the turnaround plan used at these five sites, the researcher hoped that an investigation into its effectiveness would shed light on the elements needed to convert high-poverty schools into high-functioning cultures for teachers and students. In the past, school leaders have simply been told to emulate successful schools without much explanation as to how or why they became so effective. As Futernick (2007) notes:

> We urge people in failing schools to imitate "outlier" schools—the few schools that succeed despite their demographics and what appears to be their fated story—but that advice has been of little help because it hasn't provided the means for *becoming* an outlier. Some attempt bottom-up school redesigns that have shown promising results, but such initiatives have been difficult to sustain and even harder to replicate (p.3).

Futernick (2007) has attempted to rectify this situation by presenting nine components that he believes are necessary to create a Tipping Point phenomenon in high-poverty schools. What his model lacks, however, is clear explication of how these elements would actually be

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organized in a real reform plan. The researcher admitted that his framework "lacks specificity and local perspective;" therefore, "a more comprehensive plan should be constructed by local stakeholders who understand the unique challenges that must be overcome in order to achieve success" (Futernick, 2007, p.34). The turnaround plan developed by the targeted district in this study represents one possible solution that has been tailored to meet the unique contextual challenges of a large school system in the southern part of the United States. By examining the actions taken by the five sites under the direction of this turnaround plan, Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point model was evaluated for its relevance and effectiveness in creating high-poverty, high-performing schools.

Theoretical Framework

The nine components of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point for school reform provided the theoretical framework for this study. Teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement must all be addressed, according to the researcher, if high-poverty schools want to surmount the traditional challenges of inadequate school facilities (Peterson, 1994), adverse community conditions (Kozol, 1991; Rothstein, 2004), poor teaching quality (Claycomb, 2000; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001), and low student achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu & Donaldson, 2004; McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury & Houser, 2006). Just as "Gladwell illustrate[d] how situations in our everyday world can change rapidly and unexpectedly under the right conditions," Futernick (2007) aimed to delineate how these same conditions for social epidemics could be replicated in schools in need of massive reform (p.2). Part of the problem, he admitted, was that many educators and

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members of the public at large have failed to realize that high-poverty schools can, in fact, succeed. He provided this explanation:

> Maybe the reason so few of these [high-poverty] schools are able to escape from a cycle of failure is *our* failure to recognize that a tipping point exists for them. Maybe after seeing so many reforms fail and so much money wasted, educators and the public alike have come to believe there really isn't a way to overcome the economic realities preventing so many impoverished schools from succeeding (Futernick, 2007, p.3).

So why this discussion of comprehensive school reform? Districts across the country are clamoring for answers about how to transform their high-poverty schools. The pressures of NCLB have forced these school systems to look for solutions, in the form of plans and/or models that can be adopted or adapted to meet the needs of their impoverished populations. For example, the Clover Park School District outside Tacoma, Washington began a reform initiative in 1995 to improve student achievement across the system, particularly in its Title I schools. Armed with the belief that all children can learn at high levels (regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds), schools within Clover Park "embarked on a year-long study of their status and research-based options" for improvement (Davis, Sagmiller & Hagans, 2001, n.p.). After this intensive year of self-study and examination, several schools adopted popular school reform models, such as Accelerated Schools, Paideia, and Success for All. The leadership of Clover Park soon discovered, however, that these "models are tools to assist schools [in] implement[ing] a comprehensive approach, and are not comprehensive on their own" (Davis, Sagmiller & Hagans, 2001, n.p.). Thus, more work had to be done--from scheduling to governance to budgeting--to ensure that successful change occurred. Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point model helps schools districts, such as Clover Park, by providing extensive insight into the various elements of the school environment that must be

addressed to ensure true reform (see Chapter Two, Literature Review, for an in-depth presentation of the Tipping Point framework and its nine essential components as the theoretical perspective that will frame this study).

Research Questions

In this study of transforming high-poverty schools, two extant data sets were utilized. The qualitative results of semi-structured administrator interviews and teacher focus groups were described and analyzed, along with a quantitative data set of responses from an online survey of educators' perceptions of their working conditions. In addition, document archival review was conducted to research the schools' improvement on standardized achievement tests (see Chapter Three, Methodology). Using Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework for school reform as the theoretical lens (see Chapter Two, Literature Review), the major empirical questions addressed by this research deal with the implementation and effectiveness of a turnaround plan to transform high-poverty schools. Two research questions were examined: (1) To what extent did the schools utilize Futernick's Tipping Point framework components? (2) Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point framework components more successful in improving student achievement on standardized tests? Four subquestions were also addressed: (1a) Which components were common across all schools? (1b) Which components were only present in schools with high utilization? (2a) Which components were common only across schools with above average improvement? (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack?

Qualitative and quantitative data were aligned to the nine components of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point design: teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support,

and parent/community involvement. The researcher examined all data for these distinctive elements in order to assess each school's utilization of the Tipping Point model. Afterwards, the schools' improvement on standardized tests was compared to their utilization levels.

Definitions

> The words of everyday language are rich in multiple meanings. Like other symbols, their power comes from the combination of meaning in a specific setting…. Scientific language ostensibly strips this multiplicity of meaning from words in the interest of precision. This is the reason common terms are given "technical meanings" for scientific purposes (Firestone, 1987, p.17).

To reduce miscommunication from multiple meanings and to insure reader clarity, the following four key terms are defined: school reform, high-poverty schools, low-performing schools, and Tipping Point. Since these terms are utilized multiple times throughout this study, it is imperative that their meanings be clear and concise to ease understanding and facilitate comprehension.

School Reform

School reform encompasses a variety of strategies, models, and approaches promoted by educators, researchers, and policymakers to improve schools. More succinctly, Tyack and Cuban (1995) define it as "planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems" (p.4). Prescribed frameworks, such as Core Knowledge or Coalition of Essential Schools, are often adopted by schools to create massive change. On the other hand, many schools and/or districts devise home-grown, organic reform models to better meet their unique contexts. Regardless of the approach, "to varying degrees all [sound school reform plans] are based on research, provide schools with a common vision, and deal in some way with the critical areas of professional development, school organization, and curriculum and instruction" (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005, n.p.).

High-poverty Schools

High-poverty schools may be identified with varying proportions of children from low-income homes relative to the overall context. In some places where the economy is sound, high-poverty schools may only mean one quarter of the student population, whereas in other locations with low rates of employment and weak tax bases, high-poverty may equate to third-quarters or more of pupils. "Standard practice in the education literature [is to] … measure poverty at the school level by the percentage of students who apply for and were found eligible for the federally sponsored free lunch program (those with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line)" (Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor & Wheeler, 2006, p.5). The federal government further recognizes high-poverty schools by the number of Title I dollars allocated. The largest share of resources are designated for school-wide Title I programs. "Schools enrolling at least 40 percent of students from poor families are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs that serve all children in the school" (United States Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the federal government's minimum of 40 percent was used to demarcate the lower threshold for designating high-poverty schools.

Low-performing Schools

School performance may be measured through a large number of educational outcomes, ranging from graduation rates to SAT scores to standardized tests (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). In today's high-stakes world of No Child Left Behind, many people identify schools as high- or low-performing simply by their ability to meet standards of adequate yearly progress as determined by the federal government. In this particular study, selection of low-performing schools was based on student performance on the Stanford

Achievement Test (SAT-10), a local and state requirement for testing and accountability for the targeted sites. Regardless of the method for identification, low-performing schools typically share several common challenges, including: being located in impoverished communities where crime, violence, and distress are prevalent; lacking adequate financial, human, and programmatic resources to support high-quality teaching and learning; dealing with cultures of chaos and disorganization, which impede improvement; and having high rates of student truancy and dropout (Doherty & Abernathy, 1998).

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Tipping Point

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In *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Gladwell (2002) presented a detailed account of how social epidemics, such as fashion trends, crime waves, and sexually transmitted diseases, spread their products and messages in a similar manner as viruses proliferate the human body. Many people believe that change typically occurs one incremental step at a time; however, Gladwell (2002) contended that more frequently, unanticipated moments create a "tipping point" of change to make a lasting difference. The author further elucidated his ideas by outlining the impact of three major elements: the Law of the Few (that is, the people who help to initiate and sustain social epidemics); the Stickiness Factor (the content and delivery of the message to be spread); and the Power of Context (the outside factors which impede or facilitate the success of an epidemic). Upon reading Gladwell's (2002) seminal work, educational researcher Ken Futernick (2007) applied the Tipping Point framework to the notion of transforming high-poverty schools and identified nine components for inclusion in his model: teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations and limitations provide two parameters by which a research study establishes the boundaries, exceptions, reservations, and qualifications inherent within its design (Castetter & Heisler, 1977). More specifically, delimitations narrow the scope of a study, whereas limitations identify potential weaknesses (Creswell, 2003). In order to properly delineate these parameters, several delimitations and limitations must be addressed in this proposal.

While many high-poverty schools across the country have attempted to convert their learning environments from low-performing to high-performing cultures, this study only examined a set of schools which underwent a comprehensive turnaround plan designed by their large district in the southern region of the United States. The focus on these five sites, two of which housed elementary-aged students (grades kindergarten through five) and three of which served middle schoolers (grades six through eight), may cause the findings to be irrelevant at the high school level (grades nine through twelve). Similarly, schools found in smaller, less financially advantaged systems may find difficulty in relating to the results, due to the massive amount of resources (i.e. physical and fiscal) poured into the turnaround plan.

The small sample population of educators interviewed further narrowed this study's scope. All administrators participated in one-on-one interviews to gather their thoughts, opinions, and perceptions. On the other hand, teachers only had the opportunity to discuss their ideas and concerns in a focus group setting. In two of the five locations, only three teachers participated in these interviews. This limited the insights gained from these particular sites. Additionally, the failure of one school's teachers to participate in the online survey further reduced the availability of information upon which to base this investigation,

as did the overall lack of relevant survey questions for certain framework components (i.e. teams, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/ community involvement).

Data for this study were collected after only one year of implementation, another limitation of the research. Some might argue that little improvement would be evident after just one year of reform; however, the current culture of high-stakes accountability requires schools to make rapid transformations. If schools are unable to produce immediate results, they may lose funding and/or support for reform. Therefore, while this may be classified as a limitation, it is also a reality for today's educators.

Because this mixed-methods design included qualitative research, critics may identify the study's transferability or generalizability as a weakness or limitation. Some could argue, for instance, that the findings may be open to other interpretations, rather than the ones to be generated for this study. This may be true; however, it is important to remember that the researcher drew conclusions only by using Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point model for school reform as the theoretical framework. No other lens was applied or analyzed within this research design.

To counterbalance this limitation of transferability, the researcher utilized mixed-methods strategies for within-case and multiple-case sampling to triangulate the results. Qualitative interview and focus group data were supplemented by quantitative survey results to provide a "more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study" (Jick, 1979, p.603). The multisite design strengthened the ability to generalize by providing various settings in which to test Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework. By addressing the same research questions in a number of settings using similar data collection and analysis

procedures, the researcher built a strong case for utilizing and applying the results across diverse venues.

Significance of the Study

If students of poverty are ever to achieve at rates commensurate with their more advantaged peers, schools across America must find a way to meet their social, emotional, and academic needs. Educators have a moral imperative to ensure that all students succeed, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds (Fullan, 2003). This study's focus on one district's efforts to transform five historically underachieving schools helps to shed light on the necessary steps to undergo massive reform. The results are important for several reasons.

First, school systems, like the one in this investigation, are desperately searching for "silver bullets" to transform their schools of poverty from low-performing learning environments to high-performing cultures. Unfortunately, the answers on how to get from point A to point B are not always obvious:

> Though there is an impressive body of literature that describes how these so-called 'outlier' schools operate, simply telling (or expecting) struggling schools to act like them does little good. The problem is that policy makers and educators do not know how to jump-start the process of turning failing schools into outliers (Futernick, 2007, p.11).

By clearly elucidating the multi-layered approach followed by the five schools in this study and its relationship to Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework, the researcher provides districts with a better understanding of the complexities inherent within the reform process. While the intent of this particular study was not to provide a "how to" guide for school reform, the findings may help school leaders to initiate their own plans for turnaround.

Second, this study also provides a blueprint for policymakers to reference in creating policies conducive for reform. While schools and districts may be able to independently

make progress, their efforts will be in vain if the overall policy context within which they operate does not support and sustain change. Local, state, and national policymakers can identify roadblocks to reform and implement strategies to alleviate these obstacles through the examination of Futernick's (2007) nine Tipping Point components. It is critical that policymakers take action to thwart these challenges because schools will inadvertently revert back to the status quo if supportive policies are not in place. Futernick (2007) warns, "unless [failing schools] can be improved to a point of stability, most will eventually return to their prior state of dysfunction. In fact, they may be worse off than before…. Offering *some* help may be the equivalent of offering no help" (p.10). Policymakers can learn more about what and how to help high-poverty schools through the conclusions drawn from this study's questions and subquestions:

(1) To what extent did the schools utilize Futernick's Tipping Point framework components?

    (1a) Which components were common across all schools?

    (1b) Which components were only present in schools with high utilization?

(2) Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point framework components more successful in improving student achievement on standardized tests?

    (2a) Which components were common only across schools with above average improvement?

    (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Nearly twenty-five years ago, the National Commission on Excellence in Education

(1983) released *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*. Since that time,

Americans from all walks of life, including politics, business, education, and the general

public, have relentlessly fought for better schools and quality teaching by demanding that

federal, state, and local governments support the improvement of public education through

increased funding and higher accountability standards (The Teaching Commission, 2004;

National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 2005). Numerous programs and

initiatives, such as the ABC's of Public Education in North Carolina and the federal

government's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, have been introduced during the past two

decades to solve this crisis.

While great strides have been made in the twenty years that these programs have been in

place, some students continue to face harsh challenges, simply because of their home zip

code and the school to which they are assigned. Schools with large populations of high-

poverty students face the brunt of these challenges; consequently, educators in these

impoverished communities constantly search to find proactive solutions to meet the needs of

their students. In this chapter, the literature related to school reform will be reviewed,

including its inherent challenges and its potential solutions. The reader will be presented with

a detailed description of the status of high-poverty schools in America, as well as an overview of the approaches proposed for transforming impoverished, low-performing schools. The last portion of the chapter will be devoted to explicating Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point strategy for school reform in high-poverty schools, the theoretical framework for which the data in this study will be reviewed and analyzed.

Challenges Facing High-poverty Students

Pockets of impoverished children, mostly situated in large urban or remote rural areas, attend schools which perpetually rank low in student achievement (Doherty & Abernathy, 1998). These low-income schools, such as the ones targeted for this study, face a variety of obstacles in meeting the diverse needs of their students, such as inadequate school facilities, adverse community conditions, poor teaching quality, and low student achievement. In the sections that follow, the reader will better understand these distinct challenges and their impact on school reform efforts.

Inadequate School Facilities

For inner city schools in urban areas, the larger district structure presents many barriers. "Often, [these high-poverty schools] are part of a large, centralized bureaucracy that may be slow to respond to the needs of schools. Resources are scarce, and many buildings are in disrepair" (Peterson, 1994, p.1). Walls may be in need of fresh paint, windows may be inadequately insulated, and heating/air conditioning systems may function poorly (if at all). Teachers may lack the physical resources they need for instruction, such as lab tables, science equipment, and up-to-date books. Students may be forced to sit in uncomfortable, old furniture and to utilize unkempt, rusty bathroom facilities. Overall, the facilities pale in comparison to those available in suburban communities.

Kozol (1991) has spent decades visiting schools with similar conditions. For instance, in East St. Louis, the staff and students at Martin Luther King Junior High School had to contend with the aftermath of a sewage backup three times in one year. Raw waste flowed into the basement, through the floor, and then into the school cafeteria, causing the building to be closed. At Public School 261 in District 10 of the New York City Public Schools, over 1300 pupils attended school in a former roller-skating rink. The windowless building was located on a crowded street, hidden by the traffic and an elevated public transit line. "Textbooks are scarce and children have to share their social studies books … the carpets are patched and sometimes taped together to conceal an open space" (Kozol, 1991, p.86). Because of these inadequate school facilities, high-poverty students are often ill-equipped in meeting state and federal standards for success.

Adverse Community Conditions

A significant portion of the student population in impoverished schools lives in communities where drug use, gang activity, and crime run rampant--a second challenge to school reform. Some children choose to stay inside, rather than play in the streets for fear of random gunshots. Others get pulled into the illegal activities. As one teacher told Kozol (1991), "At eight years old, some of the boys are running drugs and holding money for the dealers. By 28, they're going to be dead" (p.182).

If students manage to escape the crime of their neighborhoods, many are crippled by the other decrepit conditions of living below middle class standards. "Students come to school carrying the burdens of poverty, hunger, and poor housing" (Peterson, 1994, p.1). They fight daily with medical problems stemming from inadequate prenatal and pediatric health care (Rothstein, 2004). "I have seen children in New York," says Kozol (1991), "with teeth that

look like brownish, broken sticks. I have also seen teenagers who were missing half their teeth" (p.21). In addition to dental woes, many children of poverty suffer from other medical problems, including asthma, diabetes, and lead poisoning. A school nurse in New Jersey explained, "Many kids have chronic and untreated illnesses. I had a child in here yesterday with diabetes. Her blood-sugar level was over 700 … close to coma level" (Kozol, 1991, p.138).

One major reason for the omnipresent health problems in low-income communities is the lack of adequate medical care. With fewer doctors available than in the suburbs, children face longer recovery periods for even the most common ailments. More days of school are missed as a consequence. According to Rothstein (2004):

> There are fewer primary-care physicians in low-income communities, where the physician-to-population ratio is less than a third the rate in middle-class communities. For that reason, disadvantaged children--even those with health insurance--are more likely to miss school for relatively minor problems, such as common ear infections, for which middle-class children are treated promptly (p.20).

Without a supportive community infrastructure, children of poverty have a difficult time reaching the same levels of success as their more advantaged peers. Although schools cannot control the home environments of their pupils, they must find ways to meet their academic, as well as social, emotional, and physical needs.

Poor Teaching Quality

Unfortunately, the troubles do not end there for students in high-poverty schools. Another obstacle to school reform is the substandard teaching quality found in these buildings. While the federal government pushes districts to ensure "highly qualified teachers" for all students, school leaders in impoverished areas must often settle for a warm body in the classroom (Claycomb, 2000). Data indicate that youngsters in these schools are more likely

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to be taught by inexperienced and underprepared teachers (Berry, 2004). In fact, a recent analysis of federal statistics revealed that poor high school students were twice as likely as their more advantaged classmates to be taught key subjects by teachers not certified in those fields (Schouten & Bivens, 2002).

Many teachers enter the school doors in low-income communities lacking formal preparation with emergency teaching certificates, while others are licensed, yet assigned to classrooms for which they are not qualified to teach. Even those with a degree in education are rarely prepared to work with such diverse, high-poverty populations (Ladson-Billings, 2001). It should come as no surprise that a large number of teachers in low-income schools struggle to understand the complexities of their pupils' lives outside of school and the ramifications that their impoverished environments have on their learning. As a result, one in five new teachers leave the classroom within the first three years of employment, perpetuating the cycle of teacher turnover in these underserved contexts (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Because of this constant revolving door, high-poverty schools struggle to provide their students with high-quality instruction from caring, competent teachers.

Low Student Achievement

With the countless challenges faced by schools in low-income communities, students in these buildings typically do not perform as well as their more affluent peers. Graduation rates and SAT scores are just two measures by which poor children traditionally lag behind (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). The NCLB Act of 2001 has shined a much-needed light on this achievement gap (McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury & Houser, 2006). "In theory … [NCLB] was meant to ensure a 'highly qualified' teacher for every public school

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student, regardless of that student's socioeconomic status" (Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu & Donaldson, 2004).

In a recent report released by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), researchers documented significant differences in performance of more than 500,000 students in grade three through eight on a battery of tests conducted by the NWEA in the fall of 2004 and spring of 2005. Results indicated that a large achievement gap exists between students in low-poverty and high-poverty schools for all grades and subjects studied (McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury & Houser, 2006). "This achievement gap was relatively consistent across all grades, indicating that the groups of students in schools with high levels of poverty are no closer to students in low-poverty schools in the eighth grade than they were in the third grade" (McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury & Houser, 2006, p.13). With such a large achievement gap, it's no wonder that high-poverty students face many obstacles to success.

High-poverty, High-performing Schools

But children in impoverished communities should not give up hope. Numerous studies have emerged, which indicate that students whose parents' income level falls below the poverty line, can--and do--succeed in public education (Barth, Haycock, Jackson, Mora, Ruiz, Robinson & Wilkins, 1999; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). In fact, the research demonstrates that these youth do not have to hope for a transfer to a school in a middle or upper class neighborhood. Hundreds of schools across the United States are proving that entire populations of lower socioeconomic children can perform at or above the academic level of their more financially stable peers.

In fall 1998, the Education Trust surveyed 1200 high-poverty, high-performing schools (Barth et al., 1999). More than fifty percent of students at these schools qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Their high-performing designation was earned by either ranking as one of the top ten best scoring schools on state assessments in reading and/or math or as one of the ten most improved schools. Based on survey data, these schools shared several common characteristics. For example, faculty and staff utilized a framework of state standards as part of their daily work. According to Barth et al. (1999):

> The top performing, high poverty schools in this survey suggest that the explicit use of state standards in planning and evaluating curriculum, instruction and student work can have a significant impact on raising the achievement of low-income students. Using standards to evaluate teacher effectiveness can further strengthen the alignment of practice to student results (p.5).

Additionally, Education Trust learned from their survey of high-flying schools that the majority of schools increased the proportion of the instructional day dedicated to reading and mathematics. With additional time to learn fundamental literacy and numeracy skills, the students could practice more and expand their knowledge base. Teachers were also able to work more intensively with their pupils to ensure thorough understanding of state standards.

To ascertain their students' progress, educators in these successful schools utilized a comprehensive monitoring system. Individual children were regularly assessed by their classroom teachers, rather than waiting until the end of the year for evaluation. These formative assessments also allowed teachers to pinpoint youngsters in need of targeted support and assistance.

At these thriving schools, Education Trust also observed a change in parents' role in the educational process. "Traditional roles for parents as fundraisers are being expanded to include processes to help parents improve their knowledge of standards and their

understanding of student work" (Barth et al., 1999, p.11). At one-third of the high-performing sites, one-quarter to one-half of parents were being educated about the quality of student assignments. One in four increased the intensive parent involvement to more than one-half of families.

The Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky released a similar report in 2005, focusing on high academic achievement in high-poverty schools. The researchers surmised:

> Nearly all the worst-performing schools in Kentucky and across the nation are high-poverty schools. But there are also striking exceptions to the pattern of low income/low performance. There are enough schools that defy the trend to prove that the background of the student body does not have to determine achievement results (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p.2).

In the eight elementary schools that the committee studied, several common trends surfaced. A trickle-down effect occurred as high expectations were communicated by various stakeholders. Principals held their teachers to high standards and in turn, teachers held themselves and their students to high standards. "There was a strong belief that all students could succeed academically and that faculty and staff were capable of making this happen" (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p.2). No one felt afraid of these high expectations, however, since everyone felt a sense of trust and respect for one another. The strong relationships created a caring, nurturing environment, in which academics were the primary focus. Students were regularly assessed so that their progress could be monitored and teachers could differentiate their instruction. A collaborative model of leadership, a strong work ethic, and an intentional plan for recruitment and assignment all played key roles in the schools' success as well.

Kannapel and Clements (2005) observed another important characteristic of high-poverty, high-performing schools. "Faculty did not make an issue of the fact that many of their students were 'in poverty.' Disadvantaged students appeared to be treated in fundamentally similar ways as advantaged students" (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p.4). This finding is particularly revealing since a recent study conducted by the Public Education Network (2003) cited poverty as having more of an effect on teacher performance and student learning than racial or cultural diversity.

Delpit (1995) shared similar sentiments, based on her experiences in working with teachers of various ethnic backgrounds across the country. Through her research, she found that teachers were not always able to work effectively with students of their same race who came from different socioeconomic backgrounds. "The middle-class African-American teachers who do not identify with the poor African-American students they teach may hold similarly damaging stereotypes" (Delpit, 1995, p.xiv). Unlike the teachers at the Pritchard schools, the majority of teachers Delpit (1995) observed simply did not know how to reach poor children. Unfortunately, "despite their good intentions, many teachers who work with students of backgrounds different from their own have limited experience in teaching them and become frustrated and angry at the conditions in which they work" (Nieto, 2003, p.15).

These studies of high-poverty, high-performing schools provide hope to students, teachers, and administrators who all strive to find ways to improve student achievement in impoverished communities. While the data presented in this section offer evidence of what these schools can--and do--achieve, they provide only a cursory overview of how other schools can replicate their success. In the section that follows, school reform will be examined in more detail, along with examples of comprehensive school reform programs

supported by the federal government. This information will help to set the stage for the final

portion of this literature review, which is a full examination of Futernick's (2007) multi-

layered approach to transforming high-poverty schools.

School Reform

School reform is a generic term used by educators and policymakers when describing a

host of strategies, approaches, and models for improving schools. Tyack and Cuban (1995)

defined it in this way:

> When we speak of educational reforms, we mean planned efforts to change schools
> in order to correct perceived social and educational problems … whatever the
> reform, it usually entail[s] a long and complex set of steps discovering problems,
> devising remedies, adopting new policies, and bringing about institutional change
> (p.4).

In 1957 when Sputnik sent education into the American spotlight, school reform became

the method of choice in regaining our nation's number one spot in the global economy.

Although many progressives of the 1950's believed that "good ideas would travel of their

own volition" into schools and classrooms (Elmore, 1996, p.18), researchers found that few

initiatives made impacts wider than within isolated school buildings. The federal government

responded by launching a large-scale series of national curriculum reform initiatives during

the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's. Fullan (2000) coined this time period the

"adoption era" because:

> The goal was to get innovations out there, as if flooding the system with external
> ideas would bring about desired improvements. Huge sums of money were poured
> into major curriculum reforms like PSSC Physics, BSCC Biology, and MACOS
> Social Sciences, and organizational innovations such as open plan schools, flexible
> scheduling, and team teaching (Fullan, 2000, p.6).

Despite these wide-reaching plans, little progress was made in moving reform from

isolated improvement to large-scale institutionalization by the early 1970's. "The term

'implementation' (or more accurately, 'failed implementation') came into the vocabulary of reform" and researchers soon discovered that "putting ideas into practice was a far more complex process than people realized" (Fullan, 2000, p.6).

After witnessing the continual failure of these reform movements in public education, Goodlad (1975) decided to initiate a five-year research and development project aimed at examining the struggle for institutional change. He discovered that the conventional model for studying educational change attempted "to manipulate certain instructional interventions (such as class size or teaching method) and to look for changes in pupil outcomes;" however, this model did not always prove sufficient (Owens, 2001, p.213). The intermediary factors of regular school practices, sustained by expectations, approval, and rewards, also had an effect on school change.

According to Goodlad (1975), individual teachers cannot confront these rituals without the support of the entire school culture; thus, the overarching school culture surfaced as the unit of study. "We see everything constituting the culture of the school--its operational curriculum, written and unwritten rules, verbal and nonverbal communication, physical properties, pedagogical regularities, principal's leadership behavior and so on" (Goodlad, 1975 as cited in Owens, 2001, p.213). A new model for research design emerged with the school's culture serving as the independent variable and both the behavior of the teacher and the pupil outcomes as dependent variables of school culture. At the same time, pupil outcomes also served as a dependent variable of teacher behavior.

Goodlad's (1975) malleable framework more accurately reflected the reality of education in the mid- to late-1970's (Owens, 2001). Prior to his research, schools tried to reform certain elements of their environment, without considering the bigger picture.

"Student and staff learning can be weakened by organizational fragmentation when schools implement programs that are unrelated to each other, that address only limited numbers of students and staff, or that are ended after short periods of time" (Youngs & King, 2002, p.646). From Goodlad's (1975) research, schools learned that reform efforts must address the entire school culture, rather than just discrete parts; otherwise, the status quo will soon return. As Donahoe (1993) so aptly stated:

> As long as the responses only bend, rather than break, the traditional model, any changes brought about in a school are living on borrowed time. It is easier to go back than to go forward because the system that envelops the school was created to support the traditional model and is thoroughly inhospitable to any other form (n.p).

About two decades later in 1997, the United States Congress passed legislation promoting inclusive models of school reform. "The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, or CSRD, provided funding for schools to implement reform programs that met nine components of comprehensiveness described in the law" (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005, n.p.). These nine guidelines incorporated: effective, research-based methods and strategies; comprehensive design with aligned components; ongoing, high quality professional development; measurable goals and benchmarks for student achievement; support from within the school; parental and community involvement; external technical support and assistance; evaluation strategies; and coordination of resources. Four years later, the authorization of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 continued the program and added two more components of comprehensiveness, including a prerequisite of scientifically based research to back the plans. Rather than advocate individual reform strategies, this federal program was "designed to foster coherent schoolwide improvements that cover virtually all aspects of a school's operations, rather than

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piecemeal, fragmented approaches to reform.… These reforms must help all children to meet

challenging state academic content and achievement standards" (United States Department of

Education, 2007).

The Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) program supports various popular reform

initiatives found in many schools across America. Over 2,500 schools participated in CSR in

the first two years of implementation (Davis, Sagmiller & Hagans, 2001). Accelerated

Schools, Different Ways of Knowing, Core Knowledge, and Roots and Wings are just a few

of the federally-supported programs selected by these schools. While these models vary in

approach and scope, all aim to improve student achievement. The Northwest Regional

Educational Laboratory (2005) warned:

> It is important to remember, however, that comprehensive school reform involves
> more than simply adopting a model and expecting student achievement to improve as
> a result. Very few models fully address all 11 CSR components, so schools seeking
> CSR funds have to fill in the gaps with site-based initiatives. What's more, reform in
> general requires continuous planning, focusing, monitoring, adjusting, and working
> together to address implementation issues and new problems as they arise (n.p.).

Futernick's (2007) Perspective on Reform

Futernick (2007) agreed that schools must change the entire school environment in order

to initiate--and sustain--true educational improvement. The research professor from

California pointed out:

> Unless [failing schools] can be improved to a point of stability, most will eventually
> return to their prior state of dysfunction. In fact, they may worse off than before. Just
> like the patient who builds up resistance to antibiotics when too little is taken, the
> school builds up its own resistance when too little is done to turn it around (Futernick,
> 2007, p.10).

Futernick (2007) was highly influenced after reading Malcolm Gladwell's (2002) *The*

Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference. Using the Tipping Point

elements as a frame of reference, the researcher developed a comprehensive plan for school reform. His study of low-performing schools in California that proved unsuccessful in improving also contributed to the plan. "Implementing just a few of the improvements--no matter how sound any of them might be--was not enough to counteract the habits and myriad forces that resist change so effectively in these schools" (Futernick, 2007, p.5). Consequently, Futernick (2007) decided to "define the set of interlinking, essential supports a failing school would need to turn itself around" (p.5).

In devising the framework, he first met with teachers, administrators, parents, and other educational stakeholders to present his ideas and incorporate their feedback. In 2001, he attempted to pilot a study of its implementation in three targeted schools in Oakland. Unfortunately, district bureaucracy slowed his progress and the school system was taken over by the state before it could be initiated. While he gained support from educators in other parts of California for his plan, he had yet to implement and evaluate its full impact at the time of this study. He felt confident, however, that it could prove to be an effective means of reform for low-performing, high-poverty schools.

Before Futernick's (2007) framework is described in full detail, an overview of Gladwell's (2002) concepts is first illuminated so that the reader can gain a better understanding of how and why Futernick (2007) made his case for education reform.

Gladwell's *(2002) The Tipping Point*

Gladwell's (2002) book presented a detailed explanation of how certain ideas garner support to take flight and become a widespread phenomenon. From fashion trends to crime waves to sexually transmitted diseases, *Tipping Point* explicated how "ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do" (Gladwell, 2002, p.7). While many

people believe that change typically occurs one incremental step at a time, Gladwell (2002) argued that more often social epidemics result from unexpected moments which make a lasting difference. According to the author:

> Epidemics are a function of the people who transmit infectious agents, the infectious agent itself, and the environment in which the agent is operating. And when an epidemic tips, when it is jolted out of equilibrium, it tips because something has happened, some change has occurred in one (or two or three) of those areas (Gladwell, 2002, p.18-19).

There are three main elements to better understand these social epidemics: the Law of the Few, the Stickiness Factor, and the Power of Context. The first agent of change, the Law of the Few, describes the impact that certain individuals can have on the thoughts, opinions, and actions of others. "Economists often talk about the 80/20 Principle, which is the idea that in any situation roughly 80 percent of the 'work' will be done by 20 percent of the participants" (Gladwell, 2002, p.19). In the same way, a select few "do the work" of spreading social epidemics. One famous example is Paul Revere. The popularity and connectedness of Revere helped to ensure that his cautionary message was received across the Boston countryside. "The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts" (Gladwell, 2002, p.33).

According to Gladwell (2002), there are three types of socially influential people: Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. Connectors possess a wide and diverse circle of family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. These individuals proactively network to make new connections at every possible opportunity. "[Connectors] manage to occupy many different worlds and subcultures and niches … their ability to span many different worlds is a function

of something intrinsic to their personality, some combination of curiosity, self-confidence, sociability, and energy" (Gladwell, 2002, p.48-49).

Mavens, on the other hand, specialize in information, not people. These special few accumulate a plethora of data about a variety of subjects and passionately spread their expertise with others. "Mavens have the knowledge and the social skills to start word-of-mouth epidemics. What sets Mavens apart, though, is not so much what they know but how they pass it along" (Gladwell, 2002, p.62). Their desire to help others with decision-making helps to gain the attention of many.

While Mavens will not adamantly persuade their family and friends, Salesmen fill the void with determination and eloquence. These social masterminds are critical to spreading epidemics. The energy, charm, and likeability of Salesmen make their pitch quite easy. People cannot help but buy their ideas, due to their contagious enthusiasm, subtle signals, and non-verbal cues. Altogether, Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen help to initiate and sustain social epidemics, or in the case of Futernick's (2007) framework, school reform efforts.

The second agent of change proposed by Gladwell (2002) is the Stickiness Factor. "Stickiness" can be described as the "specific quality that a message needs to be successful" (Gladwell, 2002, p.92). In other words, it is the characteristic or quality that makes the idea unique and spreadable. Its memorable nature helps Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen to do their jobs.

Columbia Record Club used the Stickiness Factor as part of a successful advertising campaign. Consumers were advised to look for a small gold box in their issues of several weekly periodicals. Once they found the treasure box, they could write in for a free record.

"The gold box … was a kind of trigger. It gave viewers a reason to look for the ads in the *TV Guide* and *Parade*. It created a connection between the Columbia message viewers saw on television and the message they read in a magazine" (Gladwell, 2002, p.95).

Just as this example demonstrates, the Stickiness Factor does not always require elaborate schemes; rather, the sticky trigger can be "as small and as seemingly trivial as … [a] gold box" (Gladwell, 2002, p.96). Those interested in capturing the attention of the masses may simply have to tinker with their presentation style in order to obtain mass appeal. That is just what the creators of *Sesame Street*, the children's show, did. Television researchers at the University of Massachusetts conducted a series of experiments testing youngsters' attention spans. The producers of *Sesame Street* originally believed that kids would simply sit and stare at the screen, eventually zoning out. But the University of Massachusetts research indicated that was not the case:

> [Children] could divide their attention between a couple of different activities. And they weren't being random. There were predictable influences on what made them look back at the screen, and these were not trivial things, not just flash and dash (Gladwell, 2002, p.100-101).

So the writers and producers of *Sesame Street* implemented significant changes to the format of the show, making it one of the most successful children's series of all time. In the same fashion, Futernick (2007) believed that the presentation of school reform initiatives could be tinkered with to effectively make the message "stick" for various stakeholders and help bring about broad-scale change.

The third agent of change, the Power of Context, is a bit more complicated. "Epidemics are sensitive to the conditions and circumstances of the times and places in which they occur" (Gladwell, 2002, p.139). For example, a syphilis outbreak in Baltimore spreads far

more substantially in the months of June and July as opposed to January and February. So what is the cause? The warm weather of the summer means that people venture out and move around more than in the cold, snowy months of the winter. The sexually transmitted disease, therefore, has wider reaching effect during that time and is more likely to create a health epidemic.

Crime outbreaks can also be attributed to the Power of Context. Criminologists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling spawned the notion of Broken Windows to support this theory. According to these two:

> Crime is the inevitable result of disorder. If a window is broken and left unrepaired, people walking by will conclude that no one cares and no one is in charge. Soon, more windows will be broken, and the sense of anarchy will spread from the building to the street on which it faces, sending a signal that anything goes (Gladwell, 2002, p.141).

Kelling put this theory to the test when he was hired in the mid-1980s by the New York Transit Authority as a consultant to reduce crime. The Transit Authority followed his advice and began cleaning graffiti off the train cars. While others thought the focus was ludicrous and the emphasis should be on reducing crime and increasing subway reliability, Kelling was persistent. The graffiti campaign transitioned into a crackdown on fare-beating and before long, the subway system was under control.

The Power of Context is just as effective in dealing with positive subjects as negative ones. For instance, Gladwell (2002) outlined the impact of context on book sales. The widely popular novel, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, did not immediately rise to the top of the bestseller lists. Its early sales, in fact, were pretty gradual until it became a staple read for book clubs. Female customers started creating their own Ya-Ya Sisterhood groups "and bringing Wells (the author) pictures of their group for her to sign. The lesson of Ya-Ya … is

that small, close-knit groups have the power to magnify the epidemic potential of a message or idea" (Gladwell, 2002, p.174). Members of a community context, therefore, are much more likely to spread an idea than those isolated as individuals; thus, Futernick (2007) proposed using contextual influences to effectively move school reform strategies forward. In the next section, the nine components of his Tipping Point framework are detailed one element at a time.

Theoretical Framework: Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point Strategy

As previously mentioned, Futernick (2007) combined the elements of Gladwell's (2002) *Tipping Point* model to develop a comprehensive plan for school reform. The educational researcher proposed:

> From a "tipping point" perspective, each chronically failing school cannot be helped with a slow, gradualist approach to reform even if the effort is led by a dedicated and competent principal. Something more radical and immediate is needed to break the cycle of failure, something that enables a school to reach a tipping point—a point where it begins performing like an outlier (Futernick, 2007, p.46).

To achieve this goal, Futernick (2007) surmised that schools must address nine key components for reform: teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement. Taken in isolation, many of these components have been observed in common reform efforts across the United States. Futernick's (2007) framework differed from most, however, in that it called for a massive overhaul of the entire school environment. Rather than simply introduce a new reading program or hire more teachers to lower class size, a school should think about the interplay of all elements and how they impact the ultimate goal of improved student achievement.

Each of the nine components will be examined in detail in the sections that follow. Futernick's (2007) perspective on these components will be explicated, along with their current status in schools. Research-based best practices will also be delineated, where appropriate.

Teams

The first component of Futernick's (2007) framework involved the use of teams. In schools across the country, teachers work primarily in isolation, responsible for a set group of children for one or more subjects with little to no input from their colleagues (Lortie, 1975; Goodlad, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989). Even when teachers are grouped by grade level or subject area, the configurations rarely function as true teams (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). For instance, when they come together for scheduled grade level or departmental meetings, discussion typically centers on superficial issues, such as field trips and testing dates. Even worse, this time may be spent merely disseminating school-wide information that could have just as easily been distributed via email. Rarely do educators engage in deeper conversations about curricular concerns, pedagogical practices, and student progress; and unfortunately, there does not seem to be much motivation for teachers "to change their practices in their daily work routines" (Elmore, 1996, p.15).

As a result of these superficial teams, many educators may feel alone in their struggles, without the comfort of having colleagues to turn to for advice and support. Teachers in low-income, low-performing schools may face particularly difficult isolation. According to Futernick (2007):

> [It] can be an especially lonely experience. Parents seldom volunteer their time in the classroom. Each teacher is segregated in his or her own classroom for the bulk of the school day. The daily challenges that accompany teaching students who live in

poverty—e.g., serving as a "surrogate" parent, providing snacks to those who are hungry, keeping students safe from violence while at school, making sure they have a safe place to go to after school—further limit the time teachers have to plan, evaluate, and problem-solve together (p.16-17).

"Building organizational capacity through collegial interaction in schools has become prominent in much of the literature on education reform and school improvement" (Leonard & Leonard, 2003, n.p). Thus, districts have started to take the initiative to establish collaborative cultures to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, using professional development activities as the impetus for change (Youngs & King, 2002, p.647). For example, in 2003, the Monroe Township Public Schools in New Jersey devised several strategies to encourage their teachers to utilize their collective brainpower to improve instruction (Tienken & Stonaker, 2007). Like their peers in many other districts across the United States, teachers in Monroe Township attended a couple days of "sit and get" workshops throughout the year, with little to no follow-up once they returned to their classrooms. District administrators met with members of the professional development committee to devise a plan to convert "from one-shot 'topics' to a system based on NSDC's Standards for Staff Development" (Tienken & Stonaker, 2007, p.25).

The committee then surveyed staff across the district, talked with a variety of teachers from their buildings, and researched best practices in adult learning. Upon doing so, they developed a comprehensive reform plan for professional development. "Leaders reallocated money that had been spent to hire consultants from outside the district and used it to develop a core of knowledgeable teacher leaders who would work with their peers during the scheduled days" (Tienken & Stonaker, 2007, p.25). Realizing that this time was not enough, the district also created a teacher exchange program, wherein educators could request to visit

a colleague's classroom for observation or conversely, ask a peer to provide coaching in their own room. A total of sixty days of substitute teaching was allocated to facilitate this exchange.

Because collaborative cultures are different from the norm in most school buildings, clear expectations must be established from the onset about why teams are formed and what they should accomplish. Johnston, Knight, and Miller (2007) explained:

> Collaboration is a departure from the traditional school culture of isolation, and teachers had to learn how to develop a purpose for the meeting and show results, such as discernible changes in their instructional strategies, interventions with students, examination of common assessments, and curriculum plans (p.16).

Without a clear purpose and goals, teams may flounder and revert back to the superficial topics of most group meetings.

In 2002-03, the Papillion-La Vista Public Schools in Nebraska sought to increase the collaboration of its teachers and enhance their assessment literacy (Johnston, Knight & Miller, 2007). Before beginning this initiative, central office staff devised a series of concrete steps to meet their goals:

> District leaders planned and created classroom goals teams in 2002-03 to help teachers develop strategies to evaluate student assessments and target their instruction based on the results. Currently, every teacher and specialist serves on one of these teams that meet monthly on the professional learning days (Johnston, Knight & Miller, 2007, p.16).

By dividing the staff up into set units, educators began to feel a sense of camaraderie as they collectively tackled specific goals. "By being part of a consistent team all year, teachers built peer relationships and held one another accountable for taking active steps toward reaching individual classroom goals" (Johnston, Knight & Miller, 2007, p.16). Meeting time was

facilitated by drilling down to three key questions: How did students perform well? How do students need to improve? Did your assessment match your instructional strategy?

To supplement these goals teams, the district developed a second set of collaborative groups to work together during the school day on curriculum planning and student interventions. In these weekly or biweekly meetings:

> [T]eachers preview a future summative assessment and discuss what students should understand at the end of the corresponding unit. They identify and discuss how students will demonstrate learning and collaborate on assessments and lesson plans. Lastly, teachers document the progress and effectiveness of the instructional activities (Johnston, Knight & Miller, 2007, p.18).

Both teams together helped teachers to improve their instruction and better meet the needs of their students.

Teams must not always focus on long-term, sustained goals, however. The Maine-Endwell Central School District in New York developed a roll-through program to allow its teachers to collaborate on short, targeted professional development activities. "A roll-through brings specific groups of staff together for identified learning, followed by individualized coaching in the classroom" (Sever & Bowgren, 2007, p.22). Substitute teachers covered one grade level or department at a time, while the targeted teachers participated in a learning session. Once these teachers completed the short course, the subs moved on to the next grade level or department until all were trained. "Teachers then decide how much time they need to practice a new skill and for classroom coaching before they come back together for the next roll-through" (Sever & Bowgren, 2007, p.22). Instructional coaches support classroom teachers by scheduling demonstration lessons. Afterwards, they debrief to share successes and challenges. "Maine-Endwell teachers have discovered the power of collaboration and

reflection. They feel energized with the immediacy of bringing new ideas from staff development directly to the classroom" (Sever & Bowgren, 2007, p.23).

It is evident that working collaboratively as teams can reap huge results for student success. As Johnson (1990) explained:

> A lone teacher can impart phonics, fractions, the pluperfect tense, or the periodic table, but only through teachers' collective efforts will schools produce educated graduates who can read and compute; apply scientific principles; comprehend the lessons of history; value others' cultures and speak their languages; and conduct themselves responsibly as citizens. Such accomplishments are the product of a corporate venture (p.149).

In today's twenty-first century world, these higher-order thinking skills are no longer a luxury--but a necessity--for competing in our global economy (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 2005). Thus, Futernick (2007) proposed using teams to support this type of teaching and learning in his Tipping Point framework for school reform initiatives.

Time

A major obstacle to teacher collaboration is the inherent lack of time in the daily school schedule, Futernick's (2007) second component for school reform (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). "It is not enough simply to assign people to teams. If they do not have ample time to work with one another and have a sense of shared mission, they will be mere collections of individuals—not true teams" (Futernick, 2007, p.19). Schools across the United States grapple with the issue of finding time for teachers to collaborate to meet the needs of their students. "Finding time for teams to work … is both a necessity and a responsibility. If educators [want] to improve student learning, leaders must take responsibility for providing

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team time … and a structure in which they are able to work collaboratively" (Johnston, Knight & Miller, 2007, p.15).

Since 1999, the staff members at Garfield Elementary School in Livonia, Michigan have used creative thinking to find precious time during the school day, a minimum of at least sixty and sometimes as much as ninety minutes. "That is long enough to accomplish critical tasks and still hold team members' attention," said Garfield Principal William Green (Khorsheed, 2007, p.44).

The elementary teachers at Green's school utilize four distinct strategies to reallocate time for teacher collaboration. For starters, they use specials or enrichment classes to give core teachers planning periods:

> Once special teachers have fulfilled their meeting time with each class, there may be another class time available in their schedules that principals traditionally might have used to assign these teachers other tasks or to allow a class an extra music period (Khorsheed, 2007, p.44).

In addition, recess time is scheduled immediately before or after the extra arts period to extend the collaboration for teachers. Additional staff members are hired using Title I funds to supervise the students. "One year, Garfield's principal used Title I funds to hire two part-time teachers. The two managed two classes, providing additional literacy instruction and enabling two regular classroom teachers to collaborate" (Khorsheed, 2007, p.44). Classes are joined together for certain time periods as well so that fewer teachers oversee larger groups:

> At Garfield, for example, three first grade classes of 20 were reconfigured into two groups of 30 students for their music and gym periods, followed by a recess, without exceeding the contractual maximum. In this way, three classes were covered by two specialist teachers, and three classroom teachers were able to collaborate for at least an hour (Khorsheed, 2007, p.44).

In other school districts, administrators have experimented with a variety of different techniques to find time for teachers during the day. Sparks (1999), former executive director of the National Staff Development Council, presented the following innovative ideas:

> Promising and productive approaches include using substitutes to free teachers, focusing faculty meetings on teacher learning, adjusting the master schedule, and lengthening the school day for a few minutes four days per week. Schools also are implementing an early release on the fifth day to provide an extended period of time for professional development, engaging students one morning per week in alternative activities such as community service, and providing commonly scheduled lunch or planning periods for teachers working on joint projects (Sparks, 1999, n.p.).

Even when teachers do have pockets of time during the work day without students, however, myriad other responsibilities may pull them away from teamwork. With limited minutes away from children, teachers are forced to take care of personal concerns (e.g., bathroom breaks) and other important tasks, including phone calls to parents, special education meetings, and lesson preparation. One elementary teacher in a study conducted by researchers Leonard and Leonard (2003) explained:

> It's hard to find extra time to devote to collaboration. Extra time is spent on developing lesson plans, helping children who were absent with make-up work, running papers, gathering materials for lessons and school committee work. I teach fourth grade and average about forty conferences a year. This takes a lot of our time also (n.p.).

Scheduling time for meetings, therefore, must be balanced with providing time for teachers to complete their other required tasks. The Pacific Telesis Foundation found similar conclusions after funding three elementary schools in California to undergo a comprehensive restructuring project. Although money was available to buy time for the school staff members, the efforts proved unsuccessful. An evaluator of the project sites revealed this important insight:

It wasn't just a matter of finding time for meetings; there had to be time for all the additional interaction, assignments, and emotional energy that stitch an organization--a culture--together. For those teachers who thought a lot about what they did, we were crowding the time they would otherwise have spent thinking about their children and their classrooms by giving them the additional responsibility of thinking about the whole school (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.).

Studies of educational systems throughout the world indicate that teachers in other countries typically have more time for independent and collective planning than their American counterparts (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 2005). In particular, research by Stevenson and his colleagues have found that students and teachers in the countries of China, Taiwan, and Japan have a much different looking day than their peers in America. In these Asian nations, "an eight-hour school day is structured so that teachers are in charge of classes only 60% of the time they are at school, and teaching itself is a group endeavor" (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.). The remaining time is spent planning lessons, analyzing student assessments, and coordinating projects with their peers. If schools truly want to effectively succeed in transforming their cultures, they must adopt some of these strategies for time, as Futernick (2007) proposed.

Physical Environment

Futernick's (2007) third element of school reform centers on the physical environment. Schools' physical atmosphere can vary greatly across buildings within and between districts. While state-of-the-art technology and modern resources may exist in newly constructed or renovated schools, many older facilities lack the basic of necessities. Old, dingy paint may adorn walls. Wrinkled, soiled carpet may cover floors. Restrooms may have an unpleasant odor or even be out of order and unusable. Few books may exist or if they are present, may be out of date and tattered.

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Overall, the physical environment in some schools may present an unwelcoming, uncomfortable climate for students. At Lathrop Elementary School in Chicago Public Schools, students face a bleak building each day. "There are no hoops on the basketball court and no swings in the playground … for 21 years, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, the school has been without a library" (Kozol, 1991, p.53). Books are not taken home by the pupils; instead, they lay moldy, tattered, and dusty on a large table in the cafeteria. Oyler Elementary School in Cincinnati, Ohio is also pretty barren. In a fifth grade science class at the school:

> [T]he children were studying plant biology … but not with lab equipment. There was none. There was a single sink that may have worked but was not being used, a couple of test tubes locked up in a cupboard, and a skeleton also locked behind glass windows. The nearly total blankness of the walls was interrupted only by a fire safety poster. The window shades were badly worn. The only textbook … [found] had been published by Addison-Wesley in 1973. A chart of "The Elements" on the wall behind the teacher listed no elements discovered in the past four decades (Kozol, 1991, p.230-231).

In Williams v. California, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a complaint against the state of California based on the conditions of school facilities (Futernick, 2007). According to the ACLU, buildings, which housed a majority of students of color, suffered from a variety of decrepit conditions. For example, many schools lacked working water fountains, clean toilets, and normal functioning heat/air conditioning units. Roofs were leaky and rodent infestations were common. In August 2004, the state of California and the ACLU settled the case that "led to legislation which allocated close to one billion dollars to correct these conditions" (Futernick, 2007, p.21).

Just as the Broken Windows theory impacted the subway system in New York City

(Gladwell, 2002), the notion also applies to the physical environment of modern schools.

According to Futernick (2007):

> It seems quite plausible that if one were to walk into a school and see broken
> windows, graffiti, leaky roofs, dirty classrooms and bathrooms in disrepair, one would
> conclude that no one cares, that no one is in charge and anything goes. If students (or,
> by referral, their parents) draw these conclusions, how can they be expected to take
> their education seriously, much less succeed academically? If teachers draw these
> conclusions, how can they be expected to stay at these schools, much less succeed in
> teaching their students? (p.20-21).

Researchers from Boston College and SUNY-Stony Brook found that the quality of the

physical environment was an important predictor of teachers' decision to stay or leave their

current position in the District of Columbia's public schools. Since the average school

building in the United States is over forty years old (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2005), it

can be expected that many facilities are not up to present standards. Several factors were

examined to determine the quality of the school building and consequently, teacher

satisfaction and student achievement.

For starters, air quality was investigated. In nearly two-thirds of the public schools in the

District of Columbia, teachers reported poor circulation as a problem (Buckley, Schneider &

Shang, 2005). As a result, the "sick building syndrome" impacted students and teachers alike,

who suffered from asthma and other respiratory problems. Thermal comfort and classroom

lighting were two other factors that were examined as well. Many teachers believed that

regulation of heating and air impacted student learning (Lackney, 1999). In addition, over

fifteen studies have shown that adequate lighting can improve student performance and

reduce behavior problems (Jago & Tanner, 1999). Taken together, all of these elements can

also impact teacher retention.

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While the researchers found that a variety of other factors (especially teacher pay) influenced educators' decisions to stay or leave their current positions, school facilities indeed ranked as important. "As the perceived quality of the school facility improves, ceteris paribus, the probability of retention increases" (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2005, p.1115). Improving a school's physical environment can therefore prove to be a cost-effective strategy to retaining teachers. "A major facilities improvement is likely to be a one-time expense, last for many years, and have supplemental sources of state or federal funding available" (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2005, p.1119). For years to come, the district will then reap the benefits through improved teacher satisfaction. Futernick (2007) agreed that the physical environment can have advantageous effects on school reform; therefore, he included it in his Tipping Point framework for improving high-poverty schools.

Class-size Reduction

Class-size reduction marks Futernick's (2007) fourth component in his framework for school reform. According to the researcher, in order to meet individual student needs, a teacher must be able to interact with his or her pupils frequently. Due to myriad reasons, teachers in today's schools may find this difficult because of large class sizes. Poor recruitment and retention strategies, decreased funding, and federal mandates for "highly qualified teacher" status may all contribute to teachers' exorbitant class rosters.

The more students in a class, the more difficult it becomes for teachers to differentiate instruction. Particularly in high schools, teachers struggle to plan and implement student-centered lessons as thirty-plus pupils rotate in and out of their rooms for five to six periods per day. One-on-one contact between teacher and student is nearly impossible in these settings.

With larger class size also comes increased behavior management concerns. Since most classrooms were not constructed to support desks and chairs for more than thirty students, the physical area grows cramped. Students have less personal space in which to work and less room to move around. Consequently, teachers are less likely to vary instruction as hands-on and group activities present cumbersome challenges.

In a recent teacher retention study, Futernick (2007) interviewed one elementary teacher in a high-poverty school that indicated class size was an important factor in her decision to stay at her present school. The teacher reflected:

> Smaller class sizes allow much more one-on-one time with children--more time to meet their individual needs. It's a total management issue. It's not nearly as stressful having a smaller class size, especially in preparation, in delivery, in planning, in talking and meeting with parents. When you have fewer students, you have more time to do all those things (Futernick, 2007, p.22).

Not all class size reduction plans have proven successful, however. In the mid-1990s, California adopted a program for grades kindergarten through third, which capped class sizes at twenty (Futernick, 2007). Unfortunately, because the program was implemented in such a quick manner, some disturbing results followed as Bohrnstedt and Stecher (2002) described:

> The overnight need for approximately 18,000 new classrooms in a facility-challenged state led to expedient, but compromised solutions--conversion of libraries, labs, and assembly stages into classrooms; switches to year-round calendars--some of which remain problematic. The already-existing problem of teacher shortages, quality, and distribution took on crisis proportions. The hiring of many new teachers taxed schools' capacity to support and mentor teachers. Particularly troubling was the proliferation of emergency-permit teachers in high poverty areas, which raised early concerns about equity. Would low-income and minority students, who stood to gain the most from CSR, be least likely to benefit? (p.4).

To counteract these challenges, associates at the Public Policy Institute of California recommended several changes to the program (Futernick, 2007). First, they suggested that the initiative be integrated and aligned with other reforms. As is often the case in education,

multiple reforms may be introduced simultaneously, presenting conflicting priorities. Rather than forcing schools to pick and choose reform strategies, the Public Policy Institute recommended streamlining the class size program so that it worked well with other initiatives.

The Institute also suggested the development of pilot sites with even lower class sizes to "further test [its] potential to improve the achievement of low-income/minority students" (Futernick, 2007, p.23). In similar studies, Glass and Smith (1978) found that class sizes below twenty led to large achievement advantages, when compared to control groups of larger sizes. Likewise, Tennessee's Project STAR, a large-scale longitudinal study, revealed two important findings: students in small classes "performed better at all K-3 grade levels than students in larger classes. And minority and inner-city children gained more from class size reduction than their White and non-urban school peers; indeed, the effects were two to three times as great" (Bohrnstedt & Stecher, 2002, p.5). Finn (2002) discovered that small classes affected educators as well. The teachers in the small classes of Project STAR had higher morale and spent more time on direct instruction and less on classroom management than in larger classes. Indeed, best practices for small class instruction should be included in any school reform, as Futernick (2007) recommended in his Tipping Point framework.

Autonomy and Shared Governance

Futernick (2007) also believed that autonomy and shared governance should be addressed in any school reform effort. Teachers have historically been divorced from the major decision-making responsibilities in schools. While they make the majority of day-to-day choices within their classrooms, rarely do they find a place at the table when dealing with larger school or district policy decisions. For instance, issues of budgeting, hiring, and

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scheduling are traditionally under the purview of their principal and/or superintendent. Teachers become even more distanced from decision-making at the state and federal levels. Curriculum changes, licensure qualifications, and standardized testing timelines are handled by the "experts" at their state departments of education or on Capitol Hill.

More recently, however, teachers are being invited to take on greater leadership responsibility, particularly in school reform (Doherty & Abernathy, 1998; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001). Models of shared decision-making are becoming increasingly popular in schools across the United States (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). Many aspiring administrators are now learning--as part of their preparation programs--how to tap into the knowledge and skills of accomplished teachers. Through pre-service and professional development programs, current and future teachers are building their leadership skills and learning the ins and outs of collaborative decision-making.

Shared governance structures are most commonly found in the form of school leadership or site-based decision-making teams. "Many experts correctly believe that democratically run schools are positively associated with higher job satisfaction, stronger professional commitment, better teacher retention rates, increased parent involvement, and increased academic achievement" (Futernick, 2007, p.24). But just as teachers must learn how to work in teams with one another, so, too, do teachers and administrators need to understand how to establish relationships as collaborative partners. Teachers are accustomed to autonomy in their classrooms. Principals have traditionally been autonomous as school leaders. As these two groups begin working more closely together, the relationships become strained. "Resistance is evident among teachers who prefer the status quo and see no reason for change--particularly from those who doubt that their ideas for improvement will be taken

seriously" (Futernick, 2007, p.25). School governance is also a skill area which is new to most teachers so the tasks may seem complicated. "Teachers often struggle because most have little training and experience with such matters. Then poor decisions get made and participants begin questioning their collective ability to make sound decisions" (Futernick, 2007, p.25).

Collaborative decision-making requires the efforts and abilities of all stakeholders to truly be successful. Teachers are not the only group that should be pinpointed for inclusion, as Donahoe (1993) explained:

> In order for schools to outgrow their dependency on the principal, every member of the administrative, teaching, and classified staff--as well as some parents--must have an active role in the formal organization. Schools are small enough to function as a form of direct, rather than representative, democracy (n.p.).

Mechanisms must be in place to solicit the ideas and concerns of all so that certain individuals or groups are not simply glorified as the inner circle. "When a school practices shared influence, it does not mean that decisions--and therefore power--are simply delegated to, or even vested in, an individual or a committee … everyone in the school community has at least an opportunity to influence outcomes" (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.). To achieve this equitable culture, some schools send home periodic surveys to parents to get a pulse on their satisfaction and learn ways they might volunteer. Others organize community nights, where neighboring business and civic organizations are invited along with the parents to learn more about the school's programs. Working collaboratively, the entire school family experiences success:

> In a shared-influence setting, teachers have less individual autonomy because the pressure to do things differently comes from a source that they need to respond to-- their peers. The loss of individual autonomy is offset, however, by the collective

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ability to do things on behalf of student learning that the teachers was not able to do in isolation (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.).

Thus, as Futernick (2007) contended, autonomy and shared governance are key components in transforming any high-poverty school.

Leadership

Leadership is yet another crucial element in Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework for school reform. In most of today's schools, principals harbor primary responsibility for leadership. At sites undertaking whole-school reform, strong leadership becomes even more important (Datnow & Castellano, 2001). In the course of any given day, administrators must provide guidance to their teachers, build trusting relationships with parents, and serve as ambassadors to the community, all while managing the daily tasks of running a school. Administrators must ensure that their staff has adequate facilities and resources, collaborative planning time, and ongoing professional development. Research has shown that effective leaders:

> … are visible in the school and interested in instruction. They have high expectations for all students and are focused on learning goals. These leaders believe that part of their job is to eliminate distractions and competing programs that may interfere with reaching the district's learning goals (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004, p.3).

Because a principal's job is so difficult, it behooves him or her to reach out to staff for help. Individuals should be tapped to assist in leading, based on the strengths and weaknesses of the overall team. Investing time in developing the leadership of others may seem unfeasible for the busy administrator; however, it can reap huge benefits in the end. As more staff, parents, and community members feel comfortable in leading, the principal can more effectively complete his or her tasks at hand. Not all school leaders possess these skills though. While ISLLC Standard Two states that they should all strive to create such an

environment, only the best and brightest leaders usually succeed (Council of Chief State

School Officers, 1996). Research on successful leaders discovered that:

> An effective administrator develops capacity for success within the school and the community, not just through his or her intrinsic skills and talents. He or she must have genuine confidence that teachers, staff and parents are capable of constructing a coherent vision for the school, managing change, and serving as competent leaders themselves (Futernick, 2007, p.26-27).

In high-poverty schools, administrators face even more challenges than the average

principal. Older facilities, a revolving door of teacher turnover, and increased student needs

are just a few of the impediments that they must overcome. "One thing common to almost

every successful urban school is a strong and competent principal. Unfortunately, the

conditions principals face in these schools are often so demanding and stressful that many—

even the successful ones—do not stay long" (Futernick, 2007, p.26).

As a consequence, districts must constantly seek and support quality candidates to fill

positions at low-income schools:

> The fact that so many urban schools have such a difficult time attracting good principals is surely due to the perception, even if it is not the reality, that they must perform heroically. But not only are principals-as-heroes hard to come by, they are not as effective as we might think. This is because they leave untapped the wealth of skill, expertise, and leadership potential of many teachers and parents (Futernick, 2007, p.26).

Principals cannot expect others to lead immediately. Some transition time may be

necessary to provide these individuals with the training and practice needed for shared

decision-making:

> [T]he leadership skills of the principal are critical, at least in the early years, to the success of an effort to create a formal environment of shared influence. Teachers who have just emerged from their individual boxes are not yet ready to assume leadership roles in a shared-influence setting. Schools are trapped by a leadership dilemma: they require skilled, effective principals in order to outgrow their utter dependency on those principals (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.).

In order to be an effective leader in today's society, leaders must learn to negotiate the dynamics of change. "The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change, but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, nonlinear change … How do you lead in a culture such as ours, which seems to specialize in pell-mell innovation?" (Fullan, 2001, p.ix). Fullan (2001) offered a solution to this difficult dilemma. His framework for leadership combined five essential components that work independently, yet mutually, together to bring about positive change.

According to Fullan (2001), today's leaders must operate with a moral purpose as their driving force. That is, they must act "with the intent of making a positive difference in the lives of their employees, customers, and society as a whole" (Fullan, 2001, p.3). Once a leader has established a moral purpose, they must be prepared to confront the complexities of the change process. Leaders cannot rely on simply having the best ideas. They must be willing to sell their plans to others and work collaboratively with various stakeholders. They must network with others within and outside of their organization to promote their pursuits and interests. In communicating with these stakeholders, they should be prepared to interact with a variety of individuals from diverse backgrounds and schools of thought. Leaders must also commit themselves to constantly generating and increasing knowledge inside and outside of their organization (Fullan, 2001). Because the change process can produce both positive and negative outcomes, these individuals must learn to live with its ambiguity. At times, change brings about frustration and resistance from stakeholders. In other instances, it sparks innovation as dissenters present diverse opinions. Consequently, leaders must be tolerant enough to deal with this duality of messiness in order to keep the innovative juices

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flowing. They must also be willing, at times, to challenge the status quo and shake things up a bit.

Regardless of the model adopted by school leaders, it is critical for high-poverty schools to have effective leadership in place in order to turn themselves around. Futernick (2007) strongly supported the development strong leaders for reform.

A Well-rounded Curriculum

While leadership provides a critical component in transforming high-poverty schools, Futernick (2007) contended that a well-rounded curriculum is also needed. In today's test-crazed world, however, critics argue that school curriculum has been narrowed to only those subjects that are assessed through standardized measures. In many states, that means students receive a huge dose of reading and math instruction, with little to no time dedicated to studying other subjects, such as science, social studies, and the arts. Life in the twenty-first century, however, requires much more than the rudimentary three R's of reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. "Since an estimated 85 percent of current jobs and almost 90 percent of the fastest-growing and best-paying jobs now require some postsecondary education, a high school diploma and the skills to succeed in college and the workplace are essential" (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007, p.1).

A well-rounded curriculum is essential for successful workers in the new millennium. This is not the norm for most impoverished students:

> The typical curriculum for the urban poor treats students as passive, empty vessels to be "filled up" with knowledge … many educators who work with the urban poor believe that such learning will produce equity, with students more literate and better able to advance to college and to compete for jobs (Lee, 2003, p.449-450).

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The deficit view of learning fails to achieve this equitable conclusion, however. Students'

prior knowledge is not respected and little effort is made to connect the curriculum to their

culture (Kozol, 2005). Feeling unattached to school, these youngsters mentally "check out"

and become disengaged with their education.

Professional organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics,

have developed standards which support student-centered pedagogy. With a focus on

students' talents, skills, and interests, teachers can more effectively help their pupils succeed.

According to Lee (2003):

> When students engage in challenging and authentic learning activities in which
> purposeful intellectual work is connected to the real world of problem solving and
> creative projects and in which a critically supportive audience responds to work in
> progress, students' motivation and commitment to meet high expectations increase
> dramatically … It is only when students care about their own work that they begin to
> care about meeting standards (p.453).

Unfortunately, impoverished schools, particularly in inner city areas, still fail to implement

the student-centered model (Lee, 2003). Instead, Haberman (1991) calls these schools'

practices the "pedagogy of poverty," wherein schoolwork "consists primarily of control

techniques that include giving directions, making assignments, and monitoring seatwork"

(Lee, 2003, p.450). Proponents of this approach contend:

> [I]f students do not know how to read, they cannot possibly learn about science and social
> studies. Those who are far behind academically, the argument goes, cannot afford to take
> time for non-essential subjects. How can they be expected to gain an understanding of the
> world or to think critically if they cannot read, write, and compute (Futernick, 2007,
> p.28)?

Yet, while more assistance may be necessary to ensure success with the rudimentary

elements, lack of exposure to a rich curriculum may, in fact, hinder ultimate achievement.

Standardized tests, particularly in reading, draw upon essays, articles, and stories on diverse

subject matter. Students in schools that emphasize "the basics" may be able to pronounce the

words on the page; however, their comprehension skills may be lagging. Balanced exposure to

both phonics and critical thinking is the better alternative:

> Students in low-performing schools do not need more exposure to highly-scripted,
> teacher-proof reading programs; they need well-prepared teachers who know how to teach
> reading and who will present a balanced and stimulating curriculum--the same things most
> students in wealthier schools get (Futernick, 2007, p.29).

Indeed, developing a well-rounded curriculum is yet another element of Futernick's (2007)

Tipping Point plan for transforming high-poverty schools that cannot be ignored.

External Support

Principals and teachers share extremely long "to do" lists each day; therefore, Futernick

(2007) recommended finding sources of external support to facilitate the school reform

process. Between monitoring students, participating in professional development, and

communicating with parents, staff at low-income, low-performing schools must also navigate

the challenges of implementing reform initiatives. The constant barrage of competing

priorities can make reflecting on the progress and pitfalls of reform nearly impossible.

Steeped in the day-to-day work, teachers and administrators may need others outside of the

organization to serve as a sounding board and motivator.

"Schools need an external change agent to help them through the traumas of change …

just as for individuals, the help of a change agent eases organizational change and, like rebar

in concrete, keeps the process from cracking and crumbling" (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.).

Individuals providing external support bring several positive elements to the reform process.

For starters, they serve as advocates for the future, counteracting the present demands of

teaching and schooling:

> [I]t is hard to refer constantly or sometimes even at all to the school's reform vision
> and values, and even harder to devote time on a sustained basis to planned reform
> initiatives … external partners can prompt meetings on key reform initiatives and

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otherwise keep the reform process alive in people's minds and actions (Futernick, 2007, p.30).

Maintaining a consistent focus and eye toward the end result is critical for ultimate success.

External supporters also offer an insider-outsider perspective. With clear knowledge about the school, these individuals can have a better understanding than most about the complexities internal to the school. At the same time, they still reside outside of the daily grind, providing a more objective viewpoint. This insider-outsider perspective is particularly important for the reform process:

> Because schools must be dynamic organizations, identifying and adapting to changing circumstances and improved teaching methods and curriculum, they need someone who stands outside and looks at their culture and effectiveness with a cold eye and a warm heart, who would not be tempted to let difficult circumstances limit what the school believes it can achieve, who will not allow the school ever again to be a static organization, who cannot be co-opted by either the district or the school (Donahoe, 1993, n.p.).

As "mirror and thought partner," the external reform agent allows busy school leaders to think, process, and reflect (Futernick, 2007). In Clover Park School District outside Tacoma, Washington, members of the district office team served as these critical friends for principals and teachers undergoing massive efforts of school reform. During a year-long self-study by the targeted schools, district officials made frequent visits, attended faculty meetings, facilitated group discussions, and interpreted data. "In a real sense, the district-level staff became staff to the schools, which marked a real shift in the critical relationship between building and district, and a truly collaborative district/building relationship developed" (Davis, Sagmiller & Hagans, 2001, n.p.).

External support may also add skills and perspectives that are new to a school's faculty during the reform process:

Whatever the organizational development agenda of a particular 'tipping point' school, it is much more likely to establish effective new ways of working—different from those that its staff members have experienced in the past—if it has an external partner with expertise in building the kind of organization that the school aspires to become (Futernick, 2007, p.31).

For example, these partners may be able to assist the teachers and administrators in collecting and analyzing data, organizing and running efficient school operations, or designing and implementing continuous improvement strategies. All of these skills help to sustain forward movement in reform efforts. In Clover Park School District, as previously mentioned, members of the central office staff provided much needed assistance to principals and teachers at selected reform sites. For example, "district staff began to meet weekly with the principals of the schoolwide eligible schools to assist them with the process of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of their schools" (Davis, Sagmiller & Hagans, 2001, n.p.). At these weekly meetings, they taught the school-based administrators about the complexities of facilitating change, consensus-building strategies, and other critical communications skills.

As the research demonstrates, external support offers tremendous benefits to schools attempting to transform their cultures for success. Futernick (2007) acknowledged this when he added this eighth element to the list of critical components for his Tipping Point framework for reform.

Parent/Community Involvement

Effective schools use their internal collaborative strength to seek out relationships with the community. They see parents more as part of the solution than as part of the problem. They pursue programs and activities that are based on two-way capacity building in order to mobilize the resources of both the community and the school in the service of learning (Fullan, 2000, n.p.).

Futernick (2007) recognized the challenges that teachers in many impoverished neighborhoods face in building effective bridges between the school, home, and community.

In some cases, engaging family members can be difficult because the parents may still recall their own struggles in education. For instance, they may have encountered learning disabilities or behavior problems, causing school to be viewed as a necessary evil rather than a joyful place. Teachers may have been seen as enemies, rather than advocates. Consequently, school staff must create warm, welcoming environments that encourage parents to visit and take active roles in their children's education without fear of criticism or ridicule.

In other situations, parents may want to participate with their children in school but be strapped for time as they juggle multiple jobs to support their families. Parents in low-income areas are typically paid hourly wages; therefore, if they miss work, they do not earn money. Thus, teachers and administrators must get creative when scheduling parent conferences and other important meetings (Epstein, 1995). Early morning or late evening times should be made available to accommodate parents' schedules. Babysitting services and free meals can provide added incentives for attendance.

The work required of today's schools cannot be accomplished in isolation. While teachers and administrators may be extremely dedicated to helping their students, the children's needs may necessitate additional support from outside agencies. Social workers may be required to ensure a safe, orderly home life. Community volunteers may be needed to provide one-on-one or small group tutoring. Medical and dental attention may be called for to meet the children's physical needs. District central offices may assist in the oversight of new programs. State agencies may offer professional development. Together, these sources of external support prove critical to the success of school reform (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004).

Creating inclusive school cultures is not an overnight venture. A great deal of time and effort must be dedicated to this component. Futernick (2007) explained:

> Developing support from parents and the community does not come easily or without a concerted effort from the school. When parents and members of the community learn that their dysfunctional school is about to undergo significant reform, some will undoubtedly react with skepticism or resistance, especially if they have seen reforms come and go without making a lasting difference (p.33).

Teachers and administrators must consistently reach out to their constituents to build their trust and confidence. This may take months--even years--to establish but will be well worth the effort in the end.

"The model of school, family, and community partnerships locates the student at the center" (Epstein, 1995). Regardless of how much teachers and administrators commit themselves, schools cannot create successful students on their own. Even with extra support and guidance from families and community members, children's success is still not guaranteed. "Students are the main actors in their education, development, and success in school…. Partnership activities may be designed to engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own successes" (Epstein, 1995, p.702). Thus, improving family/community involvement cannot be ignored in high-poverty schools, as Futernick (2007) explained in his Tipping Point model for school reform.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

It is clear that in order to effectively turn around high-poverty schools, a comprehensive approach to reform is necessary. Piecemeal strategies may provide temporary relief; however, full-scale sustainable reform requires tactics for improving the overall school environment. To help support this argument, the researcher began this chapter by painting a vivid picture of the myriad challenges facing high-poverty schools in today's high-stakes

world, such as inadequate school facilities, decrepit community conditions, substandard teaching quality, and low student achievement. An historical overview of school reform was then presented, including an introduction to the federal government's comprehensive school reform program, to help situate the reader in the past and present perspectives towards transforming schools. A detailed outline of Futernick's (2007) nine components in the Tipping Point strategy followed to provide insights into the theoretical framework for this study. In the next chapter, methods for conducting this mixed-methods research design have been delineated.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Across America, many schools with large concentrations of high-poverty students struggle to reach pre-determined measures of success, as defined by the high-stakes accountability model of No Child Left Behind (Doherty & Abernathy, 1998). Futernick (2007) argued that these "failing" schools require a comprehensive turnaround plan that encompasses all elements of the school environment. In this mixed-methods study, the researcher applied Futernick's (2007) framework to extant qualitative and quantitative data sets from five reconstituted schools in a large southern school district.

Assumptions and Rationale for Mixed-Methods Design

"Paradigms are frameworks that function as maps or guides for scientific communities" (Usher, 1996, p.15). Thus, selecting the appropriate research paradigm helps to delineate the primary function and purpose of the research proposal. Because the researcher desired a rich, thick examination of the practices utilized by the schools to transform their cultures for school improvement, a mixed-methods design was employed.

Mixed-methods research can be defined as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.17). The origin of mixed-methods design dates back to studies of psychological traits conducted by

Campbell and Fiske in 1959 (Creswell, 2003). In publicizing their results, these trailblazers encouraged their colleagues to combine multiple methods, such as qualitative observations and quantitative surveys, to gain a richer, more complex set of results. As more and more researchers attempted this novel strategy, they soon realized the benefits of mixed-methods design. "Recognizing that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods" (Creswell, 2003, p.15).

Combining methodologies to study the same subject became known as triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Taken from navigation and military strategy, the geometric principles of triangulation helped social science researchers to understand how they could "improve the accuracy of their judgments by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon" (Jick, 1979, p.602). When evidence from multiple research strategies converge and generate similar results, researchers can create more compelling conclusions than could be produced from any single method (Jick, 1979; Yin, 2006). In addition to greater confidence in results, triangulation offers enriched explanations of the problem through deviant data points and synthesis of competing theories. These benefits of triangulating data led researchers to start touting the promise and potential of mixed-methods design, calling it the "research paradigm whose time has come" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.14).

Because the researcher in this study desired rich results, a "between (or across) methods" mixed-methods design was utilized (Denzin, 1978). Extant data from three distinct methods (i.e. semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys) were examined fully to better understand the practices taken by high-poverty schools to improve instruction and ultimately, to increase student achievement (a fourth data set). By studying these diverse data through

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the theoretical lens of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework, the researcher hoped to gain critical information about how schools can transform their cultures from low-performing to high-performing environments.

A mixed-methods design was most appropriate for this investigation since, as Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) explained, multiple purposes could be served. According to these researchers, "in a single [mixed-methods] study practical questions can be addressed, different perspectives can be examined, and if well documented, practitioners can obtain some sense of what might be useful in their local situations" (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006, p.48-49). The end goal--a "more complete, holistic, and contextual portrayal of the unit(s) under study" (Jick, 1979, p.603)--can then be obtained by combining the data from qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups with quantitative survey results.

<center>The Role of the Researcher</center>

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is "situationally determined, depending on the context, the identities of others, and your own personality and values" (Glesne, 1999, p.41). Because this mixed-methods study involved qualitative techniques, the investigator "enters into the lives of the participants" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.79); therefore, she had to be mindful of her past experiences and proactively divulge any circumstances which could have created subjective interpretation of the data gathered. "With these concerns in mind, inquirers [must] explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal interests about their research topic and process" (Creswell, 2003, p.184).

In this mixed-methods study, the investigator had to "unself" herself on several levels in order to effectively conduct the research (Glesne, 1999). For starters, in the fall of 2005 when the qualitative data were collected, the researcher worked at the educational research and

policy non-profit, which was hired to conduct an evaluation of the large southern school district's turnaround plan. As an employee at the non-profit, the researcher was asked to participate in the site visit and conduct the semi-structured interviews with the administrators at the five reconstituted schools (see Appendix B: Principal Interview Questions). Assistance from the researcher was provided to a senior research associate, who maintained primary responsibility for developing the interview protocols, drafting the consent letters, and coordinating the focus groups for teachers (see Appendix C: Teacher Focus Group Questions). At the site visit, the researcher had no interaction with the 27 teachers who participated in the focus groups. Data from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were transcribed by a policy assistant and coded by schools to protect the anonymity of the teachers and administrators, before they were given back to the researcher for use as an extant data set.

The survey data used in this study were collected in the winter of 2005 through another project at the non-profit (see Appendix D: Online Survey Questions). The researcher was aware that the survey was being implemented in the same district as the five targeted schools; however, she played a minimal role in survey development or implementation. Data were aggregated at the school level and coded using the same system as the qualitative interviews and focus groups in order to allow for comparison in this study.

Working at the same organization in which the data were gathered was not the only obstacle that the researcher had to surmount to fully "unself" herself for this study. According to Dillard (1995), "our interests originate as much out of our own personal biographical situations and previous and current life circumstances as out of a sense of what we are working to bring into being" (p.543). Thus, the researcher's decision to study high-

poverty schools was a natural extension of her past experiences in high-needs schools. As a student, the researcher attended elementary and high schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Although she came from a middle-class home herself, most of her friends lived in the surrounding impoverished neighborhoods so she became quite intimate with the culture of poverty. Later, as an elementary teacher and administrator, the researcher worked in similar communities. With a majority of students receiving free or reduced lunches, these schools suffered from analogous challenges as the ones profiled in this existing data set.

Having prior experiences as a student, teacher, and administrator in high-poverty schools, the researcher could relate fairly easily to the subjects involved. As previously mentioned, these past experiences highly influenced the researcher's decision to study the turnaround schools. As a result, a higher level of self-consciousness, which attended to the researcher's behavior and its consequences, had to be developed to ensure that these past experiences and present interests did not interfere with data analysis (Glesne, 1999).

Data Collection Procedures

Research Design

Research design can be described as "an action plan for getting from here to there" (Yin, 1994, p.19). Simply put, it "deals with answering who, what, when, where, how, and why questions" (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002, p.31). Because the researcher valued the richness of qualitative data along with the breadth and consistency of quantitative data, a mixed-methods design was selected for this study. Qualitative and quantitative techniques were viewed as "complementary rather than as rival camps" (Jick, 1979, p.602). Thus, this mixed-methods study allowed the strengths of each technique to be illuminated and the inherent weaknesses minimized.

According to Creswell (2003), a mixed-methods approach can be described as:

> … [O]ne which the researcher tends to base knowledge claims on pragmatic grounds (e.g., consequence-oriented, problem-centered, and pluralistic). It employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems. The data collection also involves gathering both numeric information (e.g., on instruments) as well as text information (e.g., on interviews) so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information (p.18, 20).

In this specific mixed-methods study, the strategies of qualitative interviews (i.e. semi-structured interviews and focus groups) and quantitative data analysis of population surveys were utilized to meet the goals of "goodness" criteria that Zelditch (1962) outlined. Informational adequacy, or completeness of data, was facilitated by research at multiple sites involving multiple stakeholder groups. Efficiency of time and effort was achieved by analyzing only the portions of extant data that were most pertinent to the research questions of this study.

Qualitative data played a primary role in the design, contrary to what many critics of mixed-methods believe. "The assumption that qualitative research in mixed methods inquiry is always given secondary or auxiliary status" is false (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark & Green, 2006, p.2). In this study, the data from qualitative interviews did not simply serve to "supplement, validate, explain, illuminate, or reinterpret quantitative data gathered from the same setting" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). Instead, it "made context explicit in explanations" of the quantitative results to paint a fuller, more holistic picture (Creswell, Shope, Plano Clark, & Green, 2006, p.2). Without qualitative data, this study would lack the critical elements to understanding how high-poverty schools transform into high-functioning communities for all students.

Numerous strategies exist for designing mixed-methods research studies. Of the six

major models that Creswell (2003) delineated, the concurrent nesting strategy is most similar

to the design for this particular study. While the data sets were not collected at the same time,

one method (i.e. qualitative) predominated over the other, nested method (i.e. quantitative).

As Creswell (2003) explained, "the embedded method addresses a different *question* than the

dominant method … [and] the data collected from the two methods are mixed during the

analysis phase of the project" (p.218). In this study, the quantitative survey indeed examined

a different set of questions (i.e. inquiries about recruitment incentives and teacher working

conditions), than the qualitative interviews and focus groups. However, the portion of the

survey dedicated to teacher working conditions offered insights into educators' perceptions

about various elements of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework, which could not be

ascertained directly from the face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Using the concurrent

nesting strategy was advantageous because the "researcher can gain broader perspectives as a

result of using the different methods as opposed to using the predominant method alone"

(Creswell, 2003, p.218).

<div align="center">*Research Questions*</div>

A single study no doubt starts with a single set of research questions. A frequent practice in allegedly carrying out mixed methods research is to split the original set of questions, so that different methods address different questions. In education evaluations, a typical split is for qualitative methods to address "process" questions and for quantitative methods to address "outcome" questions (Yin, 2006, p.42-43).

In this mixed-methods study, the process and outcome questions were addressed

concomitantly by qualitative and quantitative methods, rather than separately as Yin (2006)

described. The following two major research questions were answered by examining the

extant data sets of semi-structured interview and focus group transcripts and population

survey results, along with the archived student achievement data: (1) To what extent did the schools utilize Futernick's Tipping Point framework components? (2) Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point framework components more successful in improving student achievement on standardized tests? Four subquestions were also addressed: (1a) Which components were common across all schools? (1b) Which components were only present in schools with high utilization? (2a) Which components were common only across schools with above average improvement? (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack?

The elements of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point model were used as a framework to examine the qualitative and quantitative data sets. Questions from the semi-structured interviews with administrators, from the focus groups with teachers, and from the population survey were assigned to Futernick's (2007) nine key components of reform: teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement [see Appendix E: Alignment of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point Framework with Extant Data]. Responses to the respective questions, whether derived through qualitative or quantitative techniques, helped to determine the schools' level of utilization of the Tipping Point framework.

Sites and Sample

Sites

Data for this study were collected from five high-poverty, low-performing schools in a large school district in the southern region of the United States (see Appendix A: School Profiles). In the fall of 2004, the district launched a bold new effort to transform these

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underachieving schools. These two elementary and three middle schools, which suffered from the traditional challenges of high teacher turnover, inadequate funding, and under-qualified and ineffective faculty, ranked much lower than their more advantaged peers on various student achievement assessments, including the Stanford Achievement Test (the same test used in this study to determine the schools' level of improvement). To turn these high-poverty, low-performing schools around, the district developed and implemented a comprehensive turnaround plan.

At the five targeted sites, turnaround strategies of school reconstitution, recruitment and performance incentives, intensive professional development, and increased resources and support were employed to attract high-quality teachers committed to improving their professional practice and their students' learning through innovative approaches. For starters, school reconstitution required all faculty and staff members at the schools (including the principals) to re-apply in order to keep their present positions. Only two principals were selected by district administrators to retain their helms, while one transferred from another school and two more came from other systems in the state to transform the low-performing schools. These five school leaders varied in their perspectives towards reconstitution. Some selected a majority of the current teachers and support staff to remain in their positions; others kept only a handful. Regardless of their previous work history at the schools, all turnaround faculty members were asked to commit to five years of continued service to reduce the risk of turnover and to create a stable environment.

Recruitment and performance incentives were offered to teachers and administrators at the turnaround schools to attract and retain high-quality professionals. The monetary supplements were intended to not only recognize the challenges of working in hard-to-staff

schools but also reward teachers and school leaders for their students' academic progress. Teachers could receive up to $8,000 in incentives (i.e., a $4,000 signing bonus and up to $4,000 for student performance on standardized tests), while principals and their assistant administrators could earn up to a total of $12,000 and $9,000 respectively.

Intensive professional development was provided to enhance the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the turnaround schools. In addition to site-based in-services throughout the year, all faculty members attended an intensive summer program that focused on understanding the students' background, creating a positive school climate and culture, implementing differentiated and standards-based instruction, and utilizing data-driven decision-making.

Schools also received a variety of increased resources and support through the turnaround plan. For example, each school hired an achievement specialist and an academic coach to provide support to classroom teachers in content, student motivation, and classroom management. Social workers, counselors, and school nurses were hired to enhance mental health support for students, and efforts were made to reduce class size. Additionally, plans were initiated for building a data warehouse to enhance accessibility and use of data.

The targeted schools of the turnaround plan were all nested within the larger quantitative survey population. As Yin (2006) described, "fieldwork samples may be nested within survey samples, as in the by now routine situation where case studies are conducted on a small set of schools that are part of a much larger survey sample of schools" (p.44). In the case of this research initiative, however, the qualitative data were all collected months before leaders of the non-profit organization were approached by a regional laboratory to conduct a population survey of licensed educators in one southern state about the incentives necessary

to recruit and retain teachers to high-needs schools. Perceptual questions about teacher working conditions were also contained within the study. Since the educational lab allowed the non-profit to help select the three school systems to be investigated, the non-profit's leaders successfully advocated for including the same district in which the turnaround schools were located. Unfortunately, one of the five reconstituted schools studied chose not to participate in the online survey; therefore, no quantitative data were available for this site.

Sample

"The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990, p.169). Since the original intent of collecting the qualitative data was to gather perceptions of the district's turnaround plan, purposeful sampling dictated that various members of the school communities needed to be studied. For this qualitative data collection, both within-case and multiple-case strategies were employed. Within-case sampling required administrators and teachers to be interviewed to gain a full picture of stakeholder perspectives. In addition, multiple-case sampling necessitated that all five sites be visited to "strengthen the precision, the validity, and the stability of the findings" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.29). Applying both strategies of purposeful sampling created a robust data set of information from which to draw the research team's findings.

With the two groups at the five sites identified, the non-profit researchers had to determine how the information would be gathered from them. As Miles and Huberman (1994) explained, "questions of practicality also face us. There is a finite amount of time, with variable access to different actors and events, and an abundance of logistical problems"

(p.31). Indeed, practicality was an issue for the original research team. With only three days to complete site visits at five schools, a well-organized model for sampling had to be developed. To achieve Zelditch's (1962) "goodness" criterion of efficiency, the researchers decided to conduct one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with administrators, while focus groups were organized to reach a broader range of teachers. A minimum of one administrator and three teachers were interviewed at each of the five schools. All interviews lasted approximately one hour. Participating subjects were questioned regarding their perspectives on the design and implementation of the turnaround plan at their school.

The quantitative data were originally collected using an online survey of all licensed educators in three diverse school districts in the same southern state. Since the researchers had access to all names and email addresses in the overall survey population, a single-stage sampling design was utilized, rather than a multistage, clustering procedure (Creswell, 2003). An adequate portion of teachers (i.e. more than 40 percent) at four of the study sites completed the survey. One school chose not to participate in the survey.

Research Procedures

Semi-structured Interviews

> Researchers ask questions in the context of purposes generally known fully only to themselves. Respondents, the possessors of information, answer questions in the context of dispositions (motives, values, concerns, needs) that researchers need to unravel in order to make sense out of the words that their questions generate. The questions, typically created by the researchers, may be fully established before interviewing begins and remain unchanged throughout the interview. Questions may emerge in the course of interviewing and may be added to or replace the preestablished ones (Glesne, 1999, p.68).

Glesne's (1999) depiction of inquiry provides quite an illustrative introduction to the art and science of interviewing. When researchers interview others, they aim to gather behavior, feelings, or interpretations of the world that cannot be observed simply by watching others

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(Merriam, 1988). These qualitative data can then serve as a "source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). "The opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry" (Glesne, 1999, p. 69).

Semi-structured interviewing combines the formalized, orderly framework of structured interviewing with the naturalistic quality of ethnographic research. An interview schedule (or protocol) of questions may be developed by the researcher in advance of the interview; however, follow-up probes for clarification and deeper understanding may also be interjected (Glesne, 1999). "The participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.108). Thus, in semi-structured interviews, the researcher does not miss out on important opportunities to follow a respondent's train of thought; instead, he or she seizes the moment to dig deeper and gain a fuller understanding of the subject in study. Careful consideration is taken, however, to move the questioning back to the interview schedule to ensure consistency across case sites.

For this particular study, semi-structured interviews with the administrators at the targeted schools offered multiple benefits (see Appendix B: Principal Interview Questions). For starters, narrative content derived from the interviews helped to paint a more detailed picture of the school contexts in which the turnaround plan was implemented. The district administrators and community organizers desired a rich, robust understanding that quantitative data alone could not provide. "Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a

reader–another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner–than pages of summarized numbers"
(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). The semi-structured interviews also allowed for deeper
personal interactions with the administrators to be fostered by the research team member, as
she met with them in their natural settings (i.e. their schools), thus creating a more relaxed
interview environment for them to speak openly and honestly.

Because the researchers were solely interested in collecting data regarding the educators'
perspectives about the design and implementation of the turnaround plan, a topical
interviewing approach was employed. "Topical interviewing … focuses more on a program,
issue, or process than on people's lives" (Glesne, 1999, p.69). Consequently, more time was
spent learning about the administrators' perspectives on the plan, rather than their life
histories. Basic demographic information was collected in a minimal amount (e.g., number of
years in education, number of years at that particular site, etc.).

To facilitate the interview process, a tape recorder was used with participants'
permission. According to Glesne (1999), recording "provides a nearly complete record of
what has been said and permits easy attention to the course of the interview" (p.78). The
researcher wrote minimal field notes during the interviews to ensure that the communication
flowed. Full transcripts of the recordings were completed following the site visits by a policy
assistant at the non-profit.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviewing was the second method of data collection utilized for this
study (see Appendix C: Teacher Focus Group Questions). Just as with semi-structured
interviews, this qualitative technique can help researchers to "preserve chronological flow,
see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations"

(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.1). In addition, this distinctive interviewing approach can "play an especially prominent role by eliciting data and suggesting conclusions to which other methods would be blind. Elements of the context are illuminated" (Jick, 1979, p.603).

Although they both represent qualitative data collection strategies, focus groups differ slightly from semi-structured interviews. "When more than one person participates (e.g., focus group interviews), the interview process gathers a wide variety of information across a larger number of subjects than if there were fewer participants--the familiar trade-off between breadth and depth" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.110). As significant amounts of data are obtained quickly from a myriad of participants, the overall data set becomes enriched. The data gained through focus groups may be different, however, than what would have been garnered via individual interviews since participants in focus groups may sometimes feed off the social nature of the group and alter their responses after hearing others' opinions and perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In this study, focus groups were utilized as an efficient strategy to collect data from a wide spectrum of teachers at the five turnaround schools. With limited time and staff available, this technique offered a valuable alternative to one-on-one conversations. "The interviewer create[d] a supportive environment, asking focused questions, to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and points of view" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.114). The use of a tape recorder, with the permission of the participants, helped to capture the insightful comments and allow conversation to flow more naturally as the researchers did not need to focus on writing (Glesne, 1999). The recorded focus group conversations were then also transcribed by the non-profit's policy assistant at the completion of the site visits.

Surveys

According to Creswell (2003), "a quantitative approach [to research] is one in which the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge … , employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data" (p.18). More specifically, a survey design "provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2003, p.153). Through analyzing items on a survey, researchers can make "inferences about a large group of people from data drawn on a relatively small number of individuals from that group" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.130).

While qualitative research may be characterized as in-depth, time-intensive work, quantitative surveys are often viewed as an efficient means to compile massive quantities of information. The "economy of the design and rapid turnaround in data collection" make this research strategy useful for studies of large-scale (Creswell, 2003, p.154). In addition to convenience, surveys also offer the benefit of accuracy in measurement, which is "enhanced by quantification, replicability, and control over observer effects" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.130). Ease of administration, management, and analysis should also be noted as advantages.

Yet, surveys have "little value for examining complex social relationships or intricate patterns of interaction" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.131). For example, many surveys simply ask respondents to select one answer from among multiple choices, with no option to explain why or how the decision was made. Researchers can then only make assumptions about the factors that contributed to the participants' judgments.

Because the researcher in this study sought a robust data set, quantitative survey data

from teachers at the turnaround schools supplemented the qualitative interview data collected

at all sites (see Appendix D: Online Survey Questions). The survey, which was distributed

online through an email link, contained working conditions questions in four distinct

domains: (1) organization and management; (2) facilities and resources; (3) leadership; and

(4) professional development. Questions from these domains overlapped with elements found

in Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework for school reform, except for the components

of teams, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement.

Responses from teachers at four of the five turnaround schools (one school chose not to

participate) were analyzed through the lens of the related Tipping Point components.

Document Archival Review

The use of archival documents offers an unobtrusive means to collect data without

disrupting sites (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Extensive document review was required for

this study in order to determine the schools' level of improvement on standardized tests. The

state board of education's report cards provided the requisite data, including scores for the

Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10) from the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years. In

addition, the report cards offered background information for the targeted sites, which has

been included in the school profiles found in Appendix A.

Data Analysis Procedures

> Data analysis in mixed methods relates to the type of research strategy chosen for the
> procedures … analysis occurs both *within* the quantitative (descriptive and inferential
> numeric analysis) approach and the qualitative (description and thematic text or image
> analysis) approach, and often *between* the two approaches (Creswell, 2003, p.220).

"Transforming data into research results is called analysis," (LeCompte, 2000, p.146). In

this study, data analysis occurred within and between the qualitative and quantitative

approaches, as Creswell (2003) elucidated. The purpose of analyzing the data sets separately and collectively was to examine the multiple levels of information collected through this concurrent nested model in order to ascertain a full understanding of the schools' implementation of the turnaround plan and their relationship to Futernick's (2007) reform model [see Appendix E: Alignment of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point Framework with Extant Data]. As these processes unfolded, the researcher sought to answer the two overarching research questions for this study: (1) To what extent did the schools utilize Futernick's Tipping Point framework components? (2) Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point framework components more successful in improving student achievement on standardized tests? Four subquestions were also addressed: (1a) Which components were common across all schools? (1b) Which components were only present in schools with high utilization? (2a) Which components were common only across schools with above average improvement? (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack?

Qualitative Data

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to volumes of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For qualitative research, this process can be particularly time-consuming as pages upon pages of text are compiled through interviews and focus groups. "Confronted with a mountain of impressions, documents, transcribed interviews, and field notes, the qualitative researchers faces the difficult task of making sense of what has been learned" (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002, p.31). In this study, the six common phases of analytic procedures were followed to facilitate the researcher's journey through the qualitative data. These six phases include: "(a) organizing the data; (b)

generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) coding the data; (d) testing the emergent understandings; (e) searching for alternative explanations; and (f) writing the report" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.152).

To organize the data, information from the written transcripts of the interviews and focus groups was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, with each school having its own worksheet. The researcher muddled through the "code mines" (Glesne, 1999) by "divid[ing] text into segments or chunks, attach[ing] codes to the chunks, and find[ing] and display[ing] all instances of coded chunks (or combinations of coded chunks)" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12). The tough task of generating coding schemas for important concepts and terms was simplified, as the nine categories were already identified [i.e. the key components of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework]. The related literature was reviewed, however, in order to create the building blocks for coding system development, which correlated to these categories (Glesne, 1999).

The process of data reduction was interwoven into data analysis. "Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes of transcriptions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). Given the large volume of interview information, this task required a great deal of effort and patience, as the researcher determined "which data chunks to code and which to pull out, which patterns best summarize a number of chunks, which evolving story to tell" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.11). Through data reduction, emerging understandings were tested and alternative explanations sought out by the researcher. These phases of analysis required the data to be sifted "by repeated readings through field notes, interviews, and text to identify items relevant to the research questions. Concentrating these items in data involves

systematic processes of looking for frequency, omission, and declaration" (LeCompte, 2000, p.148). In essence, finding out how often participants mentioned certain topics or whether they avoided them altogether was critical in the data analysis, as was discerning their perceived statements of affirmation and absence of the relevant framework components.

After careful analysis and reflection upon Futernick's (2007) tenets of reform, levels of utilization were demarcated. A high bar was set for utilization strength, since Futernick (2007) argued that successful reform required all nine framework components. Consequently, schools with eight or nine elements were considered "high utilization," schools with six or seven were deemed "moderate utilization," and schools with five or less framework components were labeled as "low utilization."

The final phase of analysis included writing the dissertation chapter on research results. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) explain, the writing process plays an integral role in the data analysis framework:

> Writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic processes. In fact, it is central to that process, for in the choice of particular words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data, the researcher is engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape and form--meaning--to massive amounts of raw data (p.157-158).

A "realist tale" with a clear separation between the researcher and the researched was developed for the dissertation (Van Maanen, 1988). While some view this genre as boring and drab, others see it as the "tradition [that] set the standards and criteria for credibility, quality, and respectability in qualitative work" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.158). The practices of turnaround schools were linked to the theory of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point strategy to analyze its effectiveness in school reform.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data analysis occurred simultaneously with the qualitative data analysis. First, items on the population survey were coded using the same characteristics as the interviews and focus groups to determine their relationship to the nine components of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point model [see Appendix E: Alignment of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point Framework with Extant Data]. Once the pertinent survey data were identified by code mapping (Glesne, 1999), means for each relevant question were calculated for each school using descriptive statistics (Howell, 2002). The average scores for each question were then rank ordered by educational level (i.e. elementary, middle, high) to determine how a school was evaluated in comparison to its peers in the district. This information helped the researcher to determine how well the school utilized Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point strategies. In doing so, the goal was to draw conclusions about the reform model's effectiveness in transforming high-poverty schools to high-functioning cultures. That is, "we want to *infer* something about the characteristics of the population (parameters) from what we know about the characteristics of the sample (statistics)" (Howell, 2002, p.5).

Additional quantitative data analysis was required in order to determine the schools' level of improvement on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10). To begin, the progress for each grade level from 2003-04 to 2004-05 was calculated for both the reading and math tests. These grade level growth scores were then averaged to produce an overall mean for school improvement. The means were compared to the district average for reading and math. If schools matched the district average, they received a rating of "0," if they exceeded it, they were ranked as "+1," and if they fell short, they were identified as "-1." The two scores for reading and math were combined to determine a school's final improvement rating. Three

levels delineated student progress on the SAT-10: above average improvement (a final rating

of 1 or more), average improvement (a final rating equal to 0), and below average

improvement (a final rating of less than 0).

Methods of Verification

> The "validity" issue, at least as we use the term, is not about singular truths, and it
> certainly is not limited to quantitative measurement; rather, by validity we mean that a
> research study, its parts, the conclusions drawn, and the applications based on it can be
> of high or low quality, or somewhere in between (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006,
> p.48).

> Creating meaningful results involves validity, or whether or not research findings
> seem accurate or reasonable to the people who were studied. It also refers to whether
> or not results obtained in one study can be applied to other studies with similar or
> identical people or situations (LeCompte, 2000, p.152).

Qualitative Trustworthiness

"Too frequently, qualitative research is evaluated against the positivist criteria of validity

and reliability and found to be lacking or 'soft'" (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002, p.28).

To counteract these attacks against trustworthiness (the preferred qualitative term for

validity), several strategies were employed in this research study. For starters, the researcher

demonstrated researcher reflexivity (i.e. self-disclosed her assumptions, beliefs, and biases).

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), "it is particularly important for researchers to

acknowledge and describe their entering beliefs and biases early in the research process to

allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher

biases as the study proceeds" (p.127). Although this validity procedure was already

demonstrated in the section of this proposal entitled, "The Role of the Researcher,"

additional information was inserted as new insights were gained throughout the data analysis

process. Any unearthed experiences, values, and beliefs of the researcher, which interfered

with the research study, have been fully disclosed in the final dissertation.

Triangulation of data sources offered another strategy to ensure qualitative trustworthiness (Glesne, 1999; Creswell, 2003). "Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.126). In this study, within-case and between-case sampling techniques provided a myriad of data from two separate stakeholder groups in five different schools. These "in-depth interviews with multiple informants at each site will … allow [the researcher] to triangulate findings across sources and test issues of reliability and validity" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.60). In other words, the data from the semi-structured interviews helped to triangulate the information from the focus groups. In turn, these qualitative data were also triangulated by the secondary analysis of the quantitative survey results. Glesne (1999) said it well: "The more sources tapped for understanding, the richer the data and the more believable the findings" (p.31).

The robust, detailed nature of qualitative research provided evidence of trustworthiness as well. As Creswell (2003) suggested, "rich, thick description" of the schools' implementation of the turnaround plan and its related adherence to Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework were used "… to convey the findings. This may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (p.196). As readers gain a better understanding of the school contexts, they will be able to process the research findings much easier.

Quantitative Reliability and Validity

"There are several threats to validity that will raise potential issues about an experimenter's ability to conclude that the intervention affects an outcome" (Creswell, 2003, p.171). In this research study, the quantitative internal validity threat was subverted because

one standard survey instrument was utilized for all qualitative case sites. Inadequate procedures (e.g., changing the instrument during the experiment), therefore, did not interfere with the analysis of the data.

An external validity threat, known as population validity, could arise if readers believe that the data derived from the turnaround schools are unlikely to be generalized to a larger population of high-poverty schools (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). These targeted sites were unique in that their respective school district allocated a huge amount of financial resources and support to transform the school environments. External validity might not be achieved if readers view this uniqueness as a hindrance to greater generalization of results.

Outcome of the Study and Its Relation to Theory and Literature

Despite an expansive amount of literature on high-poverty schools and various school reform initiatives proposed to "save" them, few researchers have systematically probed administrators and teachers about the ability to completely transform entire school environments from low-achieving to high-functioning cultures. The purpose of this study was to determine whether Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework for comprehensive school reform will indeed turn schools around and create cultures of success for all students. The results may prove crucial for the high-poverty schools across the nation that so desperately want to increase student learning.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of analysis is to define, structure, and order data in a research study

(LeCompte, 2000). Interpretation requires an eye for detail, focus, and openness to subtlety

(Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This becomes particularly important for the mixed methods

researcher who must not only delve into quantitative statistics, but also dig out of the mounds

of amassed qualitative data. Van Maanen (1988) described this process as telling the "tales of

the field" by translating what has been learned into a body of textual information that

communicates understandings to the reader.

Chapter Four strives to tell the "tale" of turnaround schools by answering the research

questions posed at the onset of this mixed methods study. There were two main questions for

investigation: (1) To what extent did the schools utilize Futernick's Tipping Point framework

components? (2) Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point

framework components more successful in improving student achievement on standardized

tests? The first question, which focused on the utilization of Futernick's framework,

contained two subquestions: (1a) Which components were common across all schools? (1b)

Which components were only present in schools with high utilization? The second question,

which addressed the influence of the framework components on improvement in student

achievement, included two additional subquestions: (2a) Which components were common

only across schools with above average improvement? (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack? Through the voices of the principal and teacher interviewees as well as the survey responses, Chapter Four attempts to illustrate the turnaround schools' efforts for reform and their subsequent student achievement results.

Utilization of the Framework Components

Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework provided a nine-point plan for school reform in low-performing, high-poverty schools. Data from the five schools under study were examined closely to answer the following question about utilization: (1) To what extent did the schools utilize Futernick's Tipping Point framework components? Two subquestions were also addressed: (1a) Which components were common across all schools? (1b) Which components were only present in schools with high utilization?

Because Futernick (2007) contended that successful reform required all nine components of reform, a high bar was set for delineations of utilization strength. Schools with eight or nine elements were considered "high utilization," while schools with six or seven were deemed "moderate utilization." Schools with five or less framework components were labeled as "low utilization."

After careful analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data that was compiled for this study, it was found that School B utilized nine out of nine components for reform (high utilization), while Schools A and C both exemplified six (moderate utilization). School D ranked next with five elements (low utilization) and School E came in last with evidence of just four elements (low utilization). For a complete overview of the turnaround schools and their utilization of the reform components, see Table 1. Supplemental information about how these components were supported by the data may be found in Table 2. For example, if the

data surfaced positive affirmation of the framework component, a "+" has been noted; on the other hand, negative comments resulted in a "-." If no data were available for the element, a "/" has been used, while a "0" denotes mixed information (findings that are both positive and negative). These compiled data produced final ratings found in Table 1. Schools needed at least two "+" marks to indicate the presence of a reform component, with the only exception being cases where evidence was lacking for two of the three data sources and one "+" mark was found in the remaining area. A complete profile of the schools and their resulting evidence can be found at the end of this chapter.

Table 1

Utilization of Futernick's (2007) Framework Components

_____

	Schools				
Components	School B	School A	School C	School D	School E
Teams	x	x	x	x	x
Time	x	x	x		
Physical Environment	x	x			
Class-size Reduction	x	x	x		
Autonomy and Shared Governance	x				
Leadership	x		x	x	
A Well-rounded Curriculum	x	x	x	x	x
External Support	x			x	x
Parent/Community Involvement	x	x	x	x	x
Utilization	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low

Table 2

Evidence of Futernick's (2007) Framework Components

Schools	School B	School A	School C	School D	School E
Data	P T S	P T S	P T S	P T S	P T S

Components

	School B	School A	School C	School D	School E
Teams	+ + /	+ + /	+ + /	+ + /	+ + /
Time	+ / +	+ / +	+ + /	/ / -	/ / 0
Physical Environment	+ + +	/ + +	/ / /	/ - -	+ - -
Class-size Reduction	/ / +	/ + +	+ / /	- - -	- - -
Autonomy and Shared Governance	+ / +	- + -	/ / /	- / 0	/ - -
Leadership	+ + +	+ / -	+ + /	+ + +	- + -
A Well-rounded Curriculum	+ / /	/ + /	+ + /	+ + /	+ + /
External Support	+ / /	/ / /	/ / /	/ + /	+ + /
Parent/Community Involvement	+ + /	+ + /	+ + /	+ / /	+ / /
Utilization	High	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low

P = principal interview   + = positive evidence
T = teacher focus group interview   - = negative evidence
S = survey   / = no evidence available
                                                                        0 = mixed evidence

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Utilization Subquestions

Data analysis presented in the previous sections delineated the extent to which the

turnaround schools utilized Futernick's Tipping Point framework components in their school

reform efforts. School B, deemed a high utilization site, had evidence of nine framework

components. Schools A and C demonstrated moderate utilization with six elements each.

Schools D and E recorded five and four components respectively, qualifying as low

utilization sites. With this information in hand, two subquestions remained: (1a) Which

components were common across all schools? (1b) Which components were only present in

schools with high utilization?

Common Components

Across all five turnaround schools, there were three common elements: teams, a well-

rounded curriculum, and parent/community involvement. Given the nature of the turnaround

plan, it seems logical that these particular components would be found in all schools. The

district devised the reform plan with an underlying philosophy that educators within the

school system would unite together to ensure student success in these particular buildings.

Principals were hired with a teamwork mentality to "rally the troops" and build a collective

vision for high student achievement. In addition, a tremendous amount of resources were

pumped into these schools to ensure that students received a well-rounded curriculum.

Teachers attended extensive professional development workshops during the summer and

throughout the school year to enhance their skills as instructional leaders. District

administrators pushed the turnaround teachers to utilize differentiation strategies to meet the

needs of their unique learners. From the beginning, the community played an important role

in devising the reform plan. Parents, business leaders, and other citizens were asked to offer

their input on how to support and staff these high-needs schools. Consequently, efforts to continue their engagement flowed naturally from this inclusive starting point.

Evidence of teams was prevalent throughout the interview data from principals and teachers. Phrases, such as "we share a similar vision" and "we're in this together," could be found in reviewing the transcripts at several schools. The educators talked candidly about everyone in the building playing a part in turning the school around. "We don't just mean teachers as family," said one teacher at School B. "We mean all people--even custodians." A colleague at School D added, "As a faculty, we work together in unity." Collaborative coaching, lesson modeling, and resource sharing provided a strong foundation upon which these teams could be built. In addition, teachers came together on a regular basis at every school to design assessments, examine data, and tailor instruction in order to meet their students' needs better. "We were able to spot check other teachers and provide support for them," a teacher at School A explained.

The presence of a well-rounded curriculum surfaced in the data for all five turnaround schools. The principals were particularly pleased by their teachers' efforts to improve their instructional practice. For example, the administrator at School B applauded the effects of the district's math initiative, while the principal at School C acknowledged the "twinkle in the students' eyes" after they formed new attitudes about learning. From the teachers' perspectives, the use of hands-on manipulatives emerged as a common theme. A science teacher at School E relayed how successful her students had been on the district assessment since she started using group work and authentic lab activities. In addition, a math teacher at School D explained how she transformed her instruction from teacher-led to child-centered so that her students now discovered the formulas for themselves.

Interview data offered insights into the effective strategies utilized by all five schools to enhance parent and community involvement. Teachers at School A talked a great deal about building strong lines of communication from the start of the school year. The administrator at School D shared information about that school's efforts to go out into the neighborhoods to conduct school meetings in order to reach parents on neutral ground. School C distributed plus/delta surveys to their students' guardians to get an honest view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The larger community was engaged at Schools B and E in order to fill the void for maintenance and resource needs. These partners in education, along with the renewed parental support, have helped these schools to greatly improve their images in the community. "Their sense of self-pride has increased," remarked the principal at School D. "Everyone is proud of what these schools have become."

Components in High Utilization Schools

Data analysis revealed School B as the sole qualifier as a high utilization school, with evidence of all nine framework components present in the data collected. When examined in juxtaposition to the elements present at the four other turnaround schools, autonomy and shared governance stood out as the distinctive component at School B; no other school in the study provided sufficient information to indicate its inclusion in reform efforts. Survey data ranked this school in the top tier of all elementary schools in the district for autonomy and shared governance. In the eight questions addressing this element, no less than 82.6% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all statements. More specifically, a full 100% of teachers who completed the survey agreed that "The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems" (resulting in a second place ranking for all elementary schools in the district for this item). Similarly, 93.5% of surveyed educators

agreed that they are "recognized as an educational expert and … trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction."

Data from the administrator interview confirmed the quantitative statistics. In that in-depth conversation, the principal described her leadership philosophy in this way, "I must treat my staff as professionals…. let everyone have a say and a voice." Indeed, there was an atmosphere of autonomy and shared governance at School B, unlike any other school in the research study.

<div align="center">Framework Components and Student Achievement</div>

Futernick (2007) developed the Tipping Point framework for reform in order to improve student achievement at low-performing, high-poverty schools. He contended that the application of his robust turnaround plan would result in gains on standardized assessments. In order to test this assumption, data from the five researched schools were analyzed to address the following question: (2) Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point framework components more successful in improving student achievement on standardized tests? Two subquestions were also examined: (2a) Which components were common only across schools with above average improvement? (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack?

Student data from the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10) were utilized to determine the schools' level of improvement. To start, the growth for each grade level from 2003-04 to 2004-05 was calculated for both the reading and math tests. These grade level growth scores were then averaged to produce an overall mean for school improvement in reading and math. The means were compared to the district average for these two subject areas. Schools received a rating of "0" if they matched the district average, "+1" if they exceeded it, and "-

1" if they fell short. The two subject area scores were added together to determine a school's final rating.

Three levels demarcated student growth on the SAT-10: above average improvement (a final rating of 1 or more), average improvement (a final rating equal to 0), and below average improvement (a final rating of less than 0). After careful analysis of the SAT-10 scores for each grade level, three schools--School A, B, and C--qualified for above average improvement with final ratings of +2. School E recorded a final rating of 0 for average improvement, while School D's final rating of -1 was marked as below average improvement. Tables 3 and 4 provide a detailed numerical illustration of how these ratings were determined.

Were the schools that utilized a greater number of the Tipping Point framework components in fact more successful in improving student achievement on standardized tests? To answer the major research question for this section, the results from Table 1 were compared to the findings in Table 4. School B, with nine out of nine elements from Futernick's framework, was classified as an above average improvement school. Furthermore, Schools A and C (both with six out of nine components) also ranked as above average improvement sites. On the other hand, average improvement on the SAT-10 was demonstrated at School E, which provided evidence for only four components. School D received a below average improvement rating, while substantiating the presence of just five framework elements. See Table 5 for further details.

Based on these improvement ratings, it can be ascertained that schools in this study averaged higher rates of improvement on the SAT-10 when more framework components were included in their efforts for reform. All three schools receiving a designation as above

average improvement integrated at least six elements into their turnaround plans. Five or less

components resulted in average to below average improvement on the standardized tests.

Table 3

Improvement on Student Achievement Tests from 2003-04 to 2004-05

Grade Level	3rd	4th	5th	Mean	6th	7th	8th	Mean
				Point Growth				
District								
Reading	4	4	2	3.33	3	-1	1	1.00
Math	6	5	3	4.66	6	1	1	2.66
School A								
Reading	31	6	3	13.33 (+1)				
Math	51	15	4	23.33 (+1)				
Final				(+2)				
School B								
Reading	22	16	5	14.33 (+1)				
Math	32	28	22	27.33 (+1)				
Final				(+2)				
School C								
Reading					6	14	7	9.00 (+1)
Math					16	18	7	13.66 (+1)
Final								(+2)
School D								
Reading					0	2	-3	-0.33 (-1)
Math					9	1	-2	2.66 (0)
Final								(-1)
School E								
Reading					7	5	-3	3.00 (+1)
Math					4	9	-10	1.00 (-1)
Final								(0)

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Table 4

Point Growth on Student Achievement Tests

	Reading	Math	Overall
School A	+1	+1	+2 Above Average
School B	+1	+1	+2 Above Average
School C	+1	+1	+2 Above Average
School D	-1	0	-1 Below Average
School E	+1	-1	0 Average

Table 5

Futernick's (2007) Framework Components and Student Achievement

Components	School A	School B	School C	School E	School D
			Schools		
Teams	x	x	x	x	x
Time	x	x	x		
Physical Environment	x	x			
Class-size Reduction	x	x	x		
Autonomy and Shared Governance		x			
Leadership		x	x		x
A Well-rounded Curriculum	x	x	x	x	x
External Support		x		x	x
Parent/Community Involvement	x	x	x	x	x
Improvement	Above Average	Above Average	Above Average	Average	Below Average

Data analysis from the preceding section described the relationship between the number of Tipping Point framework components utilized at each school and the subsequent improvement in student achievement scores on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10). Further examination of these findings helped to address the following two subquestions that were raised: (2a) Which components were common only across schools with above average improvement? (2b) Which components did schools with below average improvement lack?

Components in Above Average Improvement Schools

Schools A, B, and C all received ratings of above average improvement, upon evaluation of their respective grade level scores in reading and math on the SAT-10. Comparing these schools side-by-side, it became clear that they had several components in common. As previously noted, evidence of teams, a well-rounded curriculum, and parent/community involvement were found at all five sites (for further discussion of these universal elements, see the subsection labeled *Common Components*). Schools A, B, and C were distinctive, however, in sharing two additional components. At these above average improvement schools, time and class-size reduction were evident, yet Schools D and E lacked them.

Teachers and administrators shared myriad ideas on how time was effectively utilized at the above average improvement schools. At School A, the principal pushed back when district officials condemned her for not following protocol with a common schedule. The central office administrators wanted all teachers in the building to provide reading instruction at the same time during the daily schedule. The leader at School A rejected that idea by stating, "One teacher cannot observe another if everybody is doing reading at the same time." She held her ground and eventually the district office realized how important this flexible

time for modeling lessons and coaching peers could be for teacher growth and development. A minimum 45 minutes of collaborative planning time was also built into the schedule each day for teachers at School A, with the block expanding to 75 minutes in year two of reform. School B's administrator ensured teacher collaboration time--in addition to the regularly scheduled team meetings--by allocating half-days each month for group planning. Students stayed longer with their enrichment teachers, while their regular classroom teachers collectively developed lesson units, evaluated student assessments, and planned other activities. School C demonstrated effective use of time by extending the periods at the middle school to 90 minutes. These larger blocks provided teachers with more time to explore deeper lessons with their students and also offered them more opportunity to collaborate. One teacher at the school noted, "The longer blocks allow us to analyze test scores, plan units, and work together more often. It's pretty cool."

Quantitative data for Schools A and B supplemented the qualitative data at these above average improvement schools (School C's teachers did not participate in the survey; therefore, no quantitative data were available for this school). When teachers were asked if they agreed with the statement, "Time in school is used efficiently to maximize student learning," more than three-fourths of respondents at Schools A (76.7%) and B (82.6%) either agreed or strongly agreed. The second statement regarding time (i.e. "The non-instructional time provided to me is sufficient to improve my teaching practices") garnered lower responses overall across the district. Thus, while only 56.7% and 54.3% of School A and School B's survey respondents agreed respectively, both schools still ranked in the top tier of all elementary schools for this question.

The Tipping Point framework component of class-size reduction was shared across the three above average improvement schools as well. During the teacher focus group at School A, one educator elucidated the importance of small class size on student learning. She remarked, "With a small class, you can reach every child. There were lots of resources and my struggling students soared. I haven't always had that. With large classes, you reach who you can reach and some are left behind." At School C, teachers in grades seven and eight saw a dramatic decrease in their roster size during the first year of reform. Their classes averaged 21 students or less.

The quantitative survey data bolstered the qualitative evidence of class-size reduction for Schools A and B (no surveys were completed at School C). No less than 71.7% of teachers at the two schools agreed with the following statements:

- The student composition in my classes is reasonable to allow me to meet the educational needs of all students (73.3% for School A and 71.7% for School B).

- I have reasonable class sizes, affording me the time to meet the educational needs of all students (80.0% for School A and 76.1% for School B).

These high levels of agreement for survey respondents at the two above average improvement schools led to top tier rankings for all elementary schools for both class-size reduction questions.

Components in Below Average Improvement Schools

Only one school out of five turnaround schools--School D--was assessed as having below average improvement on the SAT-10 standardized test. School D's quantitative and qualitative data provided evidence of just five elements (see section labeled *School D* for a more detailed description of this school's framework results). The four components that this

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school lacked include: time, physical environment, class-size reduction, and autonomy and shared governance. Survey responses from teachers at School D ranked the school in the bottom tier of all middle schools in the district for questions related to time, physical environment, and class-size reduction. Questions of autonomy and shared governance received mixed responses. For example, only 44.4% of teachers surveyed at School D agreed that "There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school." Conversely, a much larger percentage (79.6%) agreed with the statement, "Useful information is readily available to me so I can make informed decisions." The principal's explanation of required lesson plans and committee reports submittal negated the more positive survey findings, resulting in an overall lack of consistent utilization for the framework component of autonomy and shared governance.

Complete School Profiles

Information for each of the five turnaround schools has been included in the following section to fully explain the results found in this study. These profiles delineate the extent to which the reform components were utilized in each school, as addressed in the first research question.

School A

School A is an elementary school located in the large southern school district under investigation. The head administrator and her assistant principal were interviewed, along with ten teachers at the school. Thirty out of thirty-five teachers completed the online survey for a response rate of 85.7%. The following six framework components were found present at School A, resulting in a rating of moderate utilization: teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, a well-rounded curriculum, and parent/ community involvement.

Teams

Data analysis of principal and teacher interviews revealed a strong presence of teams at School A. The head administrator and her assistant discussed various collaborative configurations instituted during the first year of reform. For example, school-wide book studies led to collegial discussions in grade level groups. "Everyone started doing book studies together and have grown by reading and seeing their work in the books," said the principal. She went on to add, "Veterans are continuing to learn as well [as novices]. It has been a reciprocal relationship." Other grade level activities conducted during the weekly meetings have further solidified the teamwork mentality. As one teacher noted, "we now have true collaboration on our grade level. [In our meetings], we are able to spot-check other teachers and provide support for their concerns."

This teamwork was also evident in the principal's explanation of substitute procedures. After long discussions about ways to improve student achievement, grade levels decided to create a management tool called a split list. Each teacher divided his or her students up into small groups to be assigned to another teacher on grade level when the regular teacher was out, due to illness, vacation, or other commitments. The administrator explained in her interview:

> During reading and math instruction, the children automatically shift to the split list teacher to which they have been assigned, even if a sub is in place. In this way, we are committed to providing reading and math instruction every single day by a certified teacher. The sub just assists in one of the other rooms where he or she might be needed to provide extra support.

Teachers quickly bought into this idea and felt a greater sense of camaraderie in sharing their students. They especially appreciated the extra pair of hands provided by the substitute teacher when they carried a larger class load during certain class periods.

Subs have been utilized to allow teachers time to work together as well. For instance, accomplished teachers at School A were offered sub coverage to visit struggling teachers' classes and vice versa. With this added assistance, the expert educators could observe, co-teach, and/or model activities with their needy peers. "It was not intimidating," the principal stated. "Everyone worked together. My fourth grade teachers even went to visit the pre-K room to watch the teacher instruct the students on place value and working with bundles [in math]." Overall, the teachers in School A developed bonds as teammates and viewed the success of the school as their primary mission.

While there were no survey questions that addressed the presence of teams, the data from principal and teacher interviews supported a strong presence of teamwork.

Time

During the principal interview, the school leader talked vividly about her commitment to finding time for teacher collaboration. She shared this story:

> The central office reps were upset when they first came to visit my school. They felt that we were not doing Open Court [a reading program] properly and wanted me to hire a consultant to assist the teachers…. They wanted me to have a common reading schedule for everyone in the building, but I did not agree. One teacher cannot observe another if everybody is doing reading at the same time.

While the principal had to defend her decision to operate on a different daily schedule than other schools throughout the district, central office administrators finally relented and eventually conceded to her plan. "Now, I sit in meetings and hear other folks talk about building in time for collaboration, as I suggested," admitted the administrator.

On the survey, teachers responded with their perceptions about the availability of time at School A. Three-quarters (76.7%) indicated agreement with the statement, "Time in school is used efficiently to maximize student learning." This relatively high percentage supported the

interview reflections of time spent on working collaboratively to ensure student success. On the other hand, only 56.7% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that "The non-instructional time provided to me is sufficient to improve my teaching practices." While this percentage is much lower than the three-quarters in agreement on the previous statement, School A ranked relatively well in comparison to its elementary school peers for that question (11 out of 60). Overall, these survey data combine with the interviews to result in a positive presence of the element of time in School A's efforts for school reform.

Physical Environment

Teacher interviews at School A elicited strong emotions about the physical environment. During June and July prior to the first year of turnaround, the teachers at the school put in long hours to radically change the look of the school building. "We were here from sun up to sun down, seven days a week," recalled one educator. They knocked out bookshelves, painted walls, and decorated their rooms to prepare for students' arrival in the fall. "[District officials] were going to renovate this place for us, but they were going to do it in their time," a teacher commented. "We wanted people to see change … from the beginning, when they walked in." According to those interviewed, the physical makeover made a tremendous difference. One teacher explained, "Parents came in and said they've seen their children have new attitudes about coming into this new environment. They came in with a positive attitude." Her colleague added, "Look good, feel good, do good….The school was given money to make it look good [in order] to help our students be successful. And that's what has happened."

Surveys revealed that most teachers at the school (not just those interviewed) were pleased with the physical transformation of the building. Four-fifths agreed that they had

"sufficient access to instructional materials and resources" (80.8%), their "school building is clean and well-maintained" (80.0%), and it is a "safe and secure place to teach and learn" (83.3%). These high marks, in conjunction with the positive interview data, offered strong evidence of efforts to transform the physical environment, as one component of reform.

Class-size Reduction

Interviews with teachers and the school administrator did not elicit much conversation about class-size reduction at School A. The only comment recorded came from a teacher who reflected on the small class lists, in comparison to what she had experienced in years past. She noted, "With a small class, you can reach every child. There were lots of resources and my struggling students soared. I haven't always had that. With large classes, you reach who you can reach and some are left behind."

Survey data indicated a significant portion of the teachers surveyed were satisfied with the efforts for class-size reduction. For example, when asked whether the "student composition in my classes is reasonable to allow me to meet the educational needs of all students," 73.3% agreed. Approximately seven percent more teachers (80.0%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I have reasonable class sizes, affording me the time to meet the educational needs of all students." Both of these questions ranked School A in the top tier for all elementary schools. These positive statistics, along with the sentiments shared in the teacher interview, indicated that attention was paid to class-size reduction in the transformation plan at School A.

Autonomy and Shared Governance

The interview data revealed limited information about autonomy and shared governance at this elementary school. One teacher shared that it is "good to be on the same accord with

administration as a master teacher" and to have "permission to reach out there [to help the children]." On the other hand, the principal offered a different side of autonomy. The school leader reflected that "some teachers had been allowed so much latitude in the past that they did not know how to follow." She felt that there was "a lot of shared governance at [the school], but someone has to lead." Accordingly, she demonstrated her authority by requiring teachers to submit weekly lesson plans and committee reports.

Teachers who completed the online survey recorded relatively low marks for autonomy and shared governance at School A. For instance, only 30.0% of respondents agreed that "There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school." Only slightly more teachers (36.7%) shared that they "feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to me." Furthermore, a scant 43.3% agreed with the statement, "In my school, teachers are centrally involved in decision making about important educational issues" and just one-half (50.0%) reported being "recognized as an educational expert and … trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction." When compared to their elementary peers, School A ranked in the bottom tier for all questions in this area of the survey, corroborating a lack of solid evidence from the interviews that autonomy and shared governance were present during the school reform process.

Leadership

The principal interview provided information about the leadership efforts at School A. For example, the administrator talked about her background in organizational leadership and the skills she gathered through her studies. She spoke about the importance of understanding the change process and its different dynamics, as well as the necessity of establishing a learning culture to "manage the knowledge." According to the school leader:

CEOs of Fortune 500 companies "manage the knowledge" by identifying the information that cannot be found in manuals or handbooks. That is, they determine the implicit knowledge that makes some people more efficient or effective and then catalogue it for others to learn from.

To gather this knowledge, the principal "tries hard to be in classrooms 90% of her day, as the district expects. I need to know information about all projects [at the school], although I may not be directly in charge of them."

Survey data indicated less than satisfactory agreement with the principal's leadership skills, however. On two of the leadership questions, School A ranked second to last out of all elementary schools. That is, one-half or less respondents agreed with the statements, "My school leadership consistently supports me when I need it" (50%) and "Overall, the leadership in my school is effective" (46.7%). Slightly more teachers (56.7%) supported the notion that "School leaders are proficient in establishing positive learning environments and efficient operations," but that still placed the school in the lowest tier for all elementary schools (52 out of 60). These negative data heavily outweighed the principal's interview remarks, revealing a lack of positive evidence for leadership reform at School A.

A Well-rounded Curriculum

The teachers in this transformed elementary school spent a great deal of time relaying information about curriculum in their interviews. Reading instruction, differentiated interventions, and learning styles were their main areas of discussion. After being prompted about what caused a change in their reading program, one teacher shared the influence of having a reading coach on staff at the school. "If there was a problem, it was remediated immediately. We called in the reading coach and used her resources" to rectify the situation. This teacher went on to say, "Our delivery of instruction has been consistent, explicit, and direct. The kids know what we expect from them." A colleague at School A added:

We no longer teach to just smart or high kids. If we identify a child who is struggling, we are able to write a prescription for him [or her]. We don't leave anybody out. We have intervention programs, like Open Court and Voyager…. We set time aside each day to help children who are struggling. Nobody is left behind. If teachers don't know something, we knew where to go now [to get help or assistance].

This dedication to meeting student needs was echoed by other teachers at the elementary school. "I know where they are coming from so they won't be left behind," commented one educator. "I approach them in a holistic style to deal with their needs and use resources here that are available, such as counselors, social workers, and nurses." The well-roundedness of the curriculum allowed teachers to "reach every child on an individual level with a package that is distinctively designed for that child," as one teacher eloquently explained. She further elucidated how a focus on critical thinking raised the bar for success: "We have really concentrated on higher-order thinking, not just one word answers. We expected more out of our children, took them a step higher. It took a lot of planning and implementation … but it was worth the work."

Although there were no survey questions that addressed the presence of a well-rounded curriculum at School A, the interview data alone supported strong attention to this reform component.

External Support

There were no interview data or survey questions that illustrated the presence of external support or outside change agents for School A.

Parent/Community Involvement

Teachers and administrators at School A reflected on the changes in parent and community involvement through their interviews and survey responses. During the first year of reform, tremendous changes were observed in the receptiveness of families served by the

school. "They perceived us as coming because of the extra money [provided as a recruitment incentive]," explained the principal. "But they soon realized our commitment." This was particularly important to the staff, as the school leader elucidated, because many of the parents and grandparents attended the school as children. "We didn't want to be looked at as outsiders so we worked diligently to build relationships. Now, folks come in and take pictures of bulletin boards and displays with student achievement," the principal stated. Teachers also reflected on the historical impact of the school's transformation. "Grandparents remember the way [the school] was … before it started going down. The community is happy we transformed it physically. We received support from local churches to help make transformation possible," noted one educator. Her colleague added, "People came before school started and said they loved what we were doing."

School staff members emphasized that one of the biggest challenges to reform was changing the attitudes of those who assumed that families were not concerned with their children's success. "Contrary to rumor, they [parents] were very interested in their kid's education," relayed one focus group participant. "A lot of time, they just don't know how to help or what to do. They were very helpful to offer their services once I contacted them." Teachers at School A reached out to parents and grandparents at the start of school to build strong bridges for communication. "I set the foundation at the beginning of the year for parents. I noticed a big change in their attitudes, by communicating what I expected from them. They wanted to work with me even more then," one teacher shared. "Despite the fact that they might not have school supplies," remarked a teaching peer, "[these parents] deserve respect."

While there were no survey questions that addressed parent and community involvement in the schools, the interview data presented sufficient support for this element of the framework.

<p align="center">*School B*</p>

School B is an elementary school situated in this study's large southern school system. The principal and her assistant were interviewed, along with six teachers at the school. All forty-six certified educators at School B completed the online survey for a response rate of 100%. The following nine framework components were found present at School B, resulting in a rating of high utilization: teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/ community involvement.

Teams

At School B, the principal and teacher interviews revealed a strong presence of teams at the elementary school. From the start, a teamwork philosophy permeated the turnaround efforts. The administrators looked for candidates' willingness to work with others during initial interviews. Once the staff members were all selected, the school leaders initiated activities to bring the diverse group together. This was particularly important since a significant number of teachers came with the two administrators from another school in the district. As a result, the school leaders worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone felt part of the team. Their initial efforts paid off. The assistant principal reflected, "This school is envied by others in the district because of our closeness and professionalism. At last summer's in-service when all other schools left for lunch, we ate together at potlucks."

This camaraderie intensified during weekly team meetings throughout the year. "We plan as a team together and examine test scores each week on Data Fridays," noted the principal. Everyone at School B--from the administration to the support staff--has bought into the vision for student success. "We don't just mean teachers as family," one teacher explained. "All people--even custodians--work hard to help the children." A colleague concurred, "The school staff really values and respects each other." This collective responsibility and mutual respect have established a strong foundation upon which the staff has gelled as a cohesive unit.

While there were no survey questions that addressed teams, the interview data provided ample evidence of a collaborative teamwork mentality at School B.

Time

During the principal interview, the administrators shared information about how time has been spent at the transformed elementary school during the first year of reform. The principal and her assistant realized how difficult it was for their teachers to allocate time during the day for collaboration, so they designated half-days each month for group work. Creative scheduling allowed students to spend more time with their enrichment teachers, while their regular classroom teachers planned units together and organized upcoming grade level activities. Time was also allotted for the school leaders to work in their teachers' rooms. "[The administrators] do interventions with small groups in the classrooms from 2:00pm-2:50pm," the principal explained. This time assisted children in meeting their individual needs, and also instilled a sense of trust and understanding as the teachers witnessed their leaders taking an active role in their students' instruction.

Survey data from the staff resulted in fairly positive findings about time. More than four-fifths of respondents (82.6%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Time in school is used efficiently to maximize student learning." On the other hand, just over one-half of teachers (54.3%) surveyed affirmed the statement, "The non-instructional time provided to me is sufficient to improve my teaching practices." Although this percentage of agreement was much less than for the previous question, teachers at other elementary schools in the district also recorded much lower agreement for this question. Consequently, the school still ranked in the top tier of all elementary schools (13 out of 60).These survey data, in conjunction with the findings from the principal interview at School B, offered adequate substantiation of the appropriate use of time at this elementary school during the first year of reform implementation.

Physical Environment

The administrators and teachers at School B talked a great deal in their interviews about aesthetic changes made during reform. All interviewees noted how grave the environment had been when they first started at the school. "The classrooms were light blue and prison gray," explained a teacher. "Can you imagine passing from each grade and the only change is your teacher's face?" The principal added, "When I first visited this building, I noticed a strong stench in the air…. It was a mixture of mold, urine, and stale air. We had to make a change to create an inviting atmosphere for our students and their parents."

Unfortunately, the staff faced obstacles in transforming the physical environment. According to the assistant principal, "We asked downtown [central services] for numerous maintenance repairs, but they took too long to respond. We knew if we waited for them, things would not be ready by the start of school … so we took matters into our own hands."

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The school leaders called on local businesses to landscape the school grounds and build a new entrance sign. Teachers also stepped in to improve the facilities. "We cleaned and gutted the building," the principal commented. They painted the walls with the school mascot, created beautiful bulletin board displays, and spruced up the front lobby with plants and pictures. "When you look good, you feel good … and when you feel good, you strive to do better," concluded one teacher.

The most striking physical transformation at School B came at the end of October during year one of reform. "For the first time ever, kids at this school were able to check out books. In the past, they had not been trusted to take them home," stated the principal. She added, "The media center had been horrible … full of old books, lots of puzzles and games." The staff pulled together to sift through the antiquated materials, salvage usable resources, and order new books. The principal reflected on their success, "Over the course of the past year, we circulated 25,000 books through the media center and only 35 were lost or not returned. It was truly amazing to see."

The positive turnaround of the physical environment was also reflected in the survey results. Repeatedly, School B ranked in the top tier of all elementary schools for the questions addressing facilities and resources. An astounding 95.7% of all respondents agreed with the statements, "I have sufficient access to instructional materials and resources" and "My school is a safe and secure place to teach and learn." A full 100% of teachers who completed the survey affirmed that their "school building is clean and well-maintained." These high marks, coupled with the strong interview data, validated a focus on the physical environment in School B's reform efforts.

Class-size Reduction

There were no interview data that referenced class-size reduction, yet the survey questions offered insight into this framework component. For both questions dealing with classes, School B ranked in the top tier for all elementary schools. For instance, when queried about whether class composition was reasonable for meeting students' needs, just under three-fourths of survey respondents (71.7%) agreed, for a ranking of 19 out of 60 elementary schools. Similarly, 76.1% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I have reasonable class sizes, affording me the time to meet the educational needs of all students" (17 out of 60). Although the data for this framework element were minimal, the available information supported the idea that School B adequately addressed class-size reduction as part of their reform plan.

Autonomy and Shared Governance

Evidence of autonomy and shared governance was found in both interview and survey data. During the administrator interview, the principal spoke candidly about the importance of trusting her teachers. She communicated:

> I must treat my staff as professionals. We give them a lot of responsibility and let everyone have a say and a voice. We show people that we trust them. And of course, we see where the staff stands before making a decision.

Survey data supported this culture of autonomy and shared governance, as expressed by the lead administrator. No less than four-fifths of teachers who completed the survey agreed with the following statements:

- I feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to me (82.6%).

- In my school, teachers are centrally involved in decision making about important educational issues (87.0%).

- There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school (87.0%).

- I am recognized as an educational expert and am trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction (93.5%).

- In my school we take steps to solve problems, we don't just talk about them (95.7%).

- The staff is committed to "whatever it takes" to help every student learn (95.7%).

- Useful information is readily available to me so I can make informed decisions (97.8%).

- The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems (100.0%).

Through these survey data and the interview findings, it became evident that autonomy and shared governance were key elements of School B's reform efforts.

Leadership

Interviews with principals and teachers provided strong support for leadership. The assistant principal at School B started the conversation by describing her confidence in the leadership skills of the principal. "This school has always been the stepchild of the system," the assistant administrator explained. "[Our principal] was not going to take it anymore and she refused to take 'no' for an answer. She is the only principal who won't take it. She makes waves." Numerous teachers interviewed shared this same trust in the principal's leadership. "I knew there would be strong leadership [at this school] so I was really motivated about being part of this team," one teacher commented. Her co-worker--a teacher who came with administration from another school in the district--noted, "Our principal is very strong. I knew what kind of person and leader she was. I didn't feel uncomfortable about coming to

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[School B] at all because I knew she would be here. That was the main factor in deciding [to move]."

During the teacher focus group, further evidence of strong leadership pervaded the discussion. "[The principal] has the same expectations for every teacher on this faculty. She has high expectations of us and we have high expectations for our students. Everyone meets or exceeds those expectations or they don't stay around," one teacher remarked. Another teacher made sure to mention, however, that the administration upheld the same expectations for themselves as they asked of their staff members. She elucidated, "We don't have low jobs or high jobs … just jobs that we all must complete to ensure student success. It's not unusual to see [the principal] picking up trash around the building. She wants 100% from us and she gives 150%." Her colleague added similar comments about the assistant principal, "We were both going around the school and tightening table legs. We knew it needed to be done and [the assistant principal] helped me to make that happen."

The results from the online survey questions substantiated this strong evidence of leadership. A full 100% of all respondents agreed with the statement, "My school leadership communicates clear expectations to students, teachers and parents." A slightly lower percentage of teachers (97.8%) who completed the survey affirmed that school leaders established positive learning environments and efficient operations and also consistently supported the teachers when needed. Similarly, 97.8% either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "Overall, the leadership in my school is effective." Indeed, the complementary data from interviews and surveys confirmed the presence of strong leadership in the reform efforts at School B.

A Well-rounded Curriculum

During the principal interview, the administrators touched on the importance of creating a well-rounded curriculum. As part of their turnaround efforts, all teachers participated in district-based professional development for approximately six to seven weeks throughout the school year. A widely respected math initiative helped staff to understand diverse ways to tailor instruction to meet their students' needs. A literacy coach demonstrated model lessons on integrating reading and writing skills across the curriculum. In addition, teachers designed their own assessments to track student growth and progress in all subject areas. Extracurricular activities were organized by staff to engage children in non-academic interests, such as music and art.

While there were no survey questions that addressed curricular issues, the interview data from the administrators provided weak but sufficient evidence of efforts to create a well-rounded curriculum at School B.

External Support

The administrators shared both positive and negative experiences with external support during their interview with researchers. Overall, they felt little support from the district. "We're constantly jumping through hoops," the assistant principal explained. "No matter what, you get different stories from people downtown in central office. [The principal] was asked to be here, so let her do her job." The principal further elaborated, "The school is now the bright spot in the community, although central office hasn't been very helpful. They will not paint, landscape, or fulfill other maintenance needs for us." The school leaders have been persistent, however, in finding external supporters. "[The director of elementary education] has been awesome. She is the only good one downtown," the assistant principal commented.

"[The director of the local education fund] has been great as well," added the principal. "She gave our school PE equipment and has provided us with great feedback." She went on to say, "I'm going to fight for the building and gather support from these people. We need partners in education--people who keep us grounded and focused on our goals."

There were no survey questions to support the qualitative data, yet the interview data provided sufficient evidence of efforts made to garner external support at School B.

Parent/Community Involvement

Throughout the principal and teacher interviews, the staff at School B communicated the importance of establishing strong parent and community relations. From quarterly conferences ("Every teacher met face-to-face with every parent in their room during the first quarter," shared the principal) to home visits ("We do home visits nearly every day, so much so that the people know our cars in the neighborhoods," the assistant principal explained), the staff was committed to maintaining regular communication with parents. Establishing these collaborative relationships was not easy, however. One teacher revealed:

> Before we got here [to this school], parents thought we held sole responsibility for helping their kids. We taught them that it's a joint effort. Now, the children know that the whole community wants them to do well--from the parents to the teachers to the principals.

A colleague added, "There was a lot of fear because parents didn't know what would happen to their children [at the turnaround school]. We faced a lot of opposition." Through their continued commitment and care for the children, the educators won the naysayers over. The teacher further explicated, "We have changed the climate of this entire community. There is pride now. We gave parents and their children the opportunity to be proud of themselves."

Teachers reached out to the community in other ways as well. For example, at departure time, they noticed how disruptive the children became as soon as they exited the school's

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doors. Their docile, obedient youngsters turned into rambunctious troublemakers as they headed home. To mollify this situation, the teachers decided to walk their students home. With no bus riders, this meant that every child in the building would be safely escorted to their front doors. The teachers divided the students by streets and organized a schedule for these afternoon duties. A byproduct of these walks was improved relations with the older members of the surrounding community. Children were no longer running through their lawns, fighting in the streets, or yelling loudly as they passed by. The neighbors appreciated these changes and often expressed their gratitude to the staff. As one teacher reflected, "A community member told me that we had really changed things. He was glad that his yard wasn't getting messed up anymore."

These strong data from the interviews offered ample evidence, in the absence of supporting survey data, that School B effectively implemented efforts to build strong parent and community involvement.

School C

School C is one of nineteen middle schools in the large southern school district under investigation for this study. The principal was interviewed, along with three teachers from the school. The educators at School C opted not to participate in the online survey; therefore, no quantitative data is available for analysis. The following six framework components were found present at School C, resulting in a rating of moderate utilization: teams, time, class-size reduction, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, and parent/community involvement.

Teams

At School C, interviews revealed the presence of teams among administrators, teachers, and students in the building. For example, on two days per week (i.e. Data Mondays for

departments and Data Thursdays for the entire school), teachers collaborated to examine data and design lessons to meet their children's needs. "We get together to recognize 'the good, the bad, and the ugly' of test data and help one another determine the prescription," explained the principal.

From the start, it was important to the school leader to have individuals on board who preferred teamwork to isolation. Consequently, she shared that sentiment repeatedly during interviews. "I don't like cliques at all," the principal noted. "I prefer people to work holistically." At School C, this vision was carried out by coaches who joined team meetings to model and plan lessons with teachers. Colleagues also shared resource materials, such as class libraries, lab equipment, and graphic organizers, and delegated common tasks to share the workload. This collective sense of responsibility was instilled by the school leader, as this teacher described: "[The principal] makes sure that the janitorial staff up to herself plays a part in a child's life."

Evidence of teams has been observed in students as well. During the teacher focus group interview, this insightful story was shared:

> We grouped our children in a certain way…. We separated the boys from the girls. I had lower achievers--all boys--and they kind of knew it. [In gender separate classes], they decided to achieve. The students policed each other, worked together. I had one case, where one little boy came in … I teach science, but the social studies teacher on my team gave him a project to do and we had completed a test. The other boys had begun to work on their project after the test and that particular boy didn't pull anything out. The other boys questioned him about his project and encouraged him to do his work and helped him with it…. They made sure he had what he needed so their class wouldn't look bad. That meant a whole lot to me. They were teaching each other.

While School C chose not to participate in the survey, the interview data offered sufficient evidence to support the presence of teams at the middle school.

Time

At School C, the principal and teacher interviews offered important information about the use of time at the middle school. According to one teacher, periods have extended to 90 minutes. This additional time with students allows teachers to "do quite a few more lessons." The instructor went on to say, "I can teach, test, and determine what they grasped, all within one class period." This extended time also provided teachers with more opportunity to collaborate. "The longer blocks allow us to analyze test scores, plan units, and work together more often. It's pretty cool," added a colleague. The school has formally organized group meetings on Mondays and Thursdays, as previously mentioned in the Teams section, to examine data. Allocating this time ensured that staff members understood "how to interpret the assessment scores and how to drive instruction to meet student needs," noted the principal.

No survey data for questions of time were available for analysis as School C selected to not participate in the survey, yet the interview data substantiated the effective use of this element.

Physical Environment

There were no data available for physical environment since School C opted not to complete the survey. The teachers and administrators did not discuss it during their qualitative interviews either.

Class-size Reduction

The principal interview provided insights into efforts to institute class-size reduction at School C. According to the head administrator, seventh and eighth grade classes averaged 21 students. On the other hand, sixth grade numbers looked much more challenging. "We have

186 students in sixth grade with only four teachers. That means each class will have 45 kids," the school leader explained. "We're currently trying to hire more teachers. Those numbers just won't do." While sixth grade still suffered, two out of three grade levels reaped the benefits of her efforts.

For School C, no survey data were available for questions of class-size reduction as teachers at the school chose not to answer the survey; however, evidence in the administrator interview of proactive efforts to further reduce class sizes demonstrated the principal's commitment to reform, and class-size reductions had occurred in two of three grade levels.

Autonomy and Shared Governance

No data were accessible for School C in this area, as autonomy and shared governance were not addressed in interviews and school survey data were not available.

Leadership

The principal spoke a great deal about leadership in her individual interview. The School C leader reported that her biggest success during the first year of reform had been earning the "trust, respect, and support of her school family." As a newcomer to the district, she worked diligently to build strong relationships with her students, teachers, and parents. "No one respects an individual who is simply 'visible' because he or she does not have any sense about the data, about children's backgrounds, or how to collaborate with them to work toward success," the principal noted. To be "effectively visible," the administrator made daily efforts to interact with her students and staff. "I walked the halls, stopped children to talk to them, and asked how they were doing in class," remarked the turnaround principal. "I knew that data inside and out so I could call them out if they weren't telling me the truth. Because they knew I was aware of what was going on, they began to reach out to me more."

In turn, the school leader gained her teachers' trust and respect. "They liked that I wasn't afraid to 'get down and dirty' and help out with instruction," the principal said. "I have a rolling easel that I use to help kids learn what they need. I even put on funny costumes to visit classrooms as the weird math teacher." The teachers also appreciated her efforts to increase time on task. A teacher shared, "[The principal] was very good at making sure students were in class when they needed to be, so that learning could take place. That played an important part of success."

Although teachers did not complete the survey at School C, the interview data for both principal and teachers revealed sufficient affirmation of leadership's effectiveness in reform.

A Well-rounded Curriculum

A well-rounded curriculum surfaced in both principal and teacher interviews at School C. It was a big issue for the educators. To begin, the principal talked proudly of the students' change in attitude toward learning. "They are now energized about their work and really believe in themselves…. They have a twinkle in their eyes." Teachers attributed this transformation to their varied classroom instruction. One educator noted:

> We are now teaching out of the box. We're not always using paper and pencil. My children love to sing, rap, beat, and tap. So, okay, we're going to rap about science. I did a lot of things that other teachers didn't want to do. I saw that a child could learn if I adapted my lesson to meet his needs…. From class to class, you have different types of learners. I'm a visual learner. I have to see it. But I repeat myself over and over for auditory learners or do hands-on activities for kinesthetic learners. You must adapt to the different learning styles of your students.

The principal recognized the increase in her staff's ability to differentiate instruction, as this teacher described. "In the beginning, only 13% knew how to teach to the needs of their learners. Now, we're at 50%. The leadership team and coaches did lots of hands-on work to assist, supervise, and coach their colleagues in this area."

The teachers and administrator at School C also talked strongly about the infusion of literacy and math throughout the curriculum. While these two areas were stressed more than others, the educators ensured that the tasks assigned were authentic and engaging to the students so that their curriculum was robust, rather than limited. "In the mornings, we provided them with real-life math problems to solve in the cafeteria while they were eating breakfast. They worked individually or with classmates to complete these problems," the principal expressed. "They became competitive with one another to get finished quickly." Once they ate their meals, they moved to the gymnasium to sit and read. "Many of these students do not have a quiet environment at home to enjoy a book. Although they didn't have to be at school that early, over 80% came in to read with us," continued the school leader.

There were no survey questions that addressed curricular issues. Additionally, School C opted not to participate in the survey. On the other hand, the principal and teacher interview data validated the presence of a well-rounded curriculum at the school.

External Support

There were no survey questions that addressed the presence of external support or outside change agents. Moreover, School C selected not to participate in the survey and the interview data did not include information about this component.

Parent/Community Involvement

The principal and teacher interviews at School C revealed valuable data about parent/community involvement. The head administrator discussed ways that churches and government agencies were engaged at the school. Volunteers from these organizations read with students in the mornings, helped in classrooms, and donated resources, such as books, school supplies, and clothing for needy children. Parents were provided with opportunities to

express their opinions with staff through periodic plus/delta forms. They were asked both strengths and weaknesses of the school, along with recommendations for improvement. During their focus group interview, the teachers also recognized the value of parent and community engagement and their pride in its increase during the first year; however, they also admitted their hope for continued progress in this area. "I think we need more," stated one teacher. "We need more and it should be radically different."

There were no survey questions that addressed strong parent and community involvement. School C decided not to participate in the survey. Interview data, however, offered sufficient evidence of reform for this component.

School D

School D is a middle school found in this study's large southern school system. The principal and two assistant administrators were interviewed, along with three teachers at the school. Fifty-four out of fifty-seven certified educators completed the online survey for a response rate of 94.7%. The following five framework components were found present at School D, resulting in a rating of low utilization: teams, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement.

Teams

From the principal and teacher interviews, it was evident that the development of teams was incorporated into the school reform efforts at School D. The principal acknowledged that the staff "shared a similar vision … whether it was in spirit or based on performance." With a large contingent of faculty members present at the school since before the turnaround plan, the administrator relied upon the old teachers to bring the new ones on board with the initiative. According to the principal, the veterans "helped new folks to build a collaborative

community. I made sure that the old teachers mixed with the new to serve as leaders and familiarize them with the student population and the surrounding community."

The teachers confirmed this culture of teamwork in their interviews. "As a faculty, we work together in unity," stated one. A colleague added, "We're supportive of each other. When one makes a mistake, another corrects it so we all improve." The curriculum meetings have helped the faculty mix with one another and coalesce around student learning. Through discussions of content and assessment, the teachers have developed common language and recognized the importance of teamwork. The educators even noted that their students were eager to learn due to the collaborative efforts of their teachers.

There were no survey questions that addressed the presence of teams in the schools; however, the interview data revealed a strong teamwork mentality at School D.

Time

Very little interview data were collected that referenced the effective use of time in School D. While teachers talked about giving up their planning time for tutoring and parent conferences ("One conference takes up the whole planning time because we show the student's progress and all the documentation"), they did not mention having the opportunity during the school day to collaborate with their peers, as the time component entails. Survey data, however, revealed a lack of adequate time for teachers. Less than one-quarter of respondents (24.1%) indicated agreement with the statement, "The non-instructional time provided to me is sufficient to improve my teaching practices," resulting in a ranking of 18 out of 19 middle schools. Only slightly more than one-half (51.9%) agreed that "Time in school is used efficiently to maximize student learning," earning School D another spot in the

bottom third of middle schools. Together, these low rankings negate the presence of time in School D's reform plan.

Physical Environment

The physical environment left much to be desired at School D, as indicated by interview and survey data. The teachers made a point to mention the poor conditions of the school during their interview. "Make sure they write in the report that [our school] needs a bigger, better facility. This school has been here since 1900 with no renovations," reported one classroom instructor. "We have 984 kids right now and they predict we'll get over 1000 soon," added a colleague. "But we have one bathroom on the entire hall. That's a time issue, with just one bathroom for the whole hall."

Survey data substantiated the teachers' concerns. Less than two-thirds of staff (64.8% and 61.1% respectively) responded with agreement to the statements, "I have sufficient access to instructional materials and resources" and "My school building is clean and well-maintained." These percentages were low relative to the other middle schools in the district, resulting in School D's ranking in the bottom third of schools at their level. The interview and survey data both reflected the negative assessments of the physical environment at School D.

Class-size Reduction

Data from interviews and surveys revealed concerns with class-size reduction at School D. Both the principal and teachers expressed their frustration with the large class rosters. The school leader indicated that the big class size stood in the way of continued progress at the school. Teachers agreed. "The school is overflowing with children. We're talking 48 children in a class this year," noted one. Administrators proposed hiring more teachers to carry these

larger class loads. Unfortunately, the teachers did not believe the rooms could accommodate that many youngsters at once. "To be honest," a teacher admitted, "as big as my room is, I don't think I can have 48 desks. If I do, they're not going to be set up in the way I want them to be set up."

Survey data triangulated the interview remarks from the principal and teachers at School D. When probed for their agreement with the statement, "The student composition in my classes is reasonable to allow me to meet the educational needs of all students," only 16.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (for a ranking of 18 out of 19). The middle school teachers ranked their school last in the district on the second statement referencing class-size reduction, "I have reasonable class sizes, affording me the time to meet the educational needs of all students," with only 11.1% agreeing. These data substantiated the need for improvement in the area of class-size reduction at School D.

Autonomy and Shared Governance

At School D, there was little evidence of autonomy and shared governance based upon analysis of the interview and survey data. While the principal talked about garnering teacher input for professional development, the suggestion was for the future, rather than an indication of the present condition. Other comments revealed a tight control over teachers and their decision-making. Course syllabi and class rules were developed collaboratively by teachers; however, the administrators had to approve them before they were used in the classrooms.

Survey data indicated mixed results for teachers' autonomy and administrators' control. A mere 44.4% of respondents agreed with the statement, "There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school." On the other hand, nearly four-fifths (79.6%) of teachers

surveyed felt that "Useful information is readily available to me so I can make informed decisions." Slightly less (72.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they were recognized as educational experts and trusted to make sound instructional decisions. When compared with its middle school peers, School D ranked low (14 out of 19 schools) when teachers were asked if school took steps to solve problems or simply talked about them. Neither these mixed survey results nor the negative interview findings could substantiate the presence of autonomy and shared governance at School D.

Leadership

Insight into leadership at School D was surfaced through the interview and survey data. During the focus group interview, one teacher readily admitted that she was drawn to the middle school because of the supportive administration. The principal, in turn, looked for "new teachers who had taught in similar situations." He told them exactly how it was at the school so they would know what to expect, including the fact that discipline was an issue. When teachers showed difficulty in meeting these expectations, he worked with them to build their confidence. "The only way you're going to improve student learning is via teachers," said the school leader. He recommended:

> You must model for them because the principal sets the tone. You must implement what you've learned at conferences and through your own professional development. And you must speak of high expectations … that is, model for them and practice what you preach.

Teachers at School D confirmed their confidence in their principal's leadership skills through their survey responses. More than four-fifths (85.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that their "school leadership communicates clear expectations to students, teachers, and parents." Approximately three-quarters of respondents felt "Overall, the leadership in my school is effective" (75.9%) and "My school leadership consistently supports me when I need it"

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(72.2%). Together, these survey results and interview data affirmed the presence of effective leadership at School D.

A Well-rounded Curriculum

Administrators and teachers alike talked about significant changes in curriculum at the middle school, following the implementation of the turnaround plan. "More hands-on manipulatives were utilized in the classrooms," raved the principal. One social studies teacher described how she used newspapers and magazines to share current events with her classes. A math instructor also explicated:

> What I've done [in the past] was usually teacher-led. I did everything. Now, I let them do most of the work … let them discover the formulas … do what needs to be done. Before, I didn't have the opportunity to go into the computer lab. Now we have computers in the classrooms, so once we've gone over the concept, they can go and reinforce it with the Accelerated Math program.

A colleague talked about the impact of having students work in small groups to discover learning. "They get in groups to solve problems. If one doesn't know, they ask the next person in the group. After they've asked each other, then they can ask me [if they still cannot figure out the solution]." Implementing cooperative learning in her classroom has resulted in changes in student thinking. Her children have expressed their appreciation for listening to others' ideas. "They tell me all the time, 'I never thought about it like that' and 'if I look at it this way, I didn't know I could….' They wouldn't have discovered these new modes for learning without working in teams." Several teachers in the focus group admitted that using these innovative teaching strategies in a balanced curriculum required confidence and risk-taking. "You have to be willing to change," said one participant. "You cannot be set in your own ways."

While there were no survey questions that addressed curricular issues, the strong data found in the teacher interviews supported the presence of a well-rounded curriculum at School D.

External Support

Although external support was not discussed in great detail during the interviews, there was some evidence of its presence at School D. For example, teachers shared how resources from the district--particularly human resources--played a key role in turning the school around. "We have a reading coach at the school," shared one participant. "But we also have support from our literacy specialist downtown. She's there for support. I can call her anytime if I have questions." Other sources of external support included local church members who volunteered their time as tutors, district math coordinators, and outside professional development experts who facilitated summer workshops.

There were no survey questions that addressed external support from outside change agents. Yet, the interview data substantiated its presence, albeit only minimally, at School D.

Parent/Community Involvement

Numerous activities to enhance parent and community involvement during the first year of reform were shared in the administrator interview. For starters, the principal noted, "We bonded with the community by bringing meetings into their neighborhoods." Rather than having parents come to the school, the staff went out to local community centers to facilitate discussions about student progress and school activities. "This resulted in greater collaboration among stakeholders," observed the school leader. In addition, it created a stronger sense of pride in the success of School D's students. The principal reflected:

> Parents are very proud of their children and many now attend meetings…. Band and chorus performances have been combined with free dinners to entice parents to the

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school. When they come, the staff provides them with the information they need about their child's learning. A true partnership has been formed.

While there were no survey questions that addressed the presence of strong parent and community involvement in the schools, interview data confirmed the presence of this component.

School E

School E is a middle school located in the large southern school district under investigation. The principal was interviewed, along with five teachers at the school. Fourteen out of thirty-five teachers completed the online survey for a response rate of 40.0%, the minimum standard accepted for data analysis in this study. The following four framework components were found present at School E, resulting in a rating of low utilization: teams, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement.

Teams

At School E, evidence of the importance of teams was found in both the principal and teacher interviews. According to the principal interview, the school faculty began to collaborate as a "community of learners" following the launch of the turnaround plan. "Everyone takes responsibility for all kids' learning," said the administrator and through a shared vision for success, everyone works together to transform the school. The deep connections developed with the children created reciprocal relationships of respect between staff and students. "Give kids the love and care they need and they will give you the results," stated the principal. Teachers echoed their administrators' sentiments by stating that their commitment to working as teams was firmly planted in their desire to see all children succeed. "Kids need someone to help them, stick with them, show them the reason why they're doing [the work], so they can improve and be somebody," explained one teacher

during the focus group interview. Consequently, the teachers relied upon one another to find proactive solutions to meet their students' needs.

There were no survey questions that addressed the presence of teams or a collaborative teamwork mentality in the schools; however, the interview data offered sufficient evidence of this reform element.

Time

Upon examining the principal and teacher interviews, there was no evidence found, which indicated that School E used the framework component of time in their transformation efforts. No discussion of providing ample planning and collaboration time was mentioned during either set of interviews.

According to the survey data collected, there were mixed results with regard to time. Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, "Time in school is used efficiently to maximize student learning." Only 57.1% of teachers who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This percentage comparatively ranked the middle school in the bottom third of all middle schools in the district (13 of 19 middle schools). Additionally, exactly one-half (50%) of teacher respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The non-instructional time provided to me is sufficient to improve my teaching practices." While the percentage of teachers agreeing with this statement was less than those agreeing in the previous question, district teachers in the survey overall felt more negatively about this statement, resulting in School E's ranking of 6 out of 19 middle schools (top third of survey results for middle schools). Even still, these findings failed to provide strong evidence that administrators and

teachers at this school embraced the importance of finding adequate time within the school day to plan and collaborate with peers.

Physical Environment

The interview and survey data for School E revealed only minimal efforts to improve the physical environment at that school. During the administrator interview, the principal revealed that the school had been the "stepchild of the district" prior to transformation, with poor resources and antiquated facilities. Efforts had been initiated, however, to create a "safe environment that was conducive to learning" with the purchase of new resources, such as the Read 180 program and other computer hardware and software. Lockers were also removed, hallways painted, and classrooms decorated to improve the aesthetic appeal of the building. On the other hand, teachers were not as impressed by the level of improvement. "We have a computer lab," noted one instructor, "but the most disgraceful thing to me is that the eighth grade computer lab doesn't hold an entire classroom. We have to take half of them to test at a time." Another teacher added that while she knew more funding was provided to the school as a result of the reform plan, she did not see the investments in action. "As far as classroom size and resources for the teacher to actually use, I have not seen that…. That has not happened," said the educator.

Survey results supported the teachers' perceptions. For example, when asked their level of support for the statement, "I have sufficient access to instructional materials and resources," only 50% of respondents indicated agreement, ranking the middle school dead last in the district for middle schools. Similarly, School E ranked in the bottom third of all middle schools (16 out of 19) for the statement, "My school building is clean and well-maintained," with only 57.1% of teachers surveyed stating that they agreed or strongly

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agreed. Neither the interview data nor the survey results found strong support for the notion that the physical environment was greatly transformed as part of School E's reform efforts.

Class-size Reduction

Although class-size reduction was a major component of the district's turnaround plan, insufficient teacher recruitment efforts resulted in large classes in some of the schools. School E was one of those negatively impacted by the failure of recruitment incentives. The principal admitted that he would have "preferred to hire more teachers to reduce class size;" however, it was difficult to find enough applicants to fill the requisite positions, much less additional ones. Thus, class sizes could not be lowered. One teacher shared that rosters reached 30 to 32 for at least the first part of the school year. While this was phased out by January, classes were still larger than most teachers could handle. "Class size needs to be small to really do differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students," she added.

Upon further analysis, the survey data substantiated the concerns of both the principal and teachers. A mere 21.4% of teachers queried at School E agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "The student composition in my classes is reasonable to allow me to meet the educational needs of all students." This low percentage resulted in the school falling to the bottom tier of middle schools (16 out of 19). On the surface, it might appear that results for the statement, "I have reasonable class sizes, affording me the time to meet the educational needs of all students," indicated a more positive situation for class size at School E. The school ranked 7 out of 19 middle schools on this question, yet only 35.7% of their teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. These low levels of agreement on the survey questions, coupled with mixed findings from the principal and teacher interviews, resulted in a lack of evidence that class-size reduction was implemented at School E.

Autonomy and Shared Governance

Autonomy and shared governance (or lack thereof) were addressed in both interview and survey questions. For example, one teacher at School E talked about the importance of allowing teachers to have input in professional development choices. "We need something practical we can use. It's okay to stay abreast of research, but we don't need a lot of theory week after week," stated the teacher. She went on to say that teachers should have more opportunity to work together and collaborate on their practice. "I need to hear from other science teachers about what they consider success," she added, rather than listening to outside experts brought in by the district.

This lack of input in school decisions was supported by survey results. School E ranked in the bottom third of middle schools on six out of eight questions, which addressed autonomy and shared governance. For instance, only 42.9% of teachers who completed the survey agreed with the statement, "The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems." Slightly more than half (57.1%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, "I am recognized as an educational expert and am trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction," "There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school," and "I feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to me." Slightly better, 64.3% of teachers surveyed agreed that "In my school, teachers are centrally involved in decision making about important educational issues." Nevertheless, these low survey results, along with the negative responses from teacher interviews, substantiated the lack of a concerted effort to establish an atmosphere of autonomy and shared governance at School E.

Leadership

Similar concerns about leadership could be found in the interview and survey data for School E. While the principal shared his commitment for the children and ensuring success for all ("I've always been 'for the underdog' and believed in community"), he also admitted his own weaknesses in leadership. During the one-on-one interview, the school leader noted:

> There are things that I need in terms of professional development as a principal, but I'm not getting them because I'm required to attend teacher sessions. I understand the importance of being present at the teachers' workshops so that I can understand what they are being taught and what they should be implementing. However, I need assistance in technology, financial planning, and budgeting … how to deal with teachers who do not understand the [turnaround] philosophy and how to get professional staff to understand their roles.

One teacher admitted that the principal's reputation as an administrator led her to apply to the school; however, overall it was difficult to recruit teachers to School E. Many educators were "too scared" to take up the cause and accept the call to work in a turnaround school. Thus, the principal had to lower his desired qualities for candidates. Nevertheless, "with the choices that were available, I feel like I did a good job," he reflected. As his earlier comments indicated, the administrator struggled to deal with those who did decide to work there. The roles for coaches, for example, were "not fully defined and no training was provided to them before starting in their positions, nor did I get trained on how to evaluate them." Mixed messages were being sent to the coaches by the district administrators, making his job as principal difficult.

Survey questions further supported the administrator's reflections on his weak leadership skills. When his teachers were asked their level of agreement with the statement, "School leaders are proficient in establishing positive learning environments and efficient operations," only 57.1% agreed or strongly agreed, resulting in a ranking in the bottom third

of middle schools (14 out of 19). Responses to the statements, "My school leadership communicates clear expectations to students, teachers and parents" and "Overall, the leadership in my school is effective" were only slightly higher, with 64.3% of teachers surveyed indicating their agreement (which ranked the school in the bottom tier of all middle schools for both questions). These data, in conjunction with the interview findings, indicated a lack of effective leadership for school reform.

A Well-rounded Curriculum

At School E, a presence of a well-rounded curriculum was supported by the interviews with the school principal and his teachers. Numerous curricular strategies were implemented during the first year of reform, including gender classes and differentiated learning styles. "My kids were very successful," praised one teacher who was interviewed. "They had the highest scores in science for sixth grade in all schools in the district. I believe in a lot of grouping and hands-on work, which has been very successful for my students." A math teacher acknowledged the importance of hands-on learning in her classroom as well. "We don't use the book at all in class. They use it as home for practice. We use a lot of manipulatives," she explained. The principal admitted that he looked for teachers who understood and utilized these varied instructional strategies. In particular, he looked for people "who talked about kinesthetic activities because the kids at this school enjoy them."

There were no survey questions that addressed the presence of a well-rounded curriculum or other curricular issues; however, the interview data were strong enough to support its emphasis in the reform effort at School E.

External Support

The job of transforming School E required the support and assistance of external change agents, as evidenced by the principal and teacher interviews. To meet this arduous task, the administrator "called on friends from throughout his career to come help turn the school around." Through a powerful network of peers and colleagues, he used his connections to recruit teachers. He also reached out to local organizations to provide services for his students. The local education fund and a tutoring company were called in by the school leader to work with approximately 200 out of 400 students three days per week for personalized tutoring. These organizations helped to offer supplemental support to the students who needed the most help in meeting their academic goals. Although communication between these tutors and the regular classroom teachers could have been improved, the school leader was pleased with their commitment. Healthy snacks and transportation were provided, along with the human resources. Support for teachers came from various sources as well. One teacher commented about the tremendous help given by the district math coordinators. "Our math supervisor did an awesome workshop. She nailed inclusion," the teacher shared. This curricular support, combined with the tutoring services for students, helped teachers to feel more successful.

There were no survey questions that addressed external support; however, interview data sufficed for this reform element.

Parent/Community Involvement

Parent and community involvement at School E were discussed widely throughout the principal interview. From the start, the administrator loved the idea of turning schools around because of his investment in the community. "I worked in the neighborhood around the

school as a pool manager and developed a kinship with the people here. It has been a labor of love to serve as principal at this school," stated the school leader. His connections in the community have facilitated his efforts to build better relationships with businesses and civic leaders. He has been able to network politically around the city and has built good rapport with the city council, county commissioners, state representatives, and senators. These politicians have visited the school and made donations to support school resources.

The principal looked for this same commitment to the community in his interviews with teachers. He asked them to bring evidence of family support from their classrooms (e.g., newsletters and volunteer activities) and involvement with the surrounding community. He did not want to hire teachers who were "afraid of going into their homes or in their community."

Even though there were no survey questions that addressed parent and community involvement, the principal interview data provided adequate support for this element.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Mixed methods data analysis for this study revealed insight into the utilization and effectiveness of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework for school reform. After careful investigation, it was found that School B (high utilization) used all nine elements in their turnaround efforts, while Schools A and C (moderate utilization) provided evidence of six. Schools D and E (low utilization) utilized just five and four components respectively. These findings were then examined in light of the schools' level of improvement on the SAT-10 achievement test. The moderate to high utilization schools--A, B, and C--produced above average improvement on the standardized assessment. School E, a low utilization school, demonstrated average improvement and School D, also a low utilization site, exhibited below

average improvement. These findings support Futernick's (2007) assertion that a more robust reform plan is needed to turn around low-performing, high-poverty schools; however, they stop short of substantiating the notion that all nine elements are needed for success. A critique of the assumptions underlying his plan, as well as ideas for further study, will be explored in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

TESTING THE TIPPING POINT

Introduction

In today's culture of high-stakes accountability, schools must tackle the tremendous challenge of reaching the 2014 deadline of 100% proficiency for all subgroups on state tests in reading and math (United States Department of Education, Office of the Secretary, 2006). This NCLB requirement has created a particularly strong urgency in high-poverty schools across this country, which have traditionally lagged behind their more advantaged peers in rankings of standardized test scores (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Doherty & Abernathy, 1998). Scrambling for answers, many high-poverty schools have turned to the popular "reform du jour" to solve their academic accountability woes.

"Certainly most Americans would agree … that students who attend high-poverty schools have been sold short. And they would also agree that at least part of the remedy for this situation is to raise our expectations and to direct all available resources toward helping students fulfill them," says Lee (2003). But how exactly should the resources be utilized? Concurrence of educators, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders on this issue diverges when it comes to identifying the proper strategy for reform. "Poor kids need to focus on the basics of reading, writing, and math," argue a few. "We need to pay more attention to getting their parents involved," others counter. Still more contend, "What about

renovating their dilapidated buildings and giving them new books, lab equipment, and other resources?"

Indeed, the modus operandi for reform is vast and diverse. Various reform programs tout particular "silver bullets" for turning low-performing, high-poverty schools around. According to Futernick (2007), "We invest modestly in one reform measure and another and celebrate even the smallest gains" (p.3). Yet, unfortunately, these one-size-fits-all approaches frequently leave the schools worse off than when they started. Teachers, in particular, face the brunt of the challenges. Many grow weary of following one reform initiative after another. Feeling frustrated, these educators often migrate toward teaching assignments in less impoverished areas. As a result, administrators at high-poverty schools are then forced to scrounge to fill their classroom positions, frequently resorting to hiring uncertified, unqualified candidates simply to have a warm body in front of the students (Berry, 2004; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor & Wheeler, 2006).

Meanwhile, students at these low-performing, high-poverty schools must still be prepared for life in a twenty-first century world. According to the United States Department of Education's Office of the Secretary (2006), "A high school diploma, once desirable, is now essential--and, increasingly, insufficient. About 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs of the future will require some postsecondary education" (p.5). Employment in the new millennium involves flat worlds and global markets. It requires using technology efficiently, thinking critically, communicating effectively, and brainstorming collectively. It also entails creativity, innovation, and flexibility.

Thus, in 2007, it is not only a legal requirement (per the guidelines of NCLB) but also a moral imperative to prepare all students--especially high-poverty children--to meet the

demands of a twenty-first century education (Fullan, 2003). Indeed, schools must find a way to overcome the barriers of low socioeconomic status to ensure academic achievement for every child. Some schools have already managed to do so; however, these isolated pockets of success have not yet led to large-scale reform (Futernick, 2007; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002).

"If we look at the vast number of high-poverty schools that continue to fail decade after decade, we must admit that the remedies we've tried are capable of producing only limited results in most cases" (Futernick, 2007, p.3). Futernick (2007), therefore, responded to the call for transforming low-performing, high-poverty schools by outlining a robust plan for reform. His nine-point framework attempts to systematize the various components necessary to create a Tipping Point for change in these struggling buildings. According to the researcher, reform initiatives must address the elements of teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement. If schools design plans which encompass all of these "interlinking, essential supports," then their chances for success would dramatically improve (Futernick, 2007, p.5).

In this study, the reform activities of five reconstituted schools in one large southern school district were analyzed through the lens of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework to assess the extent to which the components were utilized. Once this initial level of analysis was complete, student achievement data were evaluated vis-à-vis the schools' utilization of the framework components. Overall, schools with above average improvement on the standardized tests (Schools A, B, and C) demonstrated evidence of more Tipping Point elements than those with average and below average improvement (Schools E and D

respectively). What do these results really mean? The researcher begins by offering a critique of Futernick's (2007) framework, followed by recommendations for further study.

<center>Critique of the Framework</center>

In Futernick's (2007) paper, *Excellence Loves Company*, the professor at California State University laid out a nine-point plan for reform. Just like many other researchers who focus on low-performing, high-poverty schools, he presented a compelling case for why change is necessary in these historically failing schools. The nine components of reform that he advocated are quite simply a common sense approach to transformation. It would be quite difficult to argue that any of the nine elements could not help a school turn itself around. But what is more complicated are the underlying assumptions implied by his plan. These four main assumptions include the following ideas: (1) The Tipping Point framework allows reformers to de-contextualize the condition of schools when designing turnaround plans; (2) All nine of Futernick's (2007) components are needed for school success; (3) Each element should be viewed as equally important; and (4) Everyone understands the defining principles of the nine components. In the remainder of this section, the researcher will carefully examine and critique each of these assumptions, based on the findings from this mixed methods study.

The first assumption underlying Futernick's (2007) framework is that the components inherent within the plan allow reformers to de-contextualize the circumstances surrounding impoverished schools so that attention is solely paid to the nine components brainstormed by the researcher. That is, a school's unique context is less important than the adoption and implementation of the components themselves. In essence, the context does not matter, since

Futernick (2007) contends that all low-performing, high-poverty schools should follow the same plan. This study revealed, however, that context *does* matter.

Just as educators should recognize the fallacy of adopting quick, simplistic silver bullets for success, they should also realize that reform efforts do not operate within a vacuum. Throughout this mixed methods study, variance in implementation of the nine framework components of teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement was observed across schools. All five schools were provided with the same turnaround plan for reform, yet the elements played out differently depending upon their uniquely different contexts.

Take, for instance, the case of class-size reduction. Although equal access to funding was offered to participating schools in order to reduce their class loads, the outcomes differed quite a bit across contexts. At one elementary school in the study, numerous candidates applied for jobs at the turnaround school because they wanted to work with the strong principal who had been recruited to lead the initiative. As a result, this administrator had no problem filling the extra positions needed to reduce class sizes. On the other hand, at a middle school across the district, hiring was not as fruitful. Recruitment incentives were offered to entice interested teachers to work there, but few took the bait. Consequently, class rosters in one grade level reached as high as 48 students per room. Even if more teachers had been hired though, the building lacked the space to accommodate them. The physical environment was simply inadequate.

These two exemplar schools demonstrate well the importance of context. The current conditions of low-performing, high-poverty schools must be considered when designing

implementation plans, rather than simply adopting a blanket framework of nine components. Futernick (2007) readily admits that his theory "lacks specificity and local perspective" (p.34); however, he fails to clearly recognize the degree to which schools' implementation of the framework may vary depending upon the context. Stakeholders with history and experience at the school must be able to utilize their knowledge of the unique culture and climate to make these key decisions. Reform simply cannot be de-contextualized.

A second assumption of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point theory is that the entire package of components is needed to garner success. But are *all nine* really needed for reform, as Futernick (2007) contends? Is it possible to improve student achievement if you lack attention to teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, or parent/community involvement?

According to the results of this mixed methods study, it *is* possible! While one school produced evidence of utilizing all nine components for reform, two others demonstrated the presence of just six elements and still resulted in above average improvement on the SAT-10 standardized tests. Furthermore, one school used only four and managed to receive an average improvement rating (a higher designation than a school, which utilized five elements). How could this be possible, if all nine components are needed for transformation? And what does this mean for Futernick's (2007) nine-pronged assertion?

For starters, the findings from this study support the researcher's notion that true reform cannot concentrate on just one or two elements of a school's culture and climate, as most turnaround plans currently do. A tipping point for reform must be leveraged in order to truly transform a school from an environment of low performance to an atmosphere of high

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expectations for success. Coordinated efforts for massive turnaround should be designed and implemented to disrupt the old ways of schooling and establish new strategies for teaching and learning. What is less clear is how many areas of reform must be addressed in order to spark school improvement.

According to the limited results of this study, utilization of a minimum of six components led to above average improvement on standardized tests. So does that mean that Futernick's (2007) framework should be reduced to six? Not necessarily, since the same six elements were not used across all successful schools. What should be changed, however, is the identification of any number as *the* magic number for reform. The benefit of Futernick's (2007) plan, as it is currently configured, is that it presents a robust, comprehensive look at school reform. The drawback is that it focuses *too much* on requiring all nine elements, when in fact, all nine may not need to be addressed (at least, not in the beginning). Schools and districts might be overwhelmed by the "all or nothing" mentality of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point plan. Instead of turning these schools away, his framework should serve as a guidebook for transformation, mapping out the various elements of a school that should be *considered* (not automatically adopted) when devising a reform initiative.

What's more, Futernick's (2007) declaration of nine discrete components fails to account for the fact that there might be other areas of reform in need of attention. For example, the five schools under investigation in this study all utilized reconstitution as part of their turnaround plans. Where would that strategy fall in Futernick's (2007) framework? It appears unclear at this point. And what about professional development? While it is tangentially related to a few of the present elements, it does not have its own discrete place in the framework although many schools need strong professional development plans to

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continually develop their teachers' knowledge and skills. Mentoring and induction for novices and student discipline are just a few of the other areas that also lack an appropriate place in the current reform plan.

A third assumption purported by Futernick (2007) is that the framework components all require equal attention. In his article, *Excellence Loves Company*, there is no discussion from Futernick (2007) about differentiating between high-priority versus low-priority areas of reform. Each of the nine elements is viewed as critical as the next. Is it feasible to believe that schools can change all nine components at once? What about schools and/or districts without the funding to do so? Is there ever any hope for schools in this predicament?

The research findings from this mixed methods study support a resounding answer of "yes;" there is hope. School E, with just four components, still managed to produce average improvement gains in reading and math, as compared to its middle school counterparts, after just one year of reform. While this school may not be viewed as successful as Schools A, B, and C (all with above average improvement), it should not go unnoticed that the turnaround school did improve significantly. Success was possible, even with just four of Futernick's (2007) nine components. Consequently, this finding negates the third assumption that all elements should receive the same attention. Again, in this case, evidence indicated that just four components were addressed and average success resulted. By adding just two more areas of reform [not the remaining five as Futernick (2007) would have you believe], Schools A and C reached above average improvement.

If schools want to improve, their *goal* may be to implement a comprehensive plan of all nine components; however, their *reality* may cause them to focus on just a few. The priority of these elements (i.e. which ones must be "fixed" first), the pace of reform (i.e. how quickly

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things can change), and the relative weight of importance (i.e. how much time and effort is comparatively expended on the various elements) cannot be dictated from the district, state, or federal levels.

At School B, for example, a great deal of attention was paid to creating a culture of autonomy and shared governance. Interestingly, this component stood out as the sole framework element to be found in only one school--the same school which also happened to utilize all nine components. So what makes autonomy and shared governance so important for educators? According to Futernick (2007):

> Democratically run schools are often more successful not just because parents and teachers acquire a sense of ownership and commitment; they are also more successful because critical decisions about the mission of the school, the way it is organized, what is taught and how, are better informed.

As the principal and her assistant at School B demonstrated, tapping into your resources (i.e. the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers and community members, in particular) allows school leaders to distribute leadership, rather than harboring all roles and responsibilities on their shoulders. A more inclusive, welcoming environment is therefore created, causing all stakeholders to feel a part of the change process.

Administrators in similar low-performing, high-poverty schools should find ways to tap into their own resources by surveying their staff for talented leaders and unleashing their potential to lead reform efforts. Parents should also be viewed as resources for transformation; that is, schools should unearth caregivers' talents and interests to partner with teachers and administrators for supporting school improvement. Further up the chain of command, district officials should tap into the school-based administrators as well as local teachers to brainstorm ideas and develop plans of actions. And of course, policymakers

should look to all of these stakeholder groups for feedback and guidance when crafting policies and procedures which will impact classrooms on a daily basis.

To improve Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point framework, the researcher recommends that more studies be conducted to ascertain whether reform components should be added or deleted. Once these findings are compiled, the resulting framework should be presented as a menu--rather than a recipe--for transformation to interested stakeholders. Schools could then pick and choose the areas they most need to address, based upon their respective needs and contexts, from a robust list of reform elements. Otherwise, Futernick's (2007) plan simply becomes a nine-pack of silver bullets.

A fourth and final assumption of Futernick's (2007) framework that should be examined is the idea that everyone views the nine components in the same manner. In *Excellence Loves Company*, the researcher fails to provide a clear set of operational definitions for teams, time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance, leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement. Brief sections within the document provide supporting evidence for the rationale to include the element; however, little information is included, which delineates what this component truly means when implementing school reform. Consequently, educators, policymakers, and other interested stakeholders are left to their own interpretations.

For this mixed methods study, an extensive literature review resulted in guiding principles and characteristics for identifying the nine elements in quantitative and qualitative data analysis. With no clearly defined set of terms from Futernick (2007), however, another researcher might end up with a slightly different analytical frame. How can Futernick (2007) expect schools to successfully implement reform plans when the possibility of

misinterpretation exists? Definitions must be fully developed and administrators trained on how to best address them in low-performing, high-poverty schools, in order for this plan to have longevity.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Study</div>

While this mixed methods study questioned four key assumptions inherent within Futernick's (2007) framework, there are numerous recommendations for further study that would deepen the knowledge base of understanding for this reform plan. These recommendations can be divided into three main categories: (1) additional ideas for study at the five identified sites; (2) opportunities for exploration in other schools; and (3) suggestions for framework development and refinement.

<div align="center">*Additional Ideas for Study at the Five Identified Sites*</div>

In Chapter Three, the limitations and delimitations of this study were outlined for the reader to understand the parameters within which the study was designed and implemented. Given there was only limited data available--both qualitative and quantitative--ideas for additional study at the five identified sites are extensive. For example, researchers could go back to these buildings now that several years of reform have transpired to take another look at the progress and improvement of these low-performing, high-poverty schools. Their current conditions may differ greatly than the interview and survey data revealed after just one year of implementation. In addition, interview protocols and survey questions tailored to the Futernick (2007) framework could be designed to specifically address the nine components. Teachers and administrators could also be asked to complete self-assessments of the presence of the reform elements, with supportive evidence provided in the form of artifacts contained within a school-wide portfolio.

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To increase the generalizability of Futernick's (2007) plan, exploration of reform activities in other schools in different contexts should be organized. The large southern school district in this study is certainly not the only district which has developed and implemented turnaround plans for their struggling schools. Therefore, it would be interesting to study the efforts of school leaders across a variety of contexts, from expansive urban school systems (e.g., New York City or Los Angeles) to small rural districts (e.g., those found in the Mississippi Delta or in the flatlands of Kansas). Additionally, it would be enlightening to compare the success of schools which had reform initiatives dictated to them versus those that developed a grassroots plan on their own. Are reform efforts more successful when generated by and for teachers and administrators? Can district-led efforts receive sufficient buy-in and support to create change? In all of these studies, both qualitative and quantitative data should be captured, using a variety of tools that directly address the components of the Tipping Point framework for reform.

Suggestions for Framework Development and Refinement

An assumption of this study has been that Futernick's (2007) nine components are indeed valid and important for turning low-performing, high-poverty schools around. Perhaps, however, this idea should be explored further in order to more fully develop and refine Futernick's (2007) framework. Are the nine components indeed necessary for improving all struggling schools? Do some have more weight than others in their importance and potential for impact? What role does the school context play in making choices about where to focus efforts? Are there other key factors that have been excluded? To answer these questions, successful high-poverty schools could be identified across the country, based on

comparative analysis of socioeconomic status and student achievement. Once these sites are

pinpointed, investigators could then conduct case study visits to evaluate whether the nine

elements of reform were, in fact, present in these schools. This cross-school examination

would help to validate and further explain the relative importance--and necessity--of teams,

time, physical environment, class-size reduction, autonomy and shared governance,

leadership, a well-rounded curriculum, external support, and parent/community involvement,

as well as other possible areas for reform.

Conclusion

> …[I]f dysfunctional schools are bi-modal and prone to regress unless they reach a
> threshold of stability, then this gradualist approach to reform is misguided. The theory
> presented in this Tipping Point proposal, by contrast, suggests that whatever is done
> for these schools, it must be sufficient to ensure they reach a threshold where change
> can be sustained. And it suggests that offering some help may be the equivalent of
> offering no help. In fact, more harm than good may be done if all that is provided to
> dysfunctional schools is the equivalent of two days' worth of antibiotics (Futernick,
> 2007, p.10).

Education in America stands at a crossroads. While we espouse that no child should be

left behind, we continue to act as if these students can make it on their own by failing to

provide them with the necessary tools, resources, and human capital to prepare them for a

twenty-first century world. If we truly believe that every child can--and should--receive a

robust, well-rounded education, then we must be willing to invest time and energy into

reforming the schools which need the most help. Across this country, high-poverty schools

continue to lack quality teachers, adequate facilities and resources, strong leadership, and

external support to bring about change. Rather than offer them "two days' worth of

antibiotics" (Futernick, 2007, p.10) through silver bullet-like reform initiatives, we should

instead ensure they have a long-term prescription for care. The children are depending on us.

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Appendix A:

School Profiles[1]

School A

- Grade levels: K-5

- Average daily membership: 355.2

- Percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch: 97.7

- Percentage of highly qualified teachers: 76.67

- AYP Status for 2005-06 (based on 2004-05 data): Made AYP (13 out of 13 goals);

    School Improvement (Year 1) - Delay

- Principal interview: Principal and assistant principal

- Teacher focus group: 10 teachers

- Survey response rate: 85.7%

School B

- Grade levels: K-5

- Average daily membership: 511.5

- Percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch: 96.7

- Percentage of highly qualified teachers: 87.88

- AYP Status for 2005-06 (based on 2004-05 data): Made AYP (17 out of 17 goals);

    School Improvement (Year 1) - Delay

- Principal interview: Principal and assistant principal

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[1]Data obtained from the 2004-05 State Board of Education School Report Cards.

- Teacher focus group: 6 teachers

- Survey response rate: 100%

School C

- Grade levels: 6-8

- Average daily membership: 415.1

- Percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch: 96.7

- Percentage of highly qualified teachers: 63.64

- AYP Status for 2005-06 (based on 2004-05 data): Did not make AYP (15 out of 17

  goals); School Improvement (Year 2)

- Principal interview: Principal only

- Teacher focus group: 3 teachers

- Survey response rate: 0% (school chose not to participate in the survey)

School D

- Grade levels: 6-8

- Average daily membership: 847.1

- Percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch: 90.1

- Percentage of highly qualified teachers: 72.22

- AYP Status for 2005-06 (based on 2004-05 data): Did not make AYP (13 out of 17

  goals); School Improvement (Year 6)

- Principal interview: Principal and 2 assistant principals

- Teacher focus group: 3 teachers

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- Survey response rate: 94.7%

School E

- Grade levels: 6-8

- Average daily membership: 380.4

- Percentage of students eligible for free/reduced lunch: 96.3

- Percentage of highly qualified teachers: 68.75

- AYP Status for 2005-06 (based on 2004-05 data): Did not make AYP (14 out of 17

  goals); School Improvement (Year 8)

- Principal interview: Principal only

- Teacher focus group: 5 teachers

- Survey response rate: 40.0%

Appendix B:

Principal Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself. What influenced your decision to come work here?

2. What was it that most influenced your decision to be the principal at this school?

3. What kinds of improvements or successes have you experienced at this school in the past year?

4. What is it that has prompted the successes you have experienced in your school?

5. How important was it to be able to hire new teachers for this school?

6. Let's talk next about your greatest needs for continuing to improve the quality of instruction for students in your school. What are the two things that would make the most difference for improving students' learning in this school?

7. If you could remove one barrier to improve teaching and student learning in your school, what would it be?

8. In closing, you've stepped onto an elevator and met a principal from another school who asks your advice about what you have learned that could be applied to helping to improve student learning in his/her school. What would you say to him/her about how to begin in the coming year to turn his/her school around with regard to student learning?

Appendix C:

Teacher Focus Group Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself. What do you teach? How long have you taught here at this school? In this district?

2. What was it that most influenced your decision to teach here?

3. What kinds of improvements or successes have you experienced at this school in the past year?

4. What is it that has prompted the successes you have experienced in your school?

5. Let's shift focus to your own classroom. What has prompted successes you have experienced in your classroom teaching?

6. What is your greatest need for continuing to improve the quality of your instruction for your students?

7. In closing, you've stepped onto an elevator and met a teacher from another school who you know is a great teacher. This friend shares with you that he/she is considering a move to a turnaround school and would like your advice about this decision. What would you say to this teacher in the thirty seconds that you have about what it would take to teach the students in your school?

Appendix D:

Online Survey Questions

Q3a. The student composition in my classes is reasonable to allow me to meet the educational needs of all students.

Q3b. I have reasonable class sizes, affording me the time to meet the educational needs of all students.

Q3c. Time in school is used efficiently to maximize student learning.

Q3d. The non-instructional time provided to me is sufficient to improve my teaching practices.

Q3f. The staff is committed to "whatever it takes" to help every student learn.

Q4a. I have sufficient access to instructional materials and resources.

Q4c. My school building is clean and well-maintained.

Q4d. My school is a safe and secure place to teach and learn.

Q5a. In my school, teachers are centrally involved in decision making about important educational issues.

Q5b. I am recognized as an educational expert and am trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.

Q5c. Useful information is readily available to me so I can make informed decisions.

Q5d. In my school we take steps to solve problems, we don't just talk about them.

Q5e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.

Q5f. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in my school.

Q5g. I feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to me.

Q5h. School leaders are proficient in establishing positive learning environments and efficient operations.

Q5i. My school leadership consistently supports me when I need it.

Q5j. My school leadership communicates clear expectations to students, teachers and parents.

Q5k. Overall, the leadership in my school is effective.

Alignment of Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point Framework with Extant Data

Futernick's (2007) Tipping Point Framework Component	Principal Interview Question	Teacher Focus Group Question	Online Survey Question
Teams	PI2, PI4, PI5, PI8	TFG2, TFG4, TFG5, TFG7	
Time	PI6, PI7, PI8	TFG5, TFG6, TFG7	Q3c, Q3d
Physical Environment	PI3, PI4, PI8	TFG3, TFG4	Q4a, Q4c, Q4d
Class-size Reduction	PI8	TFG5, TFG6, TFG7	Q3a, Q3b
Autonomy and Shared Governance	PI2, PI3, PI4, PI5, PI7, PI8	TFG2, TFG3, TFG4, TFG5, TFG7	Q3f, Q5a, Q5b, Q5c, Q5d, Q5e, Q5f, Q5g
Leadership	PI2, PI3, PI4, PI5, PI8	TFG2, TFG3, TFG4, TFG5, TFG7	Q5h, Q5i, Q5j, Q5k
A Well-rounded Curriculum	PI3, PI6, PI7, PI8	TFG3, TFG5, TFG6, TFG7	
External Support	PI2, PI8	TFG5, TFG7	
Parent/Community Involvement	PI3, PI4, PI5, PI6, PI7, PI8	TFG3, TFG4, TFG5, TFG6, TFG7	

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
Institutional Review Board

DETERMINATION WHETHER RESEARCH OR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES REQUIRE IRB APPROVAL *Version 22-Mar-2007*

Part 1. Contact Information, Agreements, and Signatures

Title of Study: The Tipping Point of Transformation: Assessing School Reform Efforts in Low-Performing, High-Poverty Schools

Date: April 24, 2007

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Name of funding source or sponsor:
_x_ not funded   __ Federal   __ State   __ industry   __ foundation   __ UNC-CH
__ other (specify): **Sponsor or award number**:

Applicant: I will notify the IRB if the scope of the activity changes in such a way that the answers on this form are no longer valid. I will ensure that all collaborators, students and employees assisting in this project are informed about these obligations. All information given in this form is accurate and complete.

_____   _____
Signature of Applicant   Date

Faculty Advisor if Applicant is a Student or Trainee: I accept ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this project complies with all the obligations listed above for the Applicant.

_____   _____
Signature of Faculty Advisor   Date

Part 2. Description of Research or Similar Activities

> 2.1. **Brief Summary of Purpose and Rationale**. Provide a summary of the background information, state the research questions and purpose, and indicate why the activity is being conducted. Include a brief summary of the methods and a description of data or biological samples to be used. Typical summaries are 100-150 words.

Summary: In many school reform efforts, schools develop strategies for changing discrete aspects of the environment in order to improve student learning. Unfortunately, these efforts often fail because they are attempted within a vacuum and do not account for the impact of the overall school culture. In one large southern school system, the district created a turnaround plan for five of its neediest schools (two elementary and three middle schools). Their plan included multiple strategies for reform including teacher and principal recruitment and performance bonuses, staff development programs, additional curriculum resources, and extra personnel. The manner in which this plan was implemented varied greatly across the five schools, although the district provided the same protocol for all. What then accounts for the differences in success? Why were some schools more successful than others in achieving true reform?

This study will conduct secondary analyses of data, which were originally collected by a research and policy non-profit in 2005. This organization was hired by the school district to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the district's turnaround plan in order to make recommendations for future reform efforts. Additionally, a regional educational laboratory contracted with the non-profit to conduct an online survey in three school systems in the same state (including the already studied district) to learn more about school working conditions and incentives for attracting and retaining teachers for hard-to-staff schools.

Data available for these five turnaround schools include both qualitative and quantitative information: (1) principal interviews; (2) teacher focus groups; and (3) staff survey responses to working conditions questions. Using Futernick's *Tipping Point* model as the theoretical framework, secondary analyses of the data will be conducted to determine each school's level of adherence to the model. These analyses will then be compared to the school's student learning outcomes on standardized tests.

> 2.2. **Which of the following describes your proposed activity?**

	Yes	No
2.2.1. Secondary analysis of existing data or specimens, deidentified or coded?	_x__	___
2.2.2. Program evaluation?	___	_x__
2.2.3. Class projects for educational purposes only?	___	_x__
2.2.4. QI/QA for internal purposes?	___	_x__
2.2.5. Center or core grants (to establish infrastructure)?	___	_x__
2.2.6. Training grants?	___	_x__
2.2.7. Demonstration projects?	___	_x__
2.2.8. Case study (publication of clinical scenario that has already occurred)?	___	_x__
2.2.9. Other? Explain _____	___	_x__

2.3. **Generalizable Knowledge.** Generalizable knowledge might include information presented to a broader audience or published with the intent of drawing scientific conclusions or increasing the body of scientific knowledge. This would not typically describe projects that are intended solely for internal assessment purposes, such as quality improvement/assurance, and program evaluations. Will the proposed activity result in the development of or contribution to generalizable knowledge?

_x__ yes   ____ no   If no, please explain.

2.4. **Living Individuals.** Are you planning to obtain data from or about living individuals?

_x__ yes   ____ no   Please explain.

The data have already been collected from living human beings. The applicant will have no contact with these individuals as secondary analyses of deidentified existing data will be completed.

2.5. **Direct Interaction with Individuals.** Will you be collecting data via direct interaction with individuals (any contact with subjects including questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation, treatment interventions, etc.)?

___ yes   _x__ no

2.6. **Description of Existing Records, Data, Human Biological Specimens**. What existing records, data or human biological specimens will you be using? *(indicate all that apply)*:

	Yes	No
2.6.1. a. Data already collected from another research study?	_x__	____
b. If yes, was applicant involved in the original collection?	_x__	____
If yes, please explain role: The applicant was employed by the Center for Teaching Quality when the organization was hired to assess the progress of the turnaround plan implemented by the southern school district. Of the 32 individuals interviewed, she only had contact with the five principals. She was not involved at all with the online survey process.		
2.6.2. a. Patient specimens (tissues, blood, serum, surgical discards, etc.)?	___	_x__
b. If yes, has the purpose for which they were collected been met before removal of any excess? n/a	___	___
2.6.3. Data already collected for administrative purposes?	___	_x__
2.6.4. Medical records data?	___	_x__
2.6.5. Electronic data from a clinical (i.e., not a research) database?	___	_x__
2.6.6. Publicly available data?	___	_x__
2.6.7. Other? Explain:	___	_x__

→ If you have answered "yes" to any of the items 2.6.1 through 2.6.7, provide a description of the data you propose to use, describing the type of data, how they were collected (including consent procedures), and where they currently reside.

The existing data set includes the following information: (1) principal interviews; (2) teacher focus groups; and (3) staff survey responses to working conditions questions. The principal interview and teacher focus group data were collected during a study conducted by a research and policy non-profit in August 2005. Consent forms were distributed and explained to participants, prior to the start of the

interview and focus group sessions. All individuals were promised anonymity and confidentiality. The staff survey responses to working conditions questions were compiled during the administration of an online survey in December 2005 by the same organization. Individuals were asked to provide select demographic information; however, all identifiers have been removed except the name of the school in which the participants teach.

2.7. **Private Information.** Private information includes information about behavior that occurs in a context that an individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (e.g., a medical or school record). Public information might include information that is publicly available or from observation of public behavior (e.g., seatbelt use, use of bicycle lanes, etc.). Are the data for your project private?

_x__ yes   ___ no   If no, explain:

2.8. **HIPAA.** Do any of these data come directly from a health plan, health care clearinghouse, or health care provider? (See http://www.unc.edu/hipaa/index.htm for more about HIPAA.)

___ yes   _x__ no

2.9. **Identifiers in Existing Data.** Do the data you will receive have any of the following identifiers?

_x_ No   __ Yes   *If yes, check all that apply*:

a. __ Names
b. __ Telephone numbers
c. __ Any elements of dates (other than year) for dates directly related to an individual, including birth date, admission date, discharge date, date of death. For ages over 89: all elements of dates (including year) indicative of such age, except that such ages and elements may be aggregated into a single category of age 90 and older
d. __ Any geographic subdivisions smaller than a State, including street address, city, county, precinct, zip code and their equivalent geocodes, except for the initial three digits of a zip code
e. __ Fax numbers
f. __ Electronic mail addresses
g. __ Social security numbers
h. __ Medical record numbers
i. __ Health plan beneficiary numbers
j. __ Account numbers
k. __ Certificate/license numbers
l. __ Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers (VIN), including license plate numbers
m. __ Device identifiers and serial numbers (e.g., implanted medical device)
n. __ Web universal resource locators (URLs)
o. __ Internet protocol (IP) address numbers
p. __ Biometric identifiers, including finger and voice prints

q. __ Full face photographic images and any comparable images
r. __ Any other unique identifying number, characteristic or code, other than dummy identifiers that are not derived from actual identifiers and for which the re-identification key is maintained by the health care provider and not disclosed to the researcher

2.10. **Coded Data.** Coded data are those for which identifying information (see the list in 2.9) that would enable the investigator to readily ascertain the individual's identity has been replaced with a number, letter, symbol, or combination thereof (i.e., a code) that cannot be linked to the original individual.

2.10.1 Are the data coded?   ___ yes   _x__ no

2.10.2. Will you have access to a key that deciphers the code, enabling linkage of identifying information to private information or samples?

          ___ yes   _x__ no

If you have answered "yes" to 2.10.2 you must apply for IRB approval. Please complete the form "Application for IRB Approval of Human Subjects Research" available from the Office of Human Research Ethics website.

If you have answered "no" to 2.10.2, identify the mechanism which precludes your access to the codes and include a copy of any agreements or documents that explain these protections:

	Yes	No
2.10.2.1. Data use agreement (agreement prohibiting the release of the key to decipher the code to the applicant under any circumstances)?	___	_x__
2.10.2.2. Data are publicly available?	___	_x__
2.10.2.3. Honest broker (centralized custodian who controls data and will not release codes or IDs)?	_x__	___
2.10.2.4. Other. Explain _____	___	_x__

→   If the answers to the questions above do not direct you to apply for IRB approval using the form "Application for IRB Approval of Human Subjects Research," submit this completed application to the IRB for determination if your activity requires further IRB review and approval.

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