

**EXAMINING ELEMENTS OF CHANGE  
IN FOUR SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is extensive literature about the role of the principal in creating a school culture that fosters a positive school climate. How the principal addresses staff culture is among the many issues that affect lasting change. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the activities and behaviors of four suburban high school principals and how they influence change.

Cross-case site analysis utilizing ethnographic method of investigation was conducted in four suburban high schools to examine how principals influence change. The culture of each school site was examined from the perspective of principals and department chairpersons concerning elements of change.

Data were collected through interviews with principals and department chairpersons. The Developmental Research Sequence (D.R.S.) model was used to identify a set of specific dimensions for more in-depth investigation. This process of analysis provided a method for focusing the study to discover cultural themes and patterns about how principals influence change in high schools. Triangulation of data was addressed by using multiple data sources and multiple method data analysis.

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The major findings of this study were that principals who influenced change demonstrated a high degree of interest and care for school community members on a professional and personal level. Principals who valued what and how people thought were recognized as being connected to the school culture. It was through this awareness that principals could then channel ideas and provide opportunities to involve people in the change process. Principals recognized for using this type of approach cultivated and nourished a culture that was open to examining and entertaining change for both personal and professional growth and improvement.

These results will have implications for educational practitioners who recognize the significance of change as a fundamental ingredient in today's educational climate and modern day society.

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## **DEDICATION**

To Barbara, who provided me with the time, energy, and moral support to complete this endeavor. Your confidence was a beacon for me each step of the way.

To my parents, Pat and Elizabeth, who instilled in me the value and power of education and who consistently encouraged all their children to pursue their dreams.

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

Schools are comprised of many complex and unique social systems that perform various organization functions, such as administrators, department chairpersons, and Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). In the past two decades public education has been charged to "reinvent itself," generated by a push for reform from researchers, politicians, and the public. The process for implementing new instructional programs and bringing about organizational change affects the very core of the structure and function of the school's social system.

Examination of current reform efforts and the process of change has focused on relationships and dynamics that exist in schools. Teachers are one significant element within this social system who play a critical role in the change process. Their role is unique in carrying out the day-to-day activities of the school organization. The majority of their time is spent in isolation from colleagues, with the primary responsibility of educating students assigned to them. Consequently, they are masters of their own classrooms and to a large extent determine the day-to-day activities for their students within a set of prescribed guidelines.

Teachers' response to change has often been characterized as resistant. Examples of this resistance are best illustrated with the advent of new educational reforms such as technology, block scheduling, and shared decision-making, all of which have been received with varying degrees of success. Chauvin (1992) found in her research the primary reason for this hesitation stems from teachers' perceptions of different organizational roles. They are grounded in how change affects their daily lives and the lives of students and feel that change must be meaningful to their instructional setting if it is to be considered.

## **The Principal**

Another element of the school's social system is the role of the principal. To better define what successful principals do, studies have been conducted on principals and the impact of their leadership styles. Researchers have documented that principals play a critical role in influencing reform initiatives and are recognized as instrumental in the complex process of effecting school improvement and organizational change (Hall & Hord, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Their role is best defined as "change agents" who facilitate the process of reform.

Consequently, the expectations of teachers and principals within this social system are different when confronted with change. Teachers tend to view change in respect of how it will impact their role in the classroom and ability in carrying out their teaching responsibilities. The visionary leadership principals provide in directing school culture must be grounded in a purpose which is meaningful to teachers, if change is to occur. Therefore, it is through the development of this relationship and the degree of understanding between principals and teachers which ultimately determines the environment for change (Vandenberghe, 1988).

Research conducted by Hall, Rutherford, Hord, & Huling (1984) examined principals' ability to bring about change in schools. These studies found a clear relationship between teachers' success in implementing new curriculum practices and a particular principal's leadership style.

Although the role of principal continues to be analyzed and refined, research has verified the fact that school culture is reflective of the cooperation and mutual respect for the total school population (Goodlad, 1984). This culture creates a positiveness which, in turn, leads to an effective learning environment for faculty and students. Principals are ultimately responsible for the instructional effectiveness of schools; however, other members of the school's community share

in the implementation and application of new and different instructional practices in the classroom. If the instructional program is to be a priority for the principal, then it must be implemented through a collaborative and interactive culture. All members of the school must feel comfortable sharing, delegating, and assuming aspects of responsibility.

## **Department Chairperson**

The role of department chairperson has been identified as critical in directing what should be going on with instruction in teachers' classrooms. Their position is crucial to communication between the principal and teaching staff for influencing the direction, impact, and success of curriculum matters.

Examining the perceptions of department chairpersons with regard to how principals influence change in school culture will provide a more accurate picture of what is really happening in the classroom. The reasons for selecting department chairpersons' participation are: Depth of knowledge about school-based and districtwide curriculum issues, years of teaching experience, and degree of contact with the principal concerning operational as well as long-term planning issues. The level of awareness department chairpersons have concerning school culture provides a greater depth of understanding of the "big picture." Their perceptions of how principals influence change will provide a more complete assessment in the analysis of the total school's culture.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Current leadership theories have further defined the nature of the principal's role as a significant element within the context of school culture. Their role in schools today have become even more critical because of the emphasis placed on school-based leadership for initiating

educational reform and restructuring. Their role is seen as pivotal in facilitating and fostering change relative to the total school program. The purpose of this investigation is to examine the activities and behaviors of principals and how they influence change in schools.

## **Problem Statement**

Roles and responsibilities of principals have expanded dramatically in the course of the last decade. Two of the most important aspects of the principal's role are implementing the instructional program and the creating organizational structure of the school community as a whole.

A real-life description of school culture is called for to achieve a more in-depth examination of principals' influence. Examining the culture of schools from the perspective of both principals and department chairpersons will provide a richer and more detailed picture of the total school environment. This type of naturalistic inquiry will provide a powerful description of the activities and behaviors of principals who influence a school's culture. How do principals in selected suburban high schools influence change?

## **Study Questions**

1. Who causes school culture to change?
2. Who originates change in schools?
3. What activities and behaviors of principals can be identified as influencing change?
4. What are the perceptions of department chairs of how principals influence change?
5. What cultural characteristics are unique to those schools studied as they undergo change?

6. What other factors are thought to correlate with change in those schools studied that implement change?

## **Significance of Study**

The results of this investigation will have implications for practitioners who recognize the significance of restructuring as a fundamental ingredient to school reform. Implications of this research can provide additional insight concerning restructuring efforts as well as defining and redefining roles, practices, and models of leadership.

The researcher will offer practitioners involved in this study another process to analyze their roles within their school cultures. This process could be helpful in establishing a baseline of information and determining a direction for future dialogue and emphasis. The findings could provide insight for principals and staff members for future activities that lend themselves to continued professional growth and development.

The examination of roles and responsibilities that are critical in shaping the culture of schools is grounded in the purpose of our educational system--the physical, emotional, and academic development of students. The understanding of behaviors, characteristics, and activities of principals and how they influence the culture of schools has implications for efforts to continue improving the effectiveness of schools' educational programs.

The findings from this study can be used by teacher education and administrative training programs in the delivery of curriculum, critical for preparing future educational leaders.

## Limitations of Study

The definition of change is not consistent in education. For different educational practitioners, it has different meanings. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the concept of change is considered to impact school culture from both organizational and instructional perspectives.

The second limitation is the diverse level of knowledge and understanding of the concepts of change, reform, and leadership among respondents. Experience and present roles appear to have influenced responses.

The generalizability of results from a small sampling -- four principals and 20 department chairs from four high schools -- is recognized as another limitation.

Data collection took place during the late winter and early spring of school year 1996-97. Data collected in the fall of the school year may have yielded different interpretation and results, as school was just getting underway.

The study was limited to four high schools in a large suburban school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the country. The term "large school" (more than 1500 students) versus "small school" (fewer than 1500 students) may not be viewed similarly in other parts of the country. Results may have differed in other types of schools or districts.

## Operational Definition

**Change agent** - an individual who facilitates the process of a new initiative or reform.

**Culture** - school staff social organization: the beliefs, perceptions, celebrations, and traditions teachers hold in common.

**Department chair** - an individual recognized as the head of an area of curriculum within an educational organization.

**Diversity** - as defined by different ethnic and socioeconomic groups of the total school population.

**High school** - grades 9-12.

**Large school** - student enrollment of more than 1,500 students.

**Principal** - the lead school-based supervisor at the high school level.

**Restructuring, reform, and change** - terms used to define the movement to rebuild America's public education system.

**School community** - includes students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, business leaders, and political affiliations.

**Small school** - student enrollment of less than 1,500 students.

**Vision** - a statement that expresses the direction and intentions of a particular organization.

## CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

*Education is a great ocean. Storms of change travel across its surface, only to die and be reborn in another season. Below the surface, life goes on at the slow pace of Darwinian evolution. (Stanley Elam, Kappan Editor)*

The idea and evolution of change are reflected in the history of education. Where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going all have been influencing factors in charting the direction of educational change. As each new paradigm about educational change appears, the organizational structure and culture in which it exists evolve. This is representational of the process and the organizational structure of K-12 education. Change is continuous and a constant process of revitalization and growth that takes time (Fullan, 1993).

To understand the present, we must examine the past, which will help to define the future because of the evolutionary nature of change. In the 21st century, the one constant we will be able to rely on is change (Carrow-Moffett, 1993). This literature review on educational change focuses on those involved in the process and how they have been influenced by the paradigm of change. The process of educational change has evolved with each new revelation. Solutions appear to be achievable. However, school reform is marked by isolated success stories and a myriad of failures (Sarason, 1990). This review of literature illustrates that issues of concern to educators include (1) why change is important, (2) the concept of change, (3) school culture, (4) the role of the principal, (5) the role of the department chairperson, and (6) resistance to change.

## Why Change?

*If improvement is continual, change is inevitable. (Spillane, 1996)*

Reports and examination of K-12 education over the past two decades have been critical of public education for not meeting the needs of children in today's society (*A Nation at Risk*, 1983; *A Nation Prepared*, 1986; Ernest Boyer's *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*, 1988; *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, 1996). A wealth of information has been generated that points to the failure of public education.

In 1971, Sarason wrote on the failed curriculum innovation known as "new math" that would propel American school children ahead of the Russians in the space race:

. . . the stimulus for change came primarily from outside the school culture; there was little or no attention to the characteristic regularities of the institutional culture and their possible social and psychological correlates; and there seemed to be the un verbalized assumption that the goals of change could be achieved independent of any change in these regularities. (Sarason, 1971, p. 36)

Theodore Sizer's analogy in *A Parable of War* (1989) illustrated a similar set of circumstances in relationship to educational improvement driven by mandates. In his example, soldiers are told that because of a recent mandate, their weapons must shoot further and with greater accuracy. The soldiers received no additional training and the weapons they used were the same prior to the enactment of the mandate.

The outcomes or intended results were identified without the plan, resources, and focus needed. The army continued to fight for the sake of fighting. The objectives and lack of planning and available resources created a disjointed agenda that did not meet the goal. This example is a classic case of those setting standards not having any direct involvement in preparing and implementing a change initiative. Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) identified this phenomenon in

education as change for the sake of change with no meaning or purpose. The results of such efforts will only continue to fall short and exasperate those attempting to bring about change.

The idea of reform is not new to schools. Yet most of the so-called reform efforts have resulted in nothing more than cosmetic changes (Sarason, 1990). Cuban (1990) defined these efforts as first order, which are mechanical in a sense. First-order changes might address logistical operations of a school, such as scheduling and graduation requirements. For any significant difference to occur, second-order change is necessary. Second-order change might address how teachers utilize instructional time in their classrooms from both a theoretical framework and a sound pedagogy. Second-order change becomes an integrated part of a system, whereas first-order change is simply laid on top of the system.

The efforts of change and restructuring have been bureaucratic and complicated by the lifestyle and demographics of the American culture. In the past 50 years the United States has changed from an agrarian economy, to an industrial economy, to a service-oriented economy. Many educators have complained that schools are being asked to assume too many responsibilities. While these and other changes have occurred, American high schools have continued to stay relatively unchanged (Gainey, 1994). Schools today operate and serve students much in the same manner as they did more than a century ago.

Although education has attempted to keep pace with our changing society, society's unrealistic expectations and plans have not influenced the core of our educational system (Schlechty, 1992). To be fully integrated, these changes have to reach into the attitudes, beliefs, and values of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other stakeholders involved in each school community (Fullan, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Over the past four decades, the direction of educational change can be defined by three specific waves of reform, from the sciences to politics to culture. An overview of each of these approaches to school improvement provides a historical perspective of where we have been and why. From the late 1950s to the 1970s, the rational-scientific or research and development (R & D) perspective was in vogue. Through the process of scientific inquiry, valid information could be gained. Therefore, a sound approach and application of proven methods could be applied for improvement.

The next wave of reform in the early 1980s relied on political mandates for change at the federal, state, and local levels. The philosophy of this approach assumed that laws would force schools to meet certain conditions. This top-down approach only met the needs of politicians and legislators who enacted the reform and further frustrated educators.

Sashkin and Egermeier (1993) saw the dominant approach in the 1990's for change and school restructuring efforts has focused on the cultural perspective. This approach is focused on the school or district as a distinct entity and asserts that improvements occur only with changes in values and expectations. This perspective evolved as a result of the school climate movement. Educators looked to the business and corporate communities and adopted initiatives that were similar in nature, such as Total Quality Management and shared decision-making. Bottom-up restructuring efforts of the 1990s were founded on the behavior of each individual to influence organizational culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Through this understanding of shared beliefs and values, an organization can become a dynamic and powerful culture (Sashkin & Kiser, 1991).

## Concept of Change

*The time between introduction of a new idea and system-wide implementation takes decades; change is a process, not an event. (Helminski, 1992)*

Change is a process of coming to grips with new personal meaning, and therefore is a learning process. A prerequisite for success is to understand that all change involves learning. Learning is a process that shapes the beliefs, values, and assumptions one holds. Through this learning process, a deeper sense of ownership and understanding can develop. A climate that encourages individuals to be risk-takers who are willing to venture into uncertainty must be developed.

Without this type of environment no significant change will occur (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Marris (1986) stated the problem this way:

When those who have the power to manipulate changes act as if they have only to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own. For the reformers have already assimilated these changes to their purposes, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months or years of analysis and debate. If they deny others the chance to do the same, they treat them as puppets dangling by the threads of their own conceptions. (p. 166)

Change is a process that occurs gradually over a long period of time (Guskey, 1990; Hord et al., 1987; Joyce et al., 1989). It is accomplished by individuals and is, therefore, a personal experience (Hord et al., 1987). With the advent of any change we are required not only to learn something new, we must also "unlearn" something. Part of the process of change is the integration of new perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors into one's sense of self. In the literature on school culture, Schein (1985) called this "cognitive transformation."

If we can see how change fits with our personal vision, the integration process is greatly enhanced. Teachers will relate to change in terms of what it will do for them (Hord et al., 1987). It is the unlearning process that is at the root of most resistance (Schein, 1987).

Facilitators of change must remember the personal nature of change. Lasting change must not be sanctioned or imposed by a fiat (Miller, Cohen, & Sayre, 1985). The literature indicates that change is not easy; it requires the time and coordinated efforts of groups of individuals who are willing to work together and share common goals (Fullan, 1993). Educational leaders who are responsible for influencing change must engage in a participatory process that allows members of the culture to contribute and take on responsibility and ownership of change. This idea of "buy in" will help to fuel the process of change that will result in improving the process of change. Lober (1991) emphasized that

When people are involved in the decision-making process, and decisions are reached through shared decision-making and consensus, the participants feel a sense of 'ownership' in the decisions. It has been said that 'When you help write it, you underwrite it. (p. 24)

Models that describe change have common elements; however, each model also contains unique views of the change process. Three studies related to change efforts include the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) developed in the early 1970s (Hall & Rutherford, 1975), Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (I/D/E/A) (Lieberman, 1995), and Rand Change Agent study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977).

The CBAM model provides focus on the user and seven levels of concern that individuals go through as they experience organizational change (Hall & Rutherford, 1975). This model focuses on teachers and how they react to incremental change, such as new curriculum, as opposed to large-scale change initiatives.

The first five stages in the model relate to participant readiness: (1) awareness of concern, (2) informational concerns, (3) personal concerns, (4) management concerns, and (5) concerns about consequences. The last two stages of the model are collaboration and refocusing concerns that are

related to implementation and evaluation of the process. In each of the seven steps, strategies and techniques are identified to support participants in the change process.

The CBAM model is a useful framework; however it is critical to remember that change is not a linear process. Organizations are composed of individuals who are unique organisms that process information in different ways. Acceptance of different elements of change initiatives will occur at different rates and in a chaotic order. The value of the CBAM studies is in the fact that change is accomplished by individuals.

The I/D/E/A study examined change as it relates to school improvement efforts. This study provided a three-stage process that included dialog, decisions, and action. In the dialog stage, teachers discuss new ideas, their ability to perform new roles, and the resources they would need to assist them in their efforts. In the second stage, decisions are made and, as in the CBAM model, management concerns dominate the process of change. The third stage is action that brings about implementation of new plans and changes in the status quo. This fourth and final stage is marked by development, which is a result of interaction and collaboration of staff members.

The stages repeat as members of the organization continues to explore new ideas and ask questions. This study is important because it emphasizes the importance of subgroups addressing and dealing with problems in a collaborative format to initiate change and improvement.

The Rand Change Agent Study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977) provides a focus on the role of the change agent in implementing changes in organizations. The study showed that two criteria -- a supporting setting and plan for change -- must be in place for change to be considered and accepted. The study indicated that leadership is critical to enact change and that the leader is pivotal in guiding the process. In addition, the Rand study emphasized the need for ongoing

communication about the change process reinforced by training and resources during the period of change.

Although each study examined different elements relative to the process of change, they used similar processes. The true value of the three studies was seen when they were examined together. This comprehensive review of the trends and findings revealed that active participation, face-to-face interactions, opportunities to learn new behaviors, local materials development, and support from a leader were crucial to the process.

These three studies laid a foundation for change used by educators today. The evolution of these findings has resulted in the current thinking on change. Change is: a process, not an event; accomplished by individuals; a highly personal experience; involved with developmental growth; and best understood in operational terms. The focus of facilitation should be on individuals, innovations, and the context in which it occurs (Hord et al., 1987; Fullan, 1993).

The three studies identified the element of readiness as an essential part of the change process. Readiness must be approached in terms of both the individual and the organization. For an individual to consider change, change must be needed and appear reasonable, and time must be provided for implementation. Change must be compatible with organizational culture, resources must be available, and new changes must be prioritized with existing initiatives (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Firestone (1989) referred to readiness as the organization's capacity to initiate, develop, or adopt a given innovation.

One of the key things a leader can do is create readiness for change -- an often-overlooked dimension of the change process (Conley, 1993). Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) reminds us "that above all planning must consider the pre-implementation issues of whether and how to start, and what readiness conditions might be essential prior to commencing" (p. 111).

Readiness for change becomes its own independent dimension of the change process. It involves the school's practical and conceptual capacity to initiate, develop, or adopt a given innovation, or the capacity to use reform in term of "individual" and "organizational" factors (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Understanding the rationale for change and the conceptual framework within which it exists provide the opportunity for participants to engage in the process at a different and more fundamental level (Fullan, 1993).

Throughout the literature it is documented that there is an early period of difficulty with change that Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) has labeled the "implementation dip." Even in cases where reform eventually succeeds, things will often go wrong before they go right. Huberman & Miles (1984) found that absence of early difficulty in a reform effort is usually a sign that not much was being attempted. In essence, superficial or trivial change was being substituted for substantial change (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Several studies have documented that implementation problems rather than the nature of the attempted change are the cause for failure (Sarason, 1971; Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Berman & McLaughlin (1977) found that the scope of selected change and implementation strategies had greater impact on success than did the actual nature of change itself.

Huberman & Miles (1984) described several factors as likely to contribute to successful implementation. These factors were degree of preparedness, provision for materials and resources, user commitment and understanding, ongoing aid and inservice training, team meetings, administrative support, peer consultation, and access to external consultants.

Louis & Miles (1990) found sources of implementation problems to be communication, lack of staff skills, slow progress, disagreement over desired activities, a highly ambitious project plan, faculty time and energy, maintaining interest, resources, staff development, physical plant

constraints, unanticipated crises, and competition from other change programs. Concerns for implementation become a significant element in bringing about planned change (Beach, 1993).

There can be no blueprints for change because rational planning models for complex social change do not work. Louis and Miles (1990) advocate utilizing a guided approach that can evolve throughout the change event.

The evolutionary perspective rests on the assumption that the environment both inside and outside organizations is often chaotic. No specific plan can last for very long, because it will either become outmoded due to changing external pressures, or because disagreement over priorities arises within the organization. Yet there is no reason to assume that the best response is to plan passively, relying on incremental decisions. Instead, the organization can cycle back and forth between efforts to gain normative consensus about what it may become, to plan strategies for getting there, and to carry out decentralized incremental experimentation that harnesses the creativity of all members to the change efforts . . . Strategy is viewed as a flexible tool, rather than a semi-permanent expansion of the mission. (p. 193)

Fullan (1993) explained this process as "Do, then plan . . . and do and plan some more."

Loucks (1983) also noted the importance of this time of implementation planning that extends beyond the training phase. This type of continual adjustment can help staff members better adopt to the needs of their own situations.

Fullan (1993) found that problems are often the only route to deeper change and deeper satisfaction. Effective responses to complex situations cannot be developed unless those involved are actively seeking and confronting real problems. Through this type of process creative solutions can be implemented and can strike at the heart of change. Fullan & Miles (1992) noted that successful schools do not have fewer problems than other schools; they just know how to cope with them better. Good coping strategies are active, assertive, inventive, and go directly to the root of the problem.

The process and management of change are most effective when carried out by a cross-role group of individuals from the school community (Fullan & Miles, 1992). The involvement of

teachers, department chairpersons, administrators, students, and parents is critical for second-order change to happen. Benne (1952) remarked more than 40 years ago that the skills of cooperative work should be a vital part of the general education of our people. Second-order change alters the structure of an organization, striking at core values, ideas, and roles of individuals in the culture. Collaborative work cultures that redefine the roles and responsibilities of teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members is the best means for effecting second-order change.

Sarason (1990) claimed that the predictable failure of educational reform rests, to a large extent, on existing power relationship in schools: relationships among teachers and administrators, parents and school staffs, and students and teachers. The links to most change efforts are tied to altering power relationships and are analogous to reorganization in large business today (Leithwood, 1992).

Rossmann, Corbett, & Firestone (1988) observed that incentives, learning time, and institutionalization of rules are important elements in internalization, which is fundamental to the continuation of change. As noted by Fullan, empirical evidence further suggests that planning must be continued throughout the life of a project and that plans must continuously evolve (Berman, 1981; Berman & McLaughlin, 1975).

Tyack (1990) argued that because of the cyclical history of school reform, educators have adapted a healthy skepticism toward new ways to improve schools. Change may threaten and disturb us, but as Rich (1989) says, "change is necessary for growth." Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) acknowledges that the primary task should be to get better at change.

## **School Culture**

*Building collaborative cultures involves a long developmental journey: there are no shortcuts (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).*

Culture is defined by Gibson, Ivancevich, & Donnelly (1985) as a unique system of values, beliefs, and norms that members of an organization share. Deal & Kennedy (1982) define culture as an abstraction that ties to the unconscious side of the organization. It consists partially of recurrent and predictable behavior patterns known to members of a community (Firestone & Corbett, 1988).

Culture is a learned process of expectations and norms, and it is an important factor relative to improving schools. Core values of school culture are beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions that school community members hold about their work. These factors together comprise a theory of organizational acceptability that guides how people behave and operate (Sergiovanni, 1996). To change school theory, the underpinning of the system, values, beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions must be altered to permit the system to shift in orientation and thinking, allowing it to develop new paradigms.

Serious attention to the relationship between staff culture and new change initiatives or reform efforts must be considered. Personalities, attitudes, emotions, and relationships all play a critical part. Research supports the effects of school culture on student learning, as well as teacher productivity and well-being (Joyce, Bennett, & Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990).

As Deal & Peterson (1990) point out, expectations and norms of an organization comprise the dynamic social system of complex interrelationships and symbolic webs. Within the larger school culture, smaller unique cultures will exist that can influence, accommodate, or resist change (Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Research has shown that when teachers and administrators work together in planning and implementing change, the chance for success is enhanced (Purkey & Smith, 1983; Sarason, 1990). This type of collaborative school climate appears in varying degrees in schools today as an attempt

to balance the relationship between teachers and administrators. Sarason (1990) noted that change in traditional power relationships takes time. Simply changing power relationships without changing other areas does not guarantee success. New solutions must be shown to not only work as reliably and as effectively as the old solutions but better (Hord et al., 1987; Joyce et al., 1989; Sarason, 1990).

Conley (1993) found that movement from bureaucracy to community and from isolation to collaboration involves cultural changes. Managing the change process within a cultural context is influenced by the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames of reference that a leader employs when analyzing an organization. To understand fully the culture of a school, one must have an understanding and appreciation of the culture of the community (Benjamin & Gard, 1993). Cunningham & Gresso (1993) define school culture as "an informal understanding of the way we do things around here." The operational sense of the organization is thus better understood by the people and their actions than by the hierarchical structure.

Schools can be improved when organizational culture is controlled and improved. Individual behavior is significantly influenced by the culture of the organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Studies have shown that "better schools" have a culture where teachers enjoy work and help establish a disciplined environment. School personnel also expect their students to achieve (Kritek, 1986).

Bennis (1984) reminds us that

. . . vision, purposes, beliefs, and other aspects of organizational culture are of prime importance. Symbolic expression becomes the major tool of leadership, and leadership effectiveness is no longer defined as a "9-9 grid score" or a "system 4" position. Effectiveness is instead measured by the extent to which 'compelling vision' empowers others to excel; the extent to which meaning is found in one's work; and the extent to which individual and organization are bonded together by common commitment in a mutually rewarding symbiotic relationship. (p. 70)

What sets high achieving schools apart from those which are less effective is not simply the presence of particular norms and values, but the fact that most members support them (Firestone & Corbett, 1988). Teachers have a common sense of purpose, high expectations for students, and available resources and opportunities to plan their own solutions to problems (Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). The idea of teachers as part of the learning process is part of the whole school educational mantle (Henke, 1990). In effective schools, teachers value norms of collegiality and continuous growth and improvement (Barth, 1990; Little, 1982). Growth opportunities through staff development is one method for altering the culture of schools (Rosenholtz, 1989; Hopkins, 1990). Transforming the culture through professional activities of teachers is a powerful means for creating a workplace where collaboration and innovations become the norm (Brandt, 1990).

The number of variables and factors that are part of the change process result in a wide spectrum of dynamic progressions. Educational researchers over the past several decades have learned that there are no absolute solutions, but a set of suggestions or implications dependent on the particular organizational setting (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). The unique conditions within an institution undergoing change were found to be critical in differentiating successful from less successful implementation efforts (Firestone & Corbett, 1988; Fullan, 1985; Huberman & Miles, 1984). The individual institutional setting is another significant criterion; the process of change cannot be universally applied, but needs to be distinctly different for each setting.

Each institution has a set of institutional characteristics that are specific and unique. These characteristics have been identified through various studies and include institutional leadership; staff stability; curriculum articulation and organization; continuing staff development; district support for change; school climate; institutional theory with change efforts; collegial relationships;

sense of community; clear goals and expectations; order and discipline; teacher demographics such as age, gender, and educational level; ability to observe innovation; and plan flexibility (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hopkins, 1990; Rosenblum & Louis, 1979; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1988).

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) referenced these variables as individual and organizational readiness factors in that they define the potential for an institution to undergo change. The individuals within the organization must determine whether they possess the capacity and whether the need for change is warranted. Assessment of the state of these variables in an institution is therefore a logical precursor to any change effort. The concept is recursive in that before change can occur, there may have to be other changes (Beach, 1993).

Meyer and Rowan (1983) and Deal (1987) explain why culture is so important as a means to understanding schools as stable environments:

Culture as a construct helps explain why classrooms and schools exhibit common and stable patterns across variable conditions. Internally, culture gives meaning to instructional activity and provides a symbolic bridge between action and results. It fuses individual identity with collective destiny. Externally, culture provides the symbolic facade that evokes faith and confidence among outsiders with a stake in education. (Meyer & Rowan, 1983)

People develop attachments to values, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, stories, gossips, storytellers, priests, and other cultural players. When change alters or breaks the attachment, meaning is questioned. Often, the change deeply affects those inside the culture as well as those outside . . . The existential explanation identifies the basic problems of change in educational organizations as cultural transitions (Deal, 1987).

Bolman and Deal (1987) found four frames of reference commonly employed by managers and leaders as they attempt to manage organizations and bring about changes in them: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Examining each of these four areas in depth is necessary to appreciate the nature of organizational life. If educational leaders can understand that change must occur to some degree in each of these frames, restructuring is more likely to occur and to transform schooling. A leader's job is to make conscious decisions that have an impact on school

culture in a way that makes that culture more amenable to change and more functional in its delivery of services to students (Conley, 1993).

Many schools today have adopted an organizational approach that relies on a strong culture to influence employees' direction. This approach has reduced differences in the status of organizational membership and placed a strong emphasis on participative decision-making.

Sarason (1990) defends greater teacher participation in decision-making and explains that

. . . when a process makes people feel that they have a voice in matters that affect them, they will have greater commitment to the overall enterprise and will take greater responsibility for what happens to the enterprise (p. 61).

Not everything that has been discussed will be valid in a specific change effort. Establishing and maintaining a collaborative school culture involves a long developmental journey. Change is a human art form and not a science. Ultimately, it is the interaction, give and take, and experiences of the school leader, faculty, staff, and students that will determine the path of change.

## **Role of the Principal**

*The art of leadership includes the reworking of human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values.*  
(Selznick, 1957)

One key link in restructuring may be to enable principals to envision their new roles and to help them develop the skills necessary to be successful. Effective principals realize that change is both a personal and a social phenomenon. As they develop an awareness and knowledge base about the change process, they will become more effective at managing staff conflict and resistance (Chamley, Caprio, & Young, 1994).

Bennis (1989a) observed in his interviews describing leaders that the overriding characteristic that distinguished effective leadership was a guiding purpose linked to an overarching vision. In

their research on effective schools, Corcoran & Wilson (1991) reported similar findings on the principal's role as visionary:

"Parents, teachers, and students are unanimous in citing the principal as providing the necessary vision and energy in creating and maintaining conditions for success (p. 127)."

The success of principals in introducing and implementing change is linked to their ability to effectively articulate and put into action their vision of excellence in teaching and learning.

Wolcott's study (1973) of an elementary principal found that this was accomplished in the context of an informal setting: one-on-one personal conversations, chance encounters, meetings, and phone calls. Sergiovanni (cited in Smith & Andrews, 1989) defined this as --

the process of emphasizing, paying selective attention to, and modeling important goals and behaviors in such a manner that it signals others what is valued in the school. (p. 18)

Leithwood (1990) described this strategy as building bureaucratic and cultural linkages.

Principals shape, facilitate, and foster the development of norms, values, and beliefs. These elements intimately shape the school's culture, ethos, and climate (Purkey & Smith, 1983). Fullan (1993) found that good principals do not create a vision independently and impose it on people; they develop a collaborative culture in which participants build a vision together.

Vandenberghe (1988) found that the essential feature of any style leading to successful implementation of change is that it gives meaning to that change. Unless principals put forth an extra effort to make that innovation meaningful to teachers -- by relating it to an overall vision for the school and by constantly reinforcing that vision through frequent interactions with teachers -- then the motivation to implement innovations will not last.

The clarity and quality of a principal's vision is an important aspect of his or her leadership; however:

Principals have no monopoly on wisdom. Nor should they be immune from the questioning, inquiry, and deep reflection in which we have asked teachers to engage. Principal's vision

should therefore be provisional and open to change. They should be part of the collaborative mix (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 90).

Fullan (1990) and others work with the Learning Consortium, a partnership to work on teacher development and school development. This partnership formulated eight guidelines for how principals should approach the complex task of working interactively with teachers and communities:

- ◆ Understand the culture of the school before trying to change it;
- ◆ Value your teachers: promote their professional growth;
- ◆ Extend what you value;
- ◆ Express what you value;
- ◆ Promote collaboration, not co-optation;
- ◆ Make menus, not mandates;
- ◆ Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain;
- ◆ Connect with the wider environment (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).

Effective principals are committed to change and this is one key element for bringing about change. Research has shown that effective principals are the catalysts and facilitators of change (Chamley, Caprio, & Young, 1994). The link between a facilitative principal and effective schools is well supported by the research. Barth (1993) states:

. . . a school with a vigorous, soaring vision of what it might become is more likely to become that; without a vision a school is unlikely to improve (p. 6).

Facilitative principals create the necessary conditions for change to occur within their schools (Manasse, 1985). Research on effective schools indicates that where there is a good school, there is usually a good principal (Quimby, 1985).

Badaracco & Ellsworth (1989), Sergiovanni (1992), and Schlechty (1992) all stress that leaders must aim not at manipulating subordinates, who do as they are bidden, but at motivating followers, who invest themselves actively. This requires leaders who are skillful, but who above all are credible. To be credible, they must be authentic. Authentic leaders connect what they think, what they seek, and what they do. They join, in Sergiovanni's terms, "the head, heart, and hand" of leadership. Principals whose personal values and aspirations for their schools are consistent, coherent, and reflected in daily behavior are credible and inspire trust; they are leaders worth following into the uncertainties of change (Evan, 1993).

The research of Huling-Austin and others (1985) on the activities of principals in 18 different high schools reveals that schools that are more actively involved in change have more principal involvement in structuring the process. Even with the myriad of roles that principals assume, they are still capable of maximizing their time and decision-making opportunities to influence change. Huling-Austin and others (1985) found that principals appeared to adopt two strategies in facilitating school change. The ability of the principal to communicate a vision to staff members and then directly involve them in the implementation process greatly increases the probability of effecting school change.

Mojkowski & Bamberger (1991) found that principals involved in restructuring schools engage in a variety of activities. These activities appear to be consistent with the findings of Louis & Miles (1990) and Goldman and others (1993) who researched principals in schools where restructuring had occurred. These school leaders engaged in the following:

- ◆ Creating dissonance.
- ◆ Preparing for and creating opportunities.
- ◆ Forging connections and creating interdependencies.

- ◆ Encouraging risk taking.
- ◆ Following as well as leading.
- ◆ Using information.
- ◆ Fostering the long view.
- ◆ Acquiring resources.
- ◆ Negotiating for win-win outcomes.
- ◆ Employing change strategies.
- ◆ Providing stability in change.
- ◆ Developing people professionally while getting the work accomplished.

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) warned that the high-powered, charismatic principal who radically transforms the school in three to five years can be blinding and misleading as a role model. The strategy of this principal is fragile because so much depends on his or her strength and presence, which is often short-lived. The damage created to the school culture in the long term can be more detrimental than the accomplishments and successes in the short term. Often educational leaders who fit these characteristics are career-oriented, utilizing their dynamic leadership skills to make transitions and promote their careers. The chances of establishing a collaborative work culture with this type of leader is remote. Because these principals assume a greater degree of responsibility than is necessary in their role as leaders, the foundation of a collaborative work culture is not cultivated.

Instead Fullan suggested that principals would do more lasting good for schools if they concentrated on building collaborative cultures rather than charging in forcefully with heavy agendas for change. To build collaborative work cultures, principals must concentrate on fostering: vision building; norms of collegiality that respect individuality; norms of continuous

improvement; problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies; lifelong teacher development that involves inquiry, reflective practice, collaboration, and technical skills; and restructuring initiatives (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Deal (1987) referred to this as an educational leader's ability to create artful ways to "reweave organizational tapestries from old traditions, current realities, and future vision (p. 6)."

It is increasingly clear that to meet the challenges ahead, educational leaders must be developed throughout every level of the system. Leaders who are change agents, who have vision and purpose, and who understand the big picture will be needed to guide the educational system into the future (Faidly & Musser, 1989). However, reorienting school cultures in today's political climate toward collegial problem solving and study and implementation of research-based curriculum and instruction has turned out to be difficult (Joyce et al., 1990).

The role of the principal as a savior, as change bombards the school, may not be realistic. Instead of initiating the battle cry to charge and conquer each new initiative that pops up on the horizon, principals could take a more discriminating, preventive stance. Principals need to encourage their staff, students, and parents to do the same about how much and what type of change is entertained. There needs to be an emphasis and greater value placed on success in doing a few things well, rather than settling for mediocrity in doing everything.

Hall (1995) identified the need for a new role for principals: one that sets a quota on how much change is attempted at any one time. These leaders manage change and their staff members who are responsible for implementing it. It means holding back the tide of too much innovation at once if it is in the best interest of students and teachers. Today's leaders must begin to realize that when something new is added, something old needs to be removed (Hall, 1995). Saying no and doing less is sometimes better than doing more.

## **Role of the Department Chairperson**

*The team approach focuses on functions, not roles, making effective use of the talents of staff members. (Glatthorn & Newberg, 1984)*

The traditional role of department chairs has been curriculum leadership. They are a natural choice for this role by virtue of their subject and content expertise and successful classroom teaching experiences (Lucy, 1986). Therefore, their involvement in helping to develop, facilitate, and implement new and different instructional programs and techniques of teaching is integral to change in schools. The work of department chairs is unique in the context of school culture and recognized as strategic to reinforcing and supporting the change agenda.

In high school settings the role of the department chair is instrumental in developing and supporting a quality instructional program (Hord & Murphy, 1985). The principal and department chairs do not operate separately; rather they must work together for the benefit of the educational program (Ribbins, 1988).

The relationship established between the principal and department chairs is valuable in addressing change with regard to curriculum and instruction. Because of their knowledge and instructional expertise, department chairs require a certain degree of autonomy. This will enhance their authority to administer more directly to various subject areas as well as increase their level of prestige in the school hierarchy. The most significant impact will be increased focus on effective instructional and teaching practice, which is beneficial to student learning. For this reason the department chair's position is one of the essential links between the faculty and administration (Marcial, 1984).

Crowell (1989) found that a majority of department chairs viewed past principals as general managers. They defined the role of the principal as an administrative and instructional leader.

Chairs identified this as a preferred leadership style for the principal. In reality, department chairs point to the fact that many principals still operate as general managers and very few as instructional leaders (Glatthorn & Newberg, 1984). Department chairs also saw themselves as acting more as general managers than as instructional leaders.

Williams (1987) surveyed the perceptions of teachers, department chairs, and principals in large secondary schools in Texas. In general the findings support the perception that the roles of high school principals and department chairs were more closely aligned than the roles of principals and teachers, supporting the premise of department chairs as line personnel.

Marcial (1984) founded that because of the responsibilities of department chairs they were often in conflict with teachers. Department chairs perceived their positions as more administrative while teachers viewed them as staff positions with no supervisory responsibility.

Ultimately, the principal is directly responsible for the total instructional program. The role of department chairs is to assist the principal in their particular area subject areas in achieving the mission related to the curriculum, to evaluate and supervise staff, and to manage resources. Marcial (1984) concluded that department chairs must, therefore, play a dual role with both administrative and staff functions.

Hord & Murphy (1985) studied the activities of department chairs in 30 schools over a three-year period. The data found in their study supported Marcial's (1984) findings of inconsistency in the way in which the role is operationalized. Department chairs were identified as individuals who were responsible for implementing or responding to change rather than initiating change.

In a survey of 300 department chairs at four-year colleges, character and integrity were rated as the most important personality traits. Chairs also identified other traits, in order of priority: leadership, interpersonal skills, communication, decision-making, and organizational skills. These

findings indicate the significance of effective human relations skills versus managerial administrative processes (Jennerich, 1981).

Roach (1976) found that department chairs spend 75 percent of the time interacting and communicating with members of the school community -- teachers, students, administrators, and parents -- supporting the notion that effective human relationship skills are an important personality trait for capable department chairs.

Lucy (1986) surveyed 130 suburban secondary department chairs on the estimated time dedicated to 10 tasks that included teaching, administrative duties, supervision, curriculum development, organization of instruction, utilization of support staff, developing learning resources, public relations, staffing, and others. From this list of tasks department chairs indicated that they spent less than 20 percent of their time in the role of curriculum specialists. However, a positive correlation exists between developing and organizing instructional resources and curriculum development. This finding indicates that department chairs recognized their role; however, they were not able to organize their time and focus on intended responsibilities.

Lucy (1986) recommended that principals delegate curriculum responsibilities to department chairs, along with the autonomy and time needed to carry out responsibilities. In addition, Lucy encouraged department chairs to participate in leadership and group dynamics training to strengthen their roles in the process of curriculum development and revision.

Hord & Murphy (1985) found similar results with regard to department chairs' role conflict. Their findings also support the influential and persuasive role department chairs can play in implementing change. Department chairs played a viable role in facilitating the change process -- a promising one for assisting secondary school teachers and administrators in school improvement

efforts. Their ability to guide change was also identified as an area that department chairs could continue to strengthen and expand within the department.

If change is to be significant, department chairs must be provided the latitude to engage in more meaningful dialogue with teachers. Two criteria were found to be essential: (1) time designated in the daily schedule to perform position responsibilities, and (2) policies that communicate expectations and give power to engage in these functions. Fiscal responsibility was also identified as an essential ingredient that added stature to the position.

The role of department chairs is dependent upon the degree of decision-making authority delegated from the principal (Marcial, 1984). Therefore, the role of the principal will also have to change to be more facilitative than directive. The leadership style of the principal will demand a team approach that supports and encourages all members of the school community in a collaborative type of school climate (Glatthorn & Newberg, 1984).

The team approach to management of the instructional program works well in secondary schools. The nature of the relationship between department chairs and the principal is designed so that the principal can share the responsibility of the instructional program with trusted colleagues (Maeroff, 1989; and Lewis, 1986). Lucy (1986) found that the role of department chairs required that they be involved with the fundamentals of the instructional program because of their day-to-day involvement in the curriculum, ongoing classroom experiences, and expertise in content areas.

The scope of the principal's responsibilities in today's high school instructional programs is enormous; the time and expertise required by one individual is unrealistic. The department chair is found to be the optimal position for supporting the principal and the total school program relative to curriculum and instructional supervision.

The principal is the central figure in expanding the scope of department chairs' leadership capacity. Principals who want to enhance the potential for change will place instructional supervision responsibilities with department chairs. This requires a restructuring of priorities and a commitment of additional resources. The principal must become more of a coordinator of activities and manager of elements that comprise good instructional practices (Turner, 1983). This approach will be more effective and efficient in influencing classroom instruction for the benefit of student learning than a building manager.

## **Resistance to Change**

*Students of organizational behavior recognize that resistance to innovation is deeply rooted in individual psychology and group culture. (Schein, 1985)*

Change is a two-part process. The first part of the process involves analyzing new perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in relationship to current trends of thinking. If one can see how a change can fit his or her personal vision, the integration process is facilitated. The second part involves reorganization of priorities and thinking in relationship to new thinking patterns. It requires letting go of old ways of thinking. It is the unlearning part of the process that is at the core of most resistance (Schein, 1987).

Culture is centered in sacred norms and shared values, which are the nucleus of teachers' professional identity. School staff members should feel that they are part of the social unit and develop principles of practice that facilitate how they function within the organization (Frase & Sorenson, 1992). Sarason (1982) and Goodlad (1984) first described the idea that schools have staff culture. They believed that understanding this concept of culture could help leaders of change efforts and ultimately influence instruction in the classroom.

Researchers of school culture believe that social aspects of school site staffs is an important indication of whether or not reform of any kind will be implemented. The social organization of teachers in their workplace guides the attitudes of individual teachers at school (Akin, 1991).

Hopkins (1990) in his synthesis of educational literature identified various types of culture that can either support or inhibit change. He defined the health and type of culture by six interlocking dimensions:

- ◆ history of the organization
- ◆ its values and beliefs
- ◆ myths and stories that explain it
- ◆ traditions
- ◆ rituals and ceremonies
- ◆ heroes and heroines.

Sarason (1982) pointed out that teachers who put in only the hours mandated, who believe their students cannot learn and see themselves as unable to teach, and who are often isolated within their classrooms are said to be members of a negative site culture. Where teachers are respected for their professionalism, supported in their work, and given responsibility for school planning, their culture reflects a shared belief that they are important to the school. They believe they can make a change in student achievement, and they have a positive attitude about the mission of the school (Barth, 1990).

Culture needs to be positive for change to be maintained; positive site culture will nurture change efforts, and negative culture stifles change. Within the last decade, behavioral science organizational theorists have demonstrated that when administrators seek to understand the social aspects of staff organization, they are in a better position to achieve success (Akin, 1991).

High schools have been accused of being the least innovative segment of schooling. Some have attributed this to departmentalized and complex structures (Louis, 1992). The literature indicts traditional, institutionalized conditions with high schools as barriers to progress (Williams et al., 1987). These conditions are both physical and organizational structures that influence staff culture. Three conditions that exemplify this point are (1) large comprehensive high school size and departmental structure that fosters teacher isolation, (2) demanding schedules that allow staff little time for establishing either a social or collaborative relationship with colleagues, and (3) the attitude of most high school teachers to rely solely on themselves and their own experiential learning.

These conditions impede growth and school improvement, which is based on professionalism, collegiality, and collaboration (Lieberman & Rosenholtz, 1987). Conversely, they stifle trust building and limit organizational capacity to identify and solve problems (Williams et al., 1987) and establish a barrier to change. Change is only possible when organizational culture encourages teachers to leave their isolation. This release nourishes creativity (Brandt, 1990).

A transformation of the site staff cultural norm is an essential part of restructuring in high schools. The principal's leadership is critical in the development of teacher professionalism. The summary of research on the connection between developing a new professional culture in the school and programmatic staff development efforts demonstrates a strong case for causal relationships (Little, 1981).

Resistance is inevitable. Because teachers, like all people, possess multiple realities and perceptions, change in a school environment will generate conflict. Conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable, but fundamental to successful change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

According to behavioral scientist Lippitt (1977), people resist change because of the following:

- ◆ The purpose of change is not clear.
- ◆ Those affected by the change were not involved in its planning.
- ◆ The appeal of change is based on personal reasons.
- ◆ The habit patterns of the individuals involved are ignored.
- ◆ Those being asked to make a change are afraid of failure.
- ◆ Excessive pressure to make the change is involved.
- ◆ The personal cost is too high, or the rewards are inadequate.
- ◆ There is a lack of trust in and respect for the person(s) attempting to initiate the change.
- ◆ Those being asked to change are satisfied with the status quo.

Many change efforts have proven to be of dubious value. Many proposed changes offer inadequate evidence of effectiveness; many are not comprehensive, integrated, or systematic enough to resolve the present problem; many lack adequate specificity to be implemented with understanding or consistency; and many require too much effort, time, and money (Greenwood et al., 1988).

It is also a mistake to view resistance to change as the response of malevolent or uncaring people. If anything, resistance is often legitimate; it can serve the needs of both individuals and systems (Margolis, 1991).

Individuals who are the most resistant and apathetic about change can often benefit the most from it. Unprepared to deal with this resistance, they may eventually give up, give in, and go back to more familiar ways of doing things.

The social system of school culture is fixed on maintaining the status quo and resistant to most change efforts (Sarason, 1982). Resistant teachers believe that maintaining the status quo makes

perfect sense. The key to overcoming resistance and securing cooperation is understanding and responding to both structural and personal factors fueling resistance (Margolis, 1991).

As Sarason (1990) notes, schools, like most organizations, accommodate in ways that require the least modification because ". . . the strength of the status quo -- its underlying axioms, its pattern of power relationships, its sense of what seems right, natural, and proper -- almost automatically rules out options for change" (p.77).

Carrow-Moffett (1993) found that effective leaders and change agents are aware of the early warning signs of the change-back phenomenon. Change agents recognize conflict as a necessary and valuable ally, designed to bring into the open unforeseen barriers and possibilities.

Drafke (1994) found that resistance to change also manifests itself in many ways among individuals in the workplace, such as

- ◆ regression (pretending not to know how to perform)
- ◆ lower productivity (slow pace)
- ◆ sabotage (including destruction of property)
- ◆ absenteeism (surprise)
- ◆ transfer
- ◆ resignation (and early retirement).

The Timberline High School restructuring study showed that resistance manifested itself in the form of emotion. Teachers mentioned anxiety, fear, excitement, and anger as just a few emotions that affected them as they experienced uncertainty about what restructuring at Timberline might mean to the content and philosophies of ESL and foreign-language programs (Hashimoto & Abbott, 1996).

Tension and conflict in the school are identified by others as a mask for underlying fear that people experience on a personal level when confronted with the challenge of real change. Conflict and tension also serve as a catalyst for change and as a response to change in school (Polite, 1993). Little (1993) stated that ". . . conflict increases as the changing school culture begins to shift from superficial conversations to serious discourse about learning, teaching styles, modes of organizing the curriculum, and so on" (p. 141).

Lieberman (1995) amplified this idea by observing that

. . . conflict is to be expected; reform . . . touch deeply on people's values and world views about knowledge, the purpose of schools, and the roles of teacher and student -- all very contentious issues in American society. It is not so much a question of whether conflict will arise, but how this conflict is handled. The second observation is that conflict in a restructuring process can ultimately be beneficial. (p. 11)

The Polite (1993) case study conducted at Cross Keys Middle School found that resisters in the building contributed to underlying conflict and tension in the school. Their resistance was both subtle and overt and was interpreted as both a positive and a negative influence. Some felt that there was a contingent of faculty that had just decided to put their feet down and be obstacles to everything that was being tried in the building. Others felt that resistance was a result of an unwillingness, inability, or lack of readiness to change. Still others felt that resisters helped the school see all sides of an issue before making a decision.

Resistance is significantly reduced when teachers view proposed changes as making their lives "more meaningful and productive" (Morse, 1976). Combs (1988) and Hackman & Oldham (1982) have provided critical principles for preventing or eliminating resistance, which, if followed by administrators, can contribute to teacher satisfaction and productivity. These researchers urge that those desiring change should

- ◆ not impose solutions upon people

- ◆ concentrate on beliefs and perceptions
- ◆ emphasize processes and open system thinking
- ◆ focus on what people think is immediately important
- ◆ encourage innovation and change with the potential to achieve mutually desired goals.

Change is seen as a disruption of a state of equilibrium. Regardless of how stable an individual or organization is, change can be disconcerting. It is understandable that faculty members who are satisfied with the status quo will be resistant to change. Resistance to change stems from different perceptions and styles that people bring to each changing circumstance. School leaders can do much to facilitate change through their understanding of others' preference and of those with whom they directly work (Kesler et al., 1996).

## **Summary**

The review of literature indicated that education is in a constant state of change. In this context, research in this area supported the idea of change as a means for professional growth and revitalization. Change is a multifaceted and complex process. There are many different pieces to this puzzle that comprise the change process. The relationship between each of the different pieces plays an integral part in making up the whole and the direction of change.

The genesis of change and reform is rooted in the notion that the current public education system is flawed. Some individuals feel that the current system needs major overhaul and reorganization. Conversely, others report varied successes with the daunting number of societal and academic issues that have been placed at the doorstep of the public education agenda in the last several decades.

Perhaps most significant to the change process has been the way educators measure their successes. The basis for this shift in the evaluation of success and failure may actually add to the confusion surrounding change efforts. Over the past four decades there has been a shift from research-based decision-making to a politically mandated agenda, to the current trend of site-based decision-making.

The latter and current process is dynamic and considers the human side of change. This type of agenda has helped school communities focus and better address the needs of their students. This type of collaborative process enables those involved to address specific and unique issues that strike at the needs of each school. The strength of this type of process is tied to individuals and the roles they assume in the culture of the school. This is best expressed in the phrase "the chain is as strong as its weakest link." The realization is that all members of the school culture have a significant role to play.

This type of site-based change effort is best suited for each unique and distinctly different school community. However, there is a downside to this new agenda. Educational change does not look universal and appears disjointed. Equity issues between school districts and even neighboring schools are accentuated. To individuals both inside and outside the educational community, the problem of change and reform then appears to look more daunting, problematic, and beyond reach.

Some schools are better at the change process than others because of a difference in their abilities to adjust, assimilate, and integrate new perceptions, ideas, and schemes into their school cultures. In essence they get better at problem solving and dealing with each new issue as it presents itself to their change agendas. The literature supports the idea that change is a highly personal experience, accomplished by individuals who are motivated to grow both personally and professionally (Hord et al., 1987; Fullan, 1993; Hall & Rutherford, 1975; Berman & McLaughlin,

1975 and 1977). Therefore, the success of each school in addressing a change agenda is not so much tied to what, but how and who will be involved.

A cross-group constituency that represents the whole school community allows the freedom to solve problems creatively and cope successfully with complex issues. The balance in the relationships between each school community group will ultimately determine the degree of collaboration that will and can exist. It is the element of site culture that is the strongest influence in the change process. Research indicates that many common themes emerge in schools that have been successful at promoting change. These elements are collegiality, personal and professional growth, high expectations for students, discipline, a high level of commitment, and availability of resources. It is not only the presence of these elements as a part of the school culture, but the consistency in the value of each as a norm of the culture. It will only be through an active and participatory style of decision making that these norms will become a part of the culture and influence change. It is the site culture that will ultimately chart the course of change.

The role of the principal has been cited in the educational literature as crucial to successfully implementing change. The interpretation of the principal's role in the course of educational change has evolved from a key ingredient to more of a significant role player in the process. The original expectations and responsibilities of the principal were perhaps unrealistic. A more realistic view is of the principal as facilitator and guide to enable the process.

Cases of dynamic and powerful leadership styles tend to cloud and distort a more realistic role of the principal. The fact is that there is a finite number of principals who possess such qualities to dynamically lead the charge of change. This is compounded by the fact that it is perhaps even more unrealistic to place the responsibility for change on the shoulders of one individual. Principals must strike a balance in their roles and relationships within the school culture and as

agents of change. They must position themselves on the cutting- and sometimes bleeding-edge, articulating a vision and direction for the school. A steady and even hand that can strike and maintain a balance with all constituents involved will have the greatest impact and set a tone for the process.

Bateson (1972) wrote, "information is a difference that makes a difference." It is the intention of this study to add to the available information by a descriptive case study approach that will help to better define the elements that comprise change in the school culture. There can be no specific formula for change and there are many proven and still to be discovered methods to improve the current public education system. It is within this perspective that the findings in this study supported by other case studies can provide insight that will help school leaders and educators for the benefits of students.

## **CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the activities and behaviors of principals and how they influence change in schools. A process of gathering information from principals and department chairpersons was developed to allow continuous evaluation and synthesis of data through each step in the methodology. This approach allowed data to emerge as it is being collected in a framework that guided the investigation. Through this process patterns of behaviors could then be identified to how principals influence change.

### **Overview**

Ethnographic research was conducted in four suburban high schools to examine how principals influence change (see demographic information in Table 1). Principals and department chairpersons from each school site were interviewed to examine school culture. Their beliefs about how change occurred are the focus of this investigation.

Data were collected through interviews with principals and department chairpersons. Information derived through survey questions and interviews was analyzed and synthesized to identify cultural themes and relationships. Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence (D.R.S.) was used as a model for this research design.

First-round interviews were conducted and analyzed using domain analysis and Q-Sort. The data synthesized from these two analyses were categorized and compared to help determine the boundaries of the data, to focus the study, and to formulate second-round interview questions.

Second-round interview questions were formulated based on multiple methods of analysis (e.g., domain analysis, Q-Sort, identification of major and recurring themes) that resulted from first-round interview responses (see Table 2). Second round interviews were conducted and responses were analyzed by identifying major and reoccurring themes. Responses were synthesized and grouped according to subject and content.

## **Research Design**

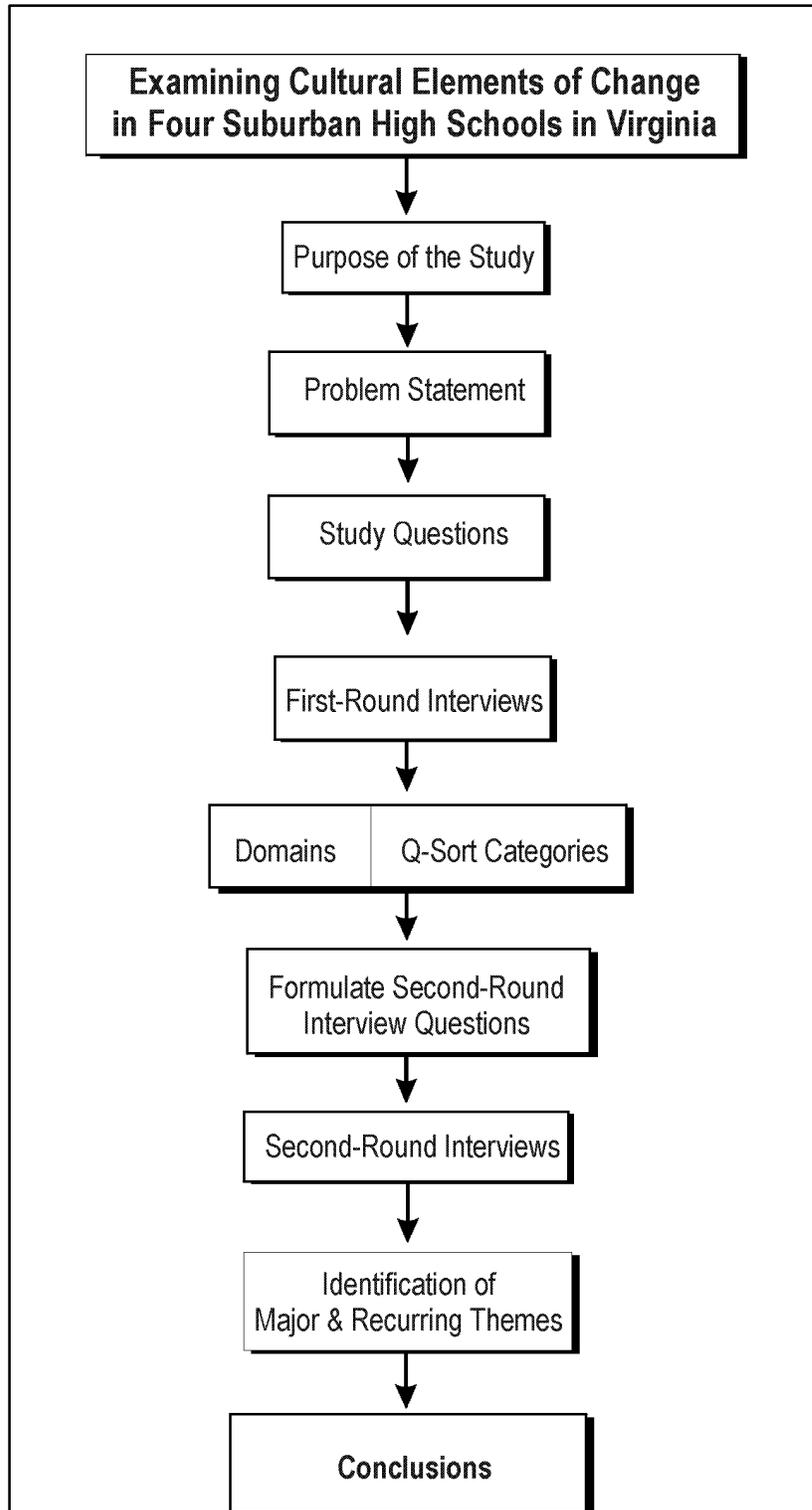
An ethnographic analysis was conducted based on naturalistic inquiry with accepted ethical and validity considerations. Spradley (1979) described the process of ethnography as "1) from what people say, 2) from the way people act, and 3) from the artifacts people use, the ethnographer can make cultural inferences which can lead to hypotheses testing and ultimately a cultural description (p. 8)." Other social scientists and researchers regard the value of ethnographic study as a means of analysis for purposes of developing and testing theory (Lutz, 1981; Denzin, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This method of inquiry lends to the ongoing process of analyzing data throughout the data collection period and provides the freedom to continue to focus the study while gathering new and different data that provide greater depth to understanding a problem (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Table 1. Demographic information of high schools studied**

	Total Enrollment	% Minority Population	% Mobility	# Supplemental Programs	# Classroom Teachers	# Specialist Teachers	# Admin Staff	Guidance Staff	Clerical Staff	Custodial Staff
School A	2,436	30	17	3.0	124.0	22.8	8.0	9.0	11.0	20.0
School B	1,444	60	25	4.0	77.0	19.5	7.0	6.0	13.0	21.5
School C	1,210	50	21	3.0	70.8	34.3	7.0	5.0	12.5	17.0
School D	1,079	42	18	4.0	60.7	23.7	6.0	5.0	9.0	14.5

**Table 2. Design of the study**



The application of Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence (D.R.S.) provided a process to focus, investigate, and discover cultural themes about how principals influence change in suburban high school settings. The D.R.S method is a progressive process of building on information through a distinct taxonomy of questions, a continuous analysis of data derived through interviews and synthesis of information to discover cultural themes and relationships.

## **Population and Sample Design**

Two sampling methods, critical case sampling and maximum variation sampling, were employed. Patton (1987) explained the importance of critical case sampling as a means of highlighting a particular aspect or point about a program. This sampling method provides a greater amount of information, useful in analyzing how high school principals influence change.

The school district in which the study was conducted required that a proposal for research be approved by the district's research screening committee. The proposal included an introduction and background information, research design and methodology, interview protocols, research timeline, method of reporting results, cost and benefit to participants and school district, budget, and Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects. The Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects is a Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University requirement for all university studies involving human subjects. This document was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects prior to making application to the school district.

The school district research screening committee approved the proposal based on the following stipulations: 1) participation be voluntary for all parties, 2) anonymity of all participants be preserved in reporting the results, 3) identity of the schools or the school system, or identifiable

characteristics of either not be revealed, and 4) adherence to all school district policies and regulations be assured. The agreement identified a division sponsor who was a member of the dissertation committee. Any significant changes to methodology would require approval by the division sponsor and the research screening committee.

## **Principals**

Critical case sampling was used to select the four principals involved in the study. As part of the sampling procedure for principals, members of the school district leadership team -- district and division assistant superintendents -- were contacted in writing to identify principals who were recognized for influencing change in their schools (see Appendix A). The ballots of the school district leadership team were tallied and based on the results, six principals were consistently identified among the twenty-three high school principals in the school district. Of the six principals identified the difference of votes received was plus or minus three votes. From this group of six, four principals were randomly selected. One principal from the original group declined to participate in the study because of time constraints related to the school staff and this study. This necessitated choosing a fourth principal from the original group.

Each of the four principals was contacted by phone to discuss the study. An overview of the purpose of the research study, the requirement of involving department chairpersons in five specific curriculum areas, and the time needed to conduct two interviews with each participant were outlined. Principals were asked to contact the five department chairpersons at their schools and enlist their involvement. All four principals agreed to discuss the information with designated department chairpersons within a two week period.

At the time of the phone conversation, the principals were informed that a packet of information regarding the study would be forwarded to them. The content of the packet included a cover letter, the approved school district research proposal, and the Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects. Six copies of this information were sent, one for the principal and five additional copies to be shared with department chairpersons.

There was a certain amount of internal bias because principals first requested department chairperson participation in this study. Department chairpersons may have felt that they could not have declined participation because of the nature of their relationship with the principal. As a result of this internal bias, department chairpersons may not have fully revealed their true feelings about different aspects of this investigation.

Two weeks after the initial contact, principals were called to determine if materials had been received and shared with department chairpersons. At that time, additional clarification was provided as necessary. The second contact with all four school principals resulted in a final confirmation on the part of the five selected department chairpersons and principals to participate as a team. First-round interviews with principals were scheduled during the course of these telephone conversations.

## **Department Chairpersons**

With the guidance of the dissertation committee at the time of prospectus, five curriculum areas were identified from which to select department chairperson. These curriculum areas were selected because they represented a cross-section of the high school instructional staff in both core curriculum and elective programs. These areas: art, English, math, physical education, and science. Patton (1987) indicated that this type of sampling method strengthens the design of a

study by capturing the central themes and shared aspects of respondents when there is program variation among the group. Multiple sources of information were obtained to verify findings.

Initial telephone conversations with department chairpersons were established within a ten day period after final confirmation with all principals. Department chairpersons were provided with background information, purpose, and design of the research study similar to earlier conversations with principals. The majority of department chairpersons could recall a brief discussion about the topic with their principals; however they did not remember specific information. After reviewing the design and purpose of the study, all department chairpersons agreed to participate. It was during these conversations that first-round interviews were scheduled. Follow-up correspondence with all department chairpersons thanking them for agreeing to participate along with a copy of information packets mailed earlier to principals were sent.

During all conversations with principals and department chairpersons their attention was directed to reading and signing the Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects. The element of confidentiality and anonymity of all participants along with the freedom to withdraw from this study without penalty were specifically highlighted. Principals and department chairpersons were informed that this document needed to be signed prior to conducting interviews.

Both principal and department chairpersons expressed a concern about what specific information would be required of them. In addition, all participants wanted to know how much of their personal time was needed for the two interviews. Because of the demand of time on principals and department chairpersons in both their professional and personal lives, concern about their commitment to the project was expressed. All participants were informed that a schedule that was both flexible and accommodating to their needs would be made available.

All but one of the first- and second-round interviews were conducted with principals in person, in their offices, between the hours of 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on a weekday. One first-round interview was conducted at the home of the principal because of scheduling conflicts. Interviews with principals were usually delayed a few minutes beyond the agreed scheduled time. Last minute phone calls, meetings with faculty and staff members, and adjustment of schedules throughout the day caused delays.

All first-round interviews conducted with department chairpersons were done in person, in their classrooms, between the hours of 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on week days or between 8 a.m. and 12 noon on Saturdays. All second-round interviews with department chairpersons were conducted over the phone between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. on a week day or Saturday, at a mutually agreed-upon time.

Prior to all first-round interviews, department chairpersons were found either working with students, completing paperwork, or setting up their classrooms for the next day's lessons. Department chairpersons expressed some concern about their involvement in this study. A number of department chairpersons wanted to know if the information that they would provide would be kept confidential. Their confidentiality was assured. They were reminded of the Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects that they signed and of the section dealing with confidentiality and anonymity.

Principals and department chairpersons who participated received thank you notes following all interviews as a gesture of appreciation for their time. The notes also included an interesting point, aspect, or insight that discussed during the last interview. Several participants on subsequent contacts noted and appreciated the follow-up. They expressed the feeling that these correspondences recognized their participation in the study as professionals.

## **Instrumentation**

In contrasting quantitative and qualitative measures, Patton (1987) compared the length, detail, and variable content of respondents' answers, noting that qualitative responses are all too often confounded and not easily analyzed. Patton also highlighted the value of such research design as a means for researchers to gain deeper insight about respondents without the restrictions of a predetermined set of survey questions and answers.

A combination of open-ended questions and a general interview guide approach were used in interviewing both groups of respondents. Patton (1987) noted that the need for such a combination of interview formats permits the investigator to probe and explore certain subjects more extensively during the interview. The process allows for flexibility to explore different topics more deeply and to gain greater insight about respondents' cultures.

## **First-round Interviews**

Descriptive and structural type questions were asked of respondents in first-round interview sessions (see Appendices B and C). First-round interview questions were similar for principals and department chairs, but tailored to respondents' roles within the schools. All first- and second-round interview sessions were tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using multiple methods of analysis (e.g., domain analysis, Q-Sort, identification of major and recurring themes).

A contact summary sheet was completed at the end of each interview and prior to coding transcribed notes (see Appendix D). Information on these forms provided a rapid retrieval of data, a guide for future interviews, an assessment of current and future coding methods, and another tool to assist in the process of further data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first step in the analysis of first-round interview data were a domain analysis and Q-Sort. Terms and phrases that synthesized the interviews were derived from these two methods of analysis.

The second step was to categorize the terms and phrases derived from each method onto tables based on the analyses: domain and Q-Sort (see Appendices E and F). The criteria used to categorize this information were: 1) identical match of terminology, 2) similarity in definitions, and 3) similarity of content and subject matter.

The third step was to conduct a comparison between the domains derived from analysis and categories defined in the Q-Sort. The purpose of this data analysis was to better define the scope and boundaries of the interviews. This process also served as another method of verification of triangulation -- part of analysis of multiple data sources. From this synthesis of information an initial draft of second-round interview questions was formulated.

## **Domain Analysis**

The first coding technique was used to analyze the data for purposes of identifying domains. Spradley (1979) found that "a domain is a symbolic category that includes other categories and the cultural knowledge of every society is made up of many such domains (p.101)." An integral part of this analysis started with uncovering and identifying domain structures contained in transcribed interview text.

The components that comprise a domain structure are: 1) a cover term, 2) two or more included terms, 3) a semantic relationship, and 4) a defined boundary. A cover term names a large category of knowledge. Included terms are related to a cover term and are subsets of this knowledge. A semantic relationship is a bridge that explains the relationship between the cover

term and included terms. The boundary of a domain structure is determined by respondents through use of language to communicate their experiences.

For purpose of illustration the following example is provided. A respondent might say, "I received a public school education. The schools I attended were Grove Elementary, Whitman Middle School, and Garfield High School. I also attended Green Acres Summer Camp during the summer months as a camper and then later as a counselor." From this text the following domain structure is derived.

< diagram of domain structure >

cover term - public school

-----  
X (is a kind of) Y - semantic relationship  
-----

**Grove Elementary** - included terms

**Whitman Middle School** - included terms

**Garfield High School** - included terms

The boundary of this domain structure is explained by a semantic relationship. The semantic relationship explained how the domain structure was formulated (e.g, Grove Elementary (is a kind of) public school, Whitman Middle School (is a kind of) public school, Garfield High School (is a kind of) public school). The boundary of the domain structure is defined in this manner.

Therefore, Green Acres Summer Camp is not an included term in this domain structure because it is not a public school.

Casagrande & Hale (1967) found the most efficient way to identify domain structures is to use semantic relationships. The use of semantic relationships for decoding the meaning of language is based on: 1) the universal nature of certain semantic relationships and 2) the small and limited

number of relationships that exist in any one culture (Spradley, 1979). The use of semantic relationships in the analysis of language allows for subtleties of meaning to be connected to included terms that form domain structures.

Seven universal semantic relationships were used: 1) strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y), 2) cause-effect (X is a result of Y), 3) rationale (X is a reason for doing Y), 4) function (X is used for Y), 5) means-end (X is a way of doing Y), 6) sequence (X is a step (stage) in Y), and 7) attribution (X is an attribute (characteristic) of Y).

Blocks of texts from each of the 24 transcribed first-round interviews, consisting of one to three paragraphs, were read to identify cover and included terms in domain structures. Cover terms were first identified and circled in pencil. The same blocks of text were scanned again for identification of included terms that added meaning to the cover terms. Included terms were underlined for purpose of classification. The same blocks of text were scanned a third time for the purpose of connecting cover term to two or more included terms, forming a domain structure. The links between cover terms and included terms were based on one or more of the seven semantic relationships.

As an example, "ways that people cope" was identified as a cover term in a transcribed interview text. Within the block of text, respondents identified the following included terms, "resentment, simply divorcing themselves, and not getting involved." The semantic relationship that applied to this domain structure was strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y). This method was used as the first step of domain analysis of first-round interviews for both principals and department chairs.

## **Domain Analysis Findings**

Approximately one hundred and forty domain structures were identified. Domain structures were then grouped based on three criteria: 1) identical match of terminology, 2) similarity of meanings, and 3) similarity of content and subject matter (see Appendix D). Grouping domain structures is part of the D.R.S. model of research development. A synthesis of the data continued to focus the study and define the boundaries of transcribed interview data.

Grouping of approximately 140 domain structures resulted in a net of 108 distinct domain headings. Thirty-two domain structures were eliminated based on the criteria established through this analysis. A select number of domain structures were grouped into sub-categories. These sub-categories were used to further synthesize the data relative to the domain structures.

For instance, several domain structures identified the following: vision, style, kind of thinker, planner, confident, values, and listener. These domain structures were grouped together under the sub-category of Principal's Personality. This process of grouping domain structures was applied only if applicable to the established criteria.

## **Transformation of Domains into Categories**

The next step in the analysis of domain structures was to categorize the information. Single source domain structures and multiple domain structures with sub-categories were categorized again based on two criteria: 1) similarity of meaning or definition, and 2) similarity of content and subject matter. As a result of this process of analysis seven distinct categories were identified.

Terms were assigned to each of these seven categories and are referenced as domains: barriers, change, communication, management style, motivating factors, traits, and role of individuals (see Appendix F). This analysis helped to: 1) define the boundaries of the interview data, 2) synthesize

the data, 3) establish additional method of triangulation, and 4) focus the study to formulate second-round interview questions.

## **Q-Sort**

The second method of coding used to analyze first-round interview data was a Q-sort. One hundred excerpts from transcribed interview text were placed on five by eight cards. The excerpts selected represent a cross-section of content and subject matter contained in transcribed first-round interviews.

A member of this dissertation committee suggested that the Q-sort process be conducted as another method to frame the data as well as one more method of triangulation. It would also facilitate the formulation of second-round interview questions.

Four people who were not educators were contacted and provided general information about the study. It was thought that these lay people could bring more objectivity to the process than educators. They were asked to perform a two-step process. The first step involved reading each of the excerpts and noting on the cards categories that described the excerpts. The second step involved reading the excerpts again and assigning each excerpt to a particular category based on their notes. This process took each individual approximately 60 to 90 minutes. As an incentive for their assistance, each person received lunch from a local carry-out restaurant.

## **Q-Sort Findings**

The four lay people conducting the Q-sort had varied educational backgrounds, ranging from one with a high school degree with work experiences to one working toward a doctorate. Each person developed categories for the one hundred excerpts. The categories developed by each person were grouped based on three criteria: 1) identical match of terminology, 2) similarity of

meanings, and 3) similarity of content and subject matter. The comparison of the four Q-sort categories to the seven domains helped to: 1) define the boundaries of the interview data, 2) synthesize the data, 3) provide an additional method of triangulation, and 4) focus the study to formulate second-round interview questions.

## **Analysis of Seven Categories and Q-Sort**

The fourth step in the analysis was to compare the seven categories derived from the domain analysis and categories defined by the four persons in the Q-Sort in order to further define the scope of the data. A process of matching domain and Q-Sort categories was performed and displayed on a matrix based on the following criteria: 1) identical match of terminology, 2) similarity of meanings, and 3) content and subject matter (see Appendix F).

The results of this analysis: 1) established the boundaries of the interviews, 2) identified similarities and differences that resulted from two different types of analysis, 3) furthered the methods of triangulation, and 4) aided in the formulation of second-round interview questions. It also provided an additional link between the analysis of domain and Q-Sort categories. This method of analysis was another link in the chain of evidence that built on the relationship between gathering and interpreting data.

The comparison of domain and Q-Sort categories from the two different methods of analysis indicated that the scope of the data were similar. The range of categories developed by each of the four persons who conducted the Q-sort were similar as to how the excerpts were grouped. A comparison of the seven categories developed as part of the domain analysis to the individual results of the Q-sort findings also indicated corresponding likeness. Consequently, the reference point chosen for the analysis of first-round interviews are the seven domains.

## **Formulating of Second-Round Interview Questions**

To review, first-round interview questions were descriptive and structural. These two types of questions were designed to have respondents: 1) describe different organizational elements (e.g., processes, symbols, rituals, cultural attributes) and 2) explain the relationship of these elements.

The analysis of first-round interview text focused on identifying and examining the relationship between each of these organizational elements (e.g., processes, symbols, rituals, cultural attributes). The application of seven universal semantic relationships provided a tool to discover the meaning of symbols and relationship to other symbols. Spradley (1979) stated the strength in the discovery principle is: "that all culture creates meaning from relatively few semantic relationships, and that certain semantic relationships are universal (p. 156)."

The next step was to develop questions to be asked of participants in second-round interviews. The purpose of these questions was to probe in greater depth the meaning of organizational elements -- processes, symbols, rituals, and cultural attributes -- and to discover the differences between elements, Spradley (1979). Five different types of questions were developed: 1) contrast verification, 2) direct, 3) dyadic, 4) contrast set, and 5) rating.

The questions were formulated based on: 1) the D.R.S. model, 2) the synthesis of data from first-round interview questions, 3) the boundaries defined by multiple methods of data analysis of first-round interviews, and 4) a chain of evidence that related first-round interview questions to the six study questions.

A final draft of second-round interview questions was reviewed by a number of the dissertation committee members. They made several recommendations about rephrasing some of the second-round interview questions to focus the responses of participants. They stressed the importance of

the relationship of tying second-round interview questions to the six study questions.

Consideration was given to rephrasing the study questions after the analysis of second-round interview data.

## **Second-round Interviews**

The final draft of second-round interview questions contained a combination of descriptive and contrasting questions. The questions for principals and department chairpersons were identical.

The questions are:

1. What type of school culture do you feel is the most conducive to change?
2. Why do you think some people choose to be teachers and others choose to be administrators?
3. What motivates you to teach or to be an administrator?
4. Describe how professional and personal growth of the staff is nurtured.
5. How have these activities impacted the school culture?
6. How does the process of introducing a new initiative to the school community begin?
7. How is feedback concerning change solicited?
8. Name one thing you would like to change. How and why?
9. What differentiates your school from others?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding these issues?

All second-round interview sessions were taped recorded and transcribed. Contact summary sheets were used again at the end of each interview to provide a rapid retrieval of data, a synopsis, and another tool to assist in the process of data analysis. Two methods of data analysis (e.g., identification of trends and recurring themes to study questions) were used.

## **Identification of Themes**

The transcribed text of second-round interviews was reviewed to identify themes that emerged from the data. The criteria used to identify those themes were determined by responses of participants based on 1) identical match, 2) similarity in meaning, and 3) similarity of content and subject matter for each response.

Blocks of transcribed interview text, ranging from one to five paragraphs, were read. Evidence related to each question was first identified by underlining with a pencil. The same block of text was reviewed a second time to identify the theme(s) present. The theme(s) that emerged were highlighted as a reference point and for ease of retrieval. Individual contact summary sheets were again used to record the data.

## **Recurrence of Themes**

The themes discovered in each second-round interview were analyzed and identified as they recurred. Individual participant interview summary sheets for each question were reviewed. Responses of participants to each question were highlighted directly on individual summary sheets. Criteria for determining recurring themes in responses were based on the 1) identical match, 2) similarity in meaning, and 3) similarity of content and subject matter for each response.

A table for each second-round interview question was created to record those themes articulated by principals and department chairpersons (see Appendix G). The data recorded on these tables were categorized to help analyze identified trends. The criteria used to categorize the data were: 1) identical match, 2) similarity in meaning, and 3) similarity of content and subject matter of theme(s). No data were reduced or eliminated as a result of this process.

## Validity and Reliability

Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation. "Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observation must be employed (Denzin, 1978, p. 28)." For the purpose of this study, two of these techniques were utilized: multiple data source interviews of principals and department chairpersons and multiple methods analysis (domain analysis, Q-Sort, and identification of themes, both major and recurring).

Code-checks were conducted to increase intercoder reliability. The initial code-checks were conducted on two piloted interviews of a principal and department chairperson. The first ten pages of each set of transcribed notes were coded separately and coding results were compared until an intercoder reliability of approximately .80 was achieved. The following formula was used: 
$$\text{intercoder reliability} = \frac{\text{number of agreements}}{\text{total number of agreements} + \text{disagreements}}$$
 Intercoder reliability checks of second-round interviews for both principals and department chairpersons were conducted to ensure consistency over the term of the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

To increase internal consistency, intracoding system checks were conducted. The first ten pages of transcribed notes were coded after the interview and then coded a few days later on a separate uncoded copy until a minimum reliability of approximately .80 was achieved.

## CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

### Introduction

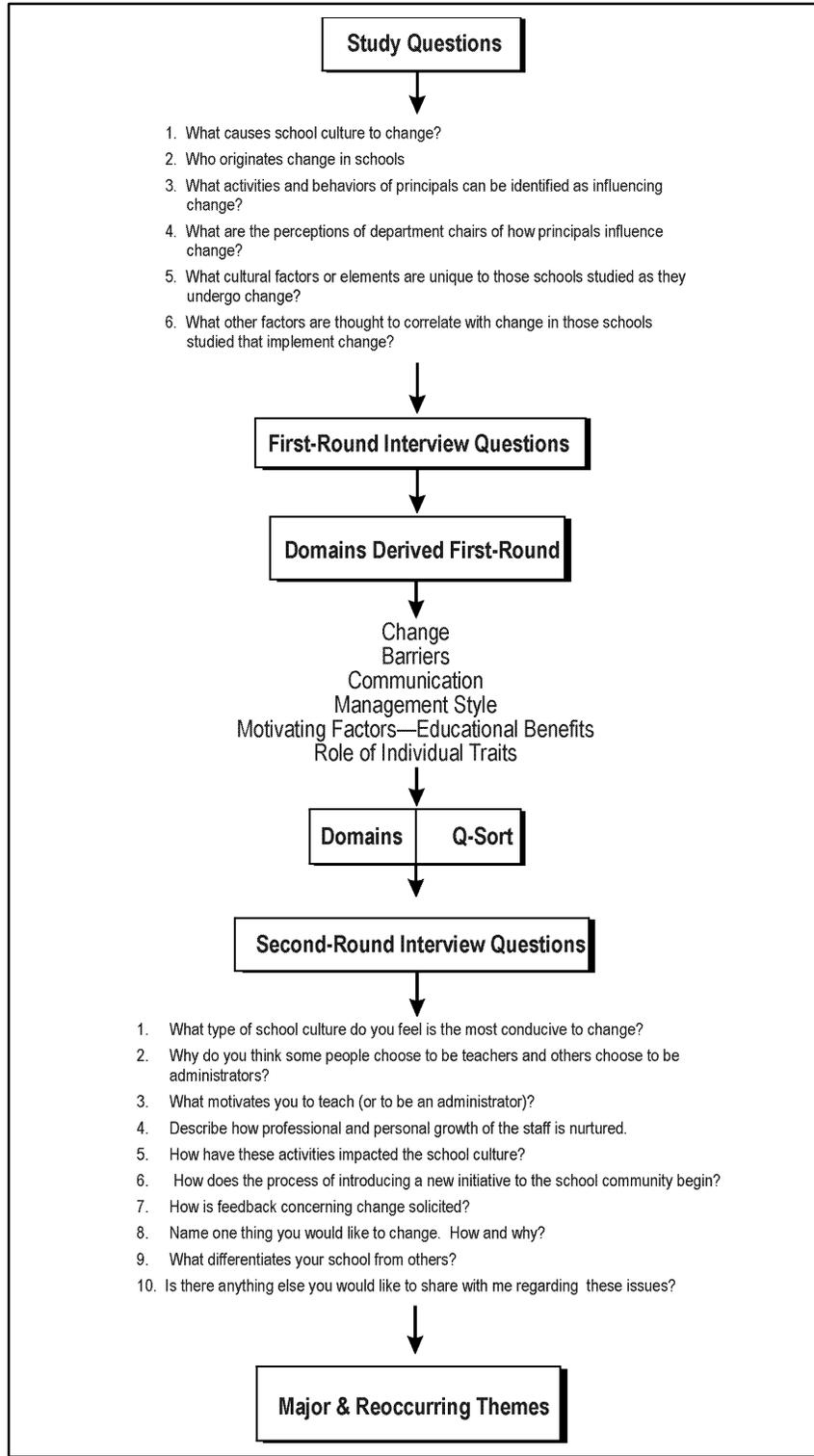
As described in Chapter Two, the process of change is evolutionary. As change occurs, there is a shift in its direction, based on how the environment reacts to its implementation. As such, change is something of an organic process, resistant to the implementation of static paradigms. Likewise, this study was an organic process, taking shape as results emerged. Therefore, a framework for analyzing the data provided a process for focusing and synthesizing the data collection to determine patterns of behavior.

A summary of the process is also warranted here for the purpose of bringing to mind preliminary results: Study questions were posed, from which first-round interview questions were developed, as per Spradley's (1979) taxonomy. Analysis of data revealed seven domains, which were substantiated by a Q-sort, also based on data from first round interview responses. The next step was the development of second-round interview questions, which were formulated based on multiple methods of analysis (see Table 3). Major and recurring themes emerged from this data and are also presented. Findings related to the six major study questions are as follows:

#### ***1. What causes school culture to change?***

The majority of those interviewed identified three primary themes that cause school culture to change. The first theme stressed the importance of an open and trusting school culture that fosters and supports team spirit. Interviewees emphasized the importance of diversity and respect for all members of the school community (see Figure 1).

**Table 3. How do principals in selected suburban high schools influence change?**



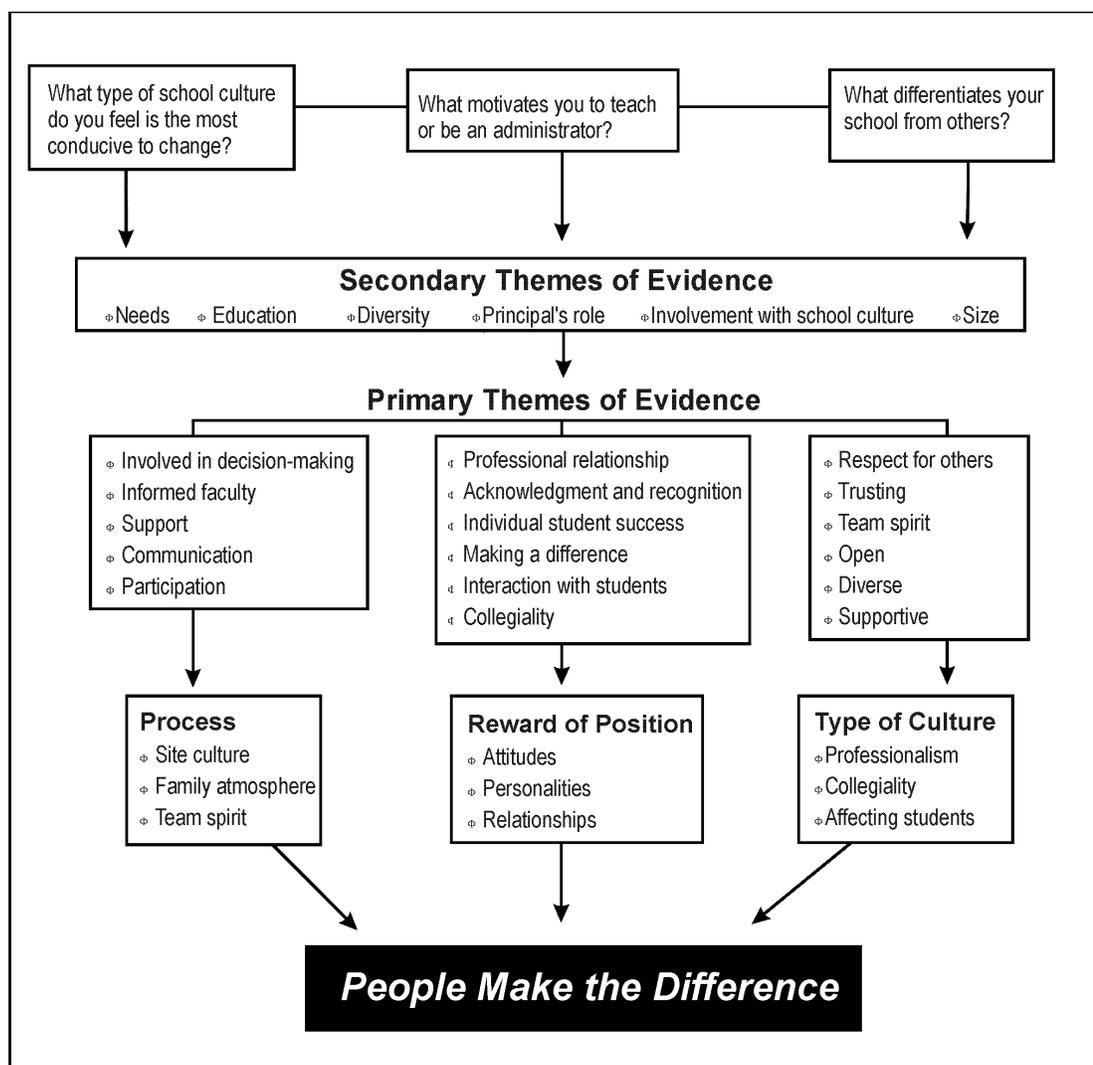


Figure 1. What causes school culture to change?

The second theme concerned the process of change. Respondents expressed concern about mechanical elements of change, such as maintaining good communication and staff participation throughout each stage of a change initiative. Both principals and department chairs illustrated this idea by providing examples of how all school community members could be involved in elements of the decision-making process with change initiatives.

The third theme focused on the intrinsic rewards of working in the field of education that come from interacting daily with students, playing a role in growth and development of individual students, and having opportunity to give something back to society to help create a better future. A strong link to this trend of thinking was the idea of professionalism. All respondents involved in the study mentioned the idea of building relationships and fostering collegiality as another reward of their vocation.

The majority of respondents expressed a common idea, "that people make the difference" through each of the three primary themes discussed. This particular overarching theme stressed the importance of attitudes, relationships, and building a family atmosphere or team spirit as the most critical part of effecting change. In each of the three primary themes identified, the idea of the "human side" of change was found to be at the foundation of each respondent's thought process.

The secondary themes identified by respondents that are indirectly linked to the primary themes include the need for change and for making it meaningful; the benefits of a small school environment in the change process; the instrumental role the principal plays in bringing about change; and the idea of diversity as a strength in school culture to facilitate the implementation of new initiatives. The secondary themes cited by a smaller number of respondents addressed more intricate elements of change.

## **2. *Who originates change in schools?***

The majority of respondents indicated that principals are the primary initiators of change. The compelling factor motivating principals to examine and consider change(s) is improvement to the instructional program.

A select group of respondents identified other secondary forces that also influence change. Three variables identified with the greatest frequency were outside forces (school board and state and local government); the need for meaningful change (overt and evident to all); and bottom-up initiatives generated by students, teachers, and parents (see Figure 2).

Respondents did not seem to be concerned with how or who started the change process, but with the direction of change once started. All respondents mentioned that a process or framework existed, known to all in the school culture as a map for guiding change. Respondents identified elements of this framework: gathering and examining a new change initiative; communicating information about the new initiative to the school community; providing opportunities for small group discussion; large group forums; informal conversation; and opportunities for all school community members to participate in the decision-making process (surveys, voting, group consensus). All respondents' familiarity, knowledge, and ability to clearly articulate a process of change reinforced the perception that change was a regular part of the culture of schools in this study.

A large part of principals' roles brings them into contact with many different groups in the school culture on a regular and ongoing basis. Their role in the organization has the greatest potential and opportunity to influence the extent of and direction for change. The important question that needs to be answered is, "are they inhibiting change by not exercising their job

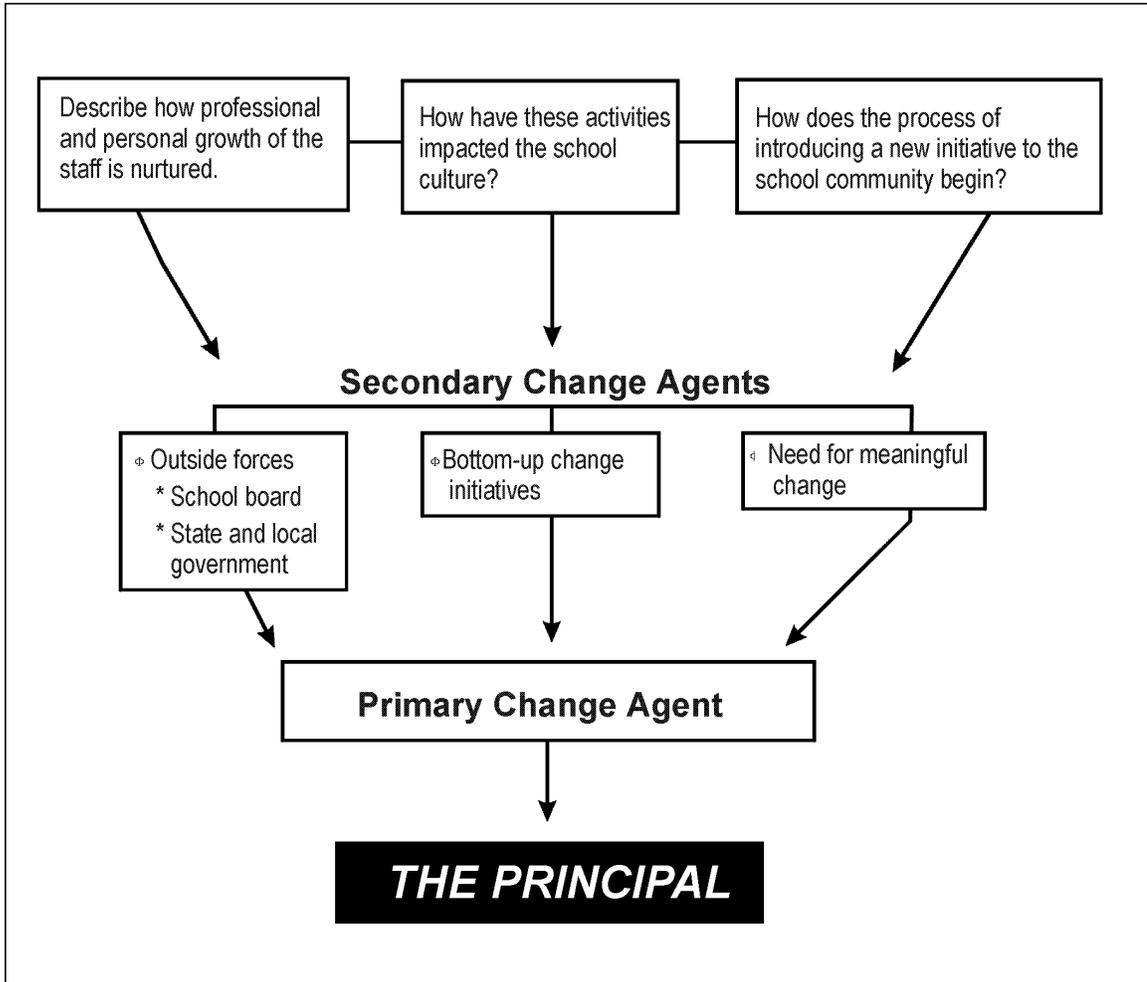


Figure 2. Who originates change in schools?

responsibilities and commanding the full capacity of their roles?" This is not true in the case of the principals who participated in this study.

### ***3. What activities and behaviors of principals can be identified as influencing change?***

All principals interviewed discussed their roles in relationship to "the big picture" and their "sphere of responsibility." Within the context of this framework, principals and department chairs identified a group of distinct characteristics directly correlated with "the big picture" (see Figure 3).

The majority of respondents identified consistently four distinct characteristics: communicator, facilitator, leadership, and "the human element." Principals and department chairs valued the idea of "the human element" and the importance of taking both a personal and a professional interest in people. It was this particular characteristic that principals fostered to channel their energy for promoting and generating change initiatives. Principals interviewed were passionate in their concern for people. Department chairs expressed that they liked the idea that principals took a vested interest in staff and school community members on professional and personal levels. Qualities that exemplified this caring behavior included strong leadership, good positive communication, and an ability to facilitate ideas, processes, and people.

Principals identified the qualities of the "big picture" by speaking in general terms about their professional satisfaction. Personal satisfaction occurred from regular contact, involvement, and interaction with different groups in the school community on a day-to-day basis as well as in weekly and monthly meetings. An even greater degree of satisfaction was expressed by the ability to cause and influence the direction of ideas, groups, and programs that impact

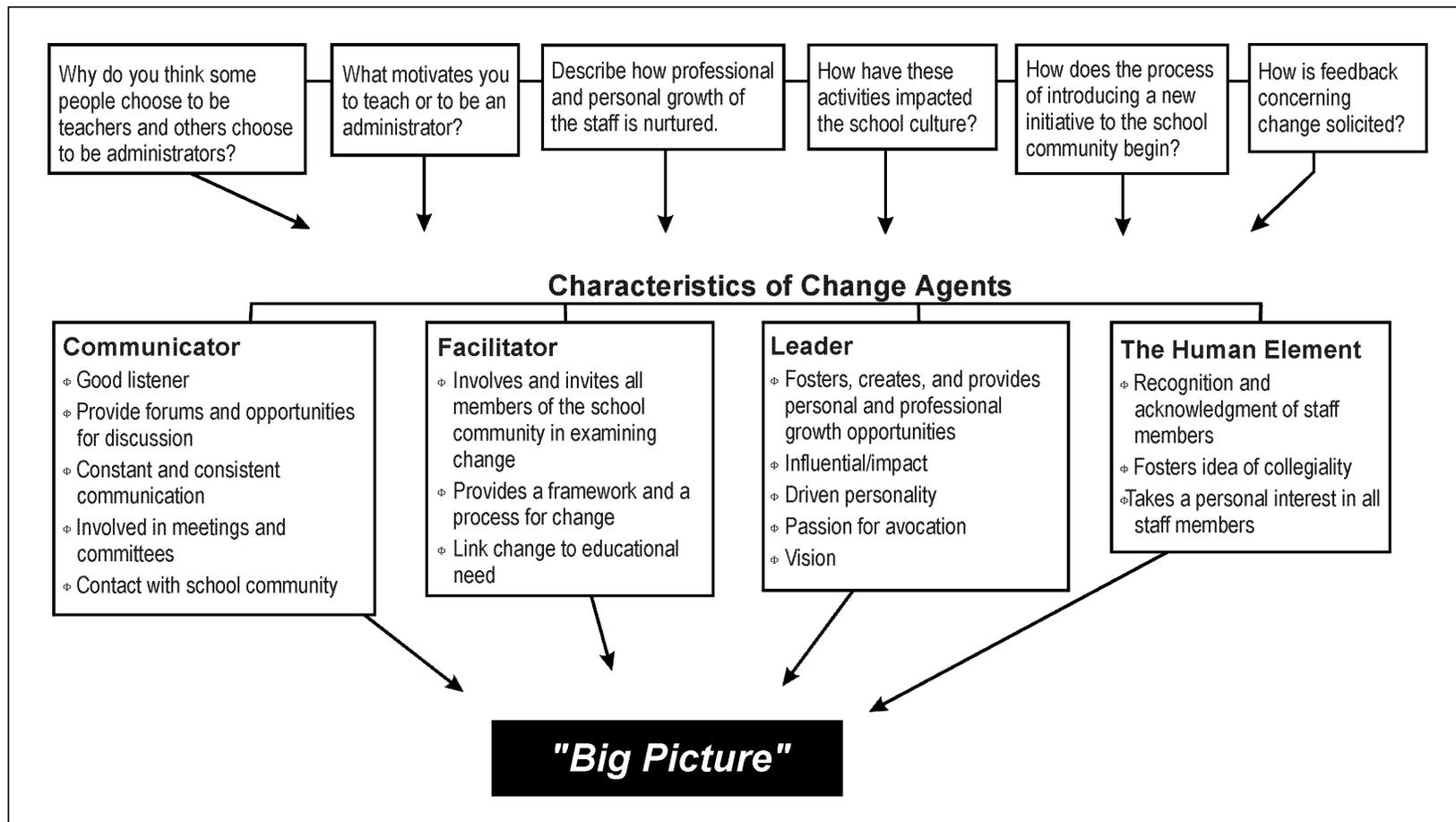


Figure 3. What activities and behaviors of principals can be identified as influencing change?

students. Principals expressed these viewpoints in varied degrees; they spoke passionately about their roles as school leaders.

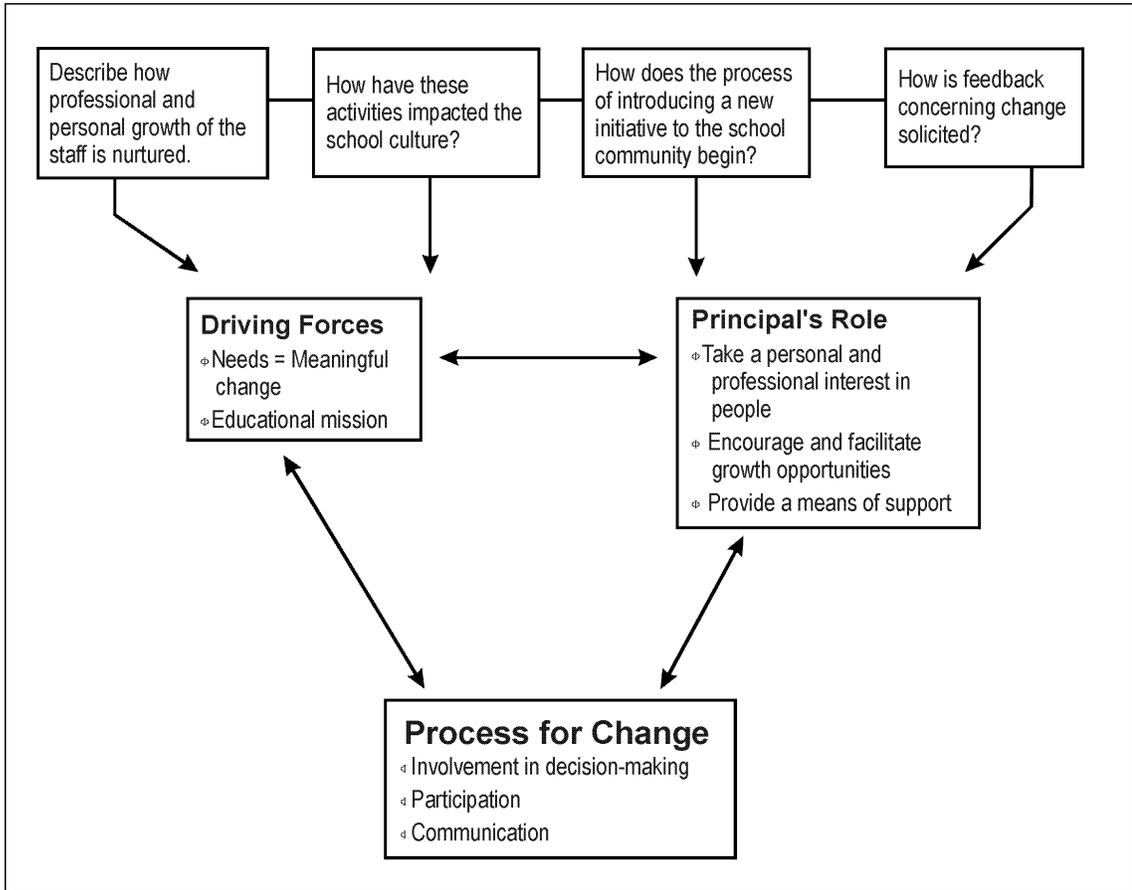
Conversely, department chairs talked about specific roles of principals and actions they took to influence change. They also noted that it was not so much what principals did to influence change, but how they did it. Department said that being a good communicator, facilitator, and leader who has a true interest and concern for people were conducive to easing the change process.

#### ***4. What are the perceptions of department chairs on how principals influence change?***

Department chairs identified distinct stages that worked in relationship with each other to influence change (i.e., process for change, driving forces, principal's role). Principals played the role of facilitator for staff and guide for the change process.

Department chairs identified specific characteristics of principals as facilitators. These characteristics are (1) encouraging and providing personal and professional growth opportunities; (2) providing a means of support (i.e., funding for workshops and resources and leave time); and (3) taking an interest in people on personal and professional levels. When linked together, these characteristics served as a catalyst to fuel and energize a system of change (see Figure 4).

In the context of this system the principal played a key position in guiding the change process. The first and perhaps most critical role was providing a driving force for change. The answer to the question "Why do we need to change?" was linked to the educational mission and



**Figure 4. What are the perceptions of department chairs on how principals influence change?**

purpose of the school and the educational system. It was not critical for the principal to have initiated the idea for change, but to ground the plan for change. As one department chair expressed, "For change to be considered it needs to be meaningful and beneficial for teachers and students."

The principal's role also included providing a process or road map for how change was examined in the school culture and to pose the question, "How do we look at new ideas?" Strong elements of the process are communication, opportunities for participation, and involvement in decision-making.

Discussion elicited from department chairs regarding this model of thinking could appear linear. However, the investigator perceived a change model designed to be in perpetual motion. Each characteristic and element has the potential to cause a reaction and create energy that can move the process and agenda for change forward. The principal's role is recognized as an element that can fuel and positively charge the whole process.

##### ***5. What cultural factors or elements are unique to those schools studied, insofar as they implement change?***

The majority of respondents identified the attitude, personality, and family atmosphere of the staff as attributes of their school. As stated by several of the respondents, "people make the difference." Many participants expressed a strong feeling concerning professionalism, linked to collegiality and a team spirit. There was a sense that a committed educational environment that supported students and staff members helps develop a bond, or, as expressed by a number of respondents, a "family atmosphere." This was further substantiated by a respondent who said, "We really have the best interests of the students at heart and work very hard toward it."

A smaller percentage of respondents cited demographic diversity of their cultures as a strength. They identified the diverse make-up of their school's ethnic and socioeconomic composition as a plus because it made them grow professionally and personally, develop an appreciation for diversity, and help students better prepare for entering society. The majority of respondents who cited diversity as a strength were department chairs.

A number of principals and department chairs identified the size of their school staff, student enrollment, and physical size of their building as a positive attribute. As noted, three of the four school staff who participated in this study are in small schools. Those who said that school size is a positive attribute were from the three small schools in the study. They tied their reasoning very closely to the ideas expressed by a greater percentage of respondents who talked about building relationships linked to the idea of a family or team (see Figure 5).

## ***6. What other perceived factors could be allies to change in those schools studied that implement change?***

More than half of those interviewed identified logistical or organizational factors, which they noted that if adjusted could better facilitate the change process. Matters of concern dealt with factors such as the day-to-day operation of the school (i.e., attendance, passing time, field trips); management of the school (i.e., meetings, class size, length of school day and year); personnel issues related to professionalism and accountability; and the size of the student body and physical plant. Department chairpersons comprised the majority of this group of respondents.

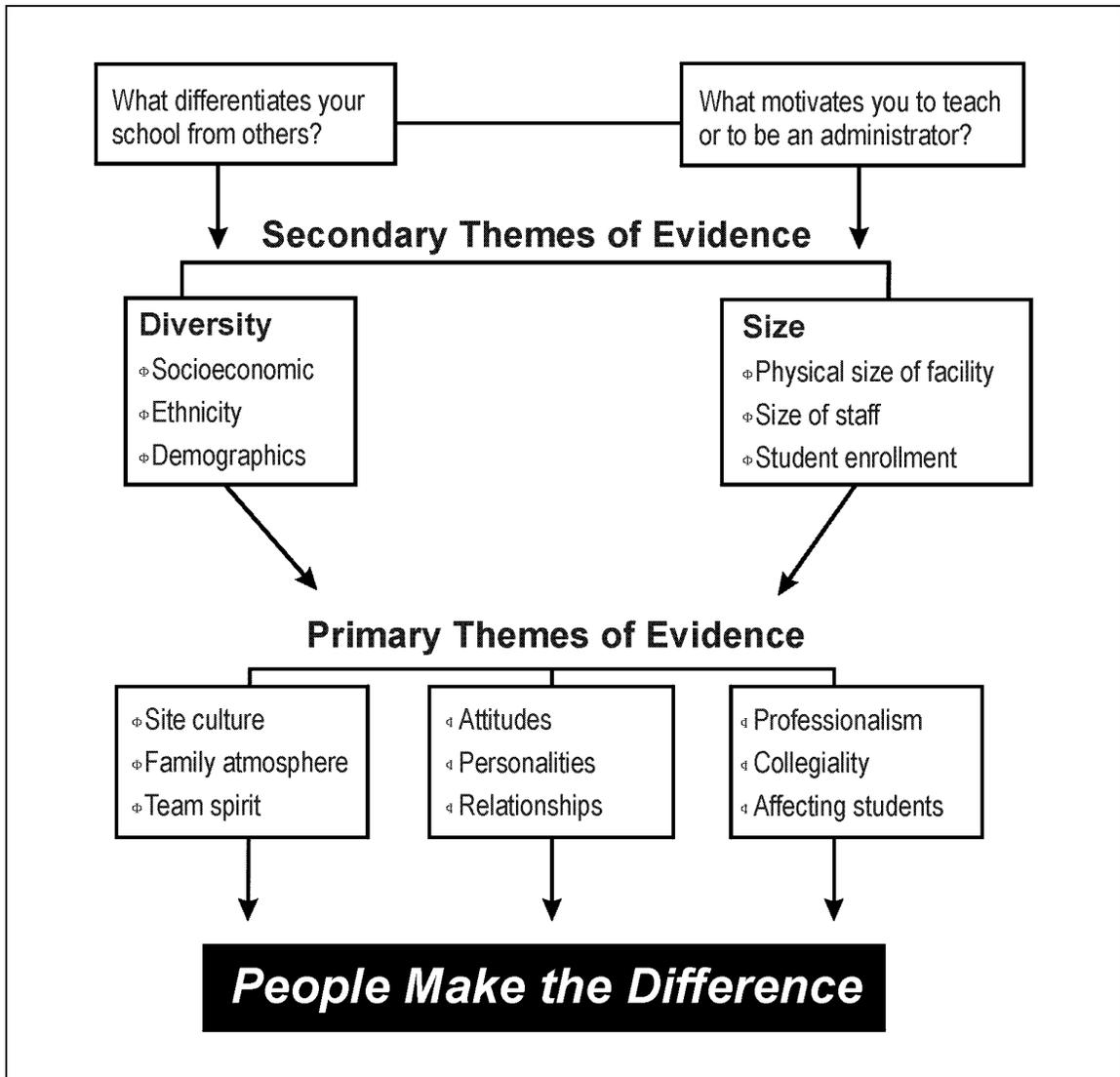
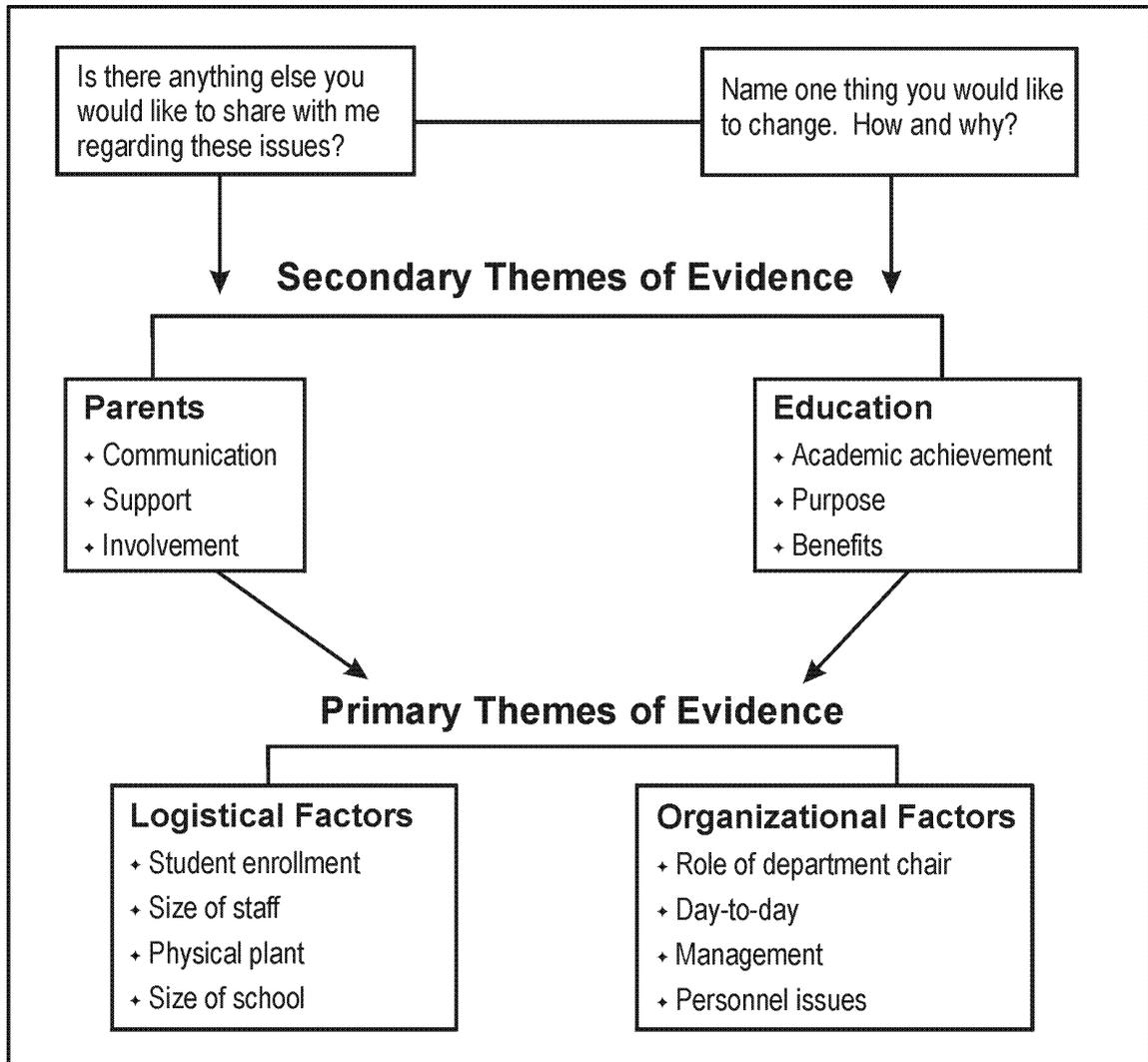


Figure 5. What cultural factors or elements are unique to those schools studied, insofar as they implement change?

A substantial number of respondents spoke about raising the level of awareness among students, parents, and community members as it related to the purpose and benefit of education. Many of those who responded expressed a real concern that students as well as parents did not recognize either. All respondents felt that a successful formula was to place a strong emphasis on student expectations linked to academic achievement (see Figure 6).

A very small percentage of respondents felt that parent involvement was a missing piece in the change equation. Some expressed the need for parents to be more involved in school functions and take a greater role in their child's education. One principal expressed the need to improve communication with parents. Through this effort parents would be better informed and therefore able to make a valuable contribution. This particular principal's point was focused on how to achieve such a task in a diverse school community. This principal suggested using a transition program model that would link elementary, middle, and high school through articulation of curriculum, community activities, and standardization of expectations for students.

Alternatives that a majority of respondents provided dealt with first-order change as described by Cuban (1990). Solutions for improving and facilitating change were of a logistical nature. Some grounded their solutions in the purpose and philosophy of education in the country. However, the overriding majority of responses were to "work harder" and "raise the bar higher" to meet the challenges faced today in education.



**Figure 6. What other perceived factors could be allies to change in those schools studied that implement change?**

## Summary

The principals who participated in this study were able to influence change by demonstrating a high degree of interest and care for school community members on professional and personal levels. Principals who valued what and how people thought were recognized as being connected to their school cultures and as having a strong sense of school community. It was through this awareness that principals could then channel ideas and provide opportunities to involve people in the change process. Principals utilized a menu of activities to engage all members of the school community on different levels with varied degrees of responsibility and ownership.

The response echoed by one of the department chairs is the best summation in addressing the problem statement: "My principal does not influence change, (but rather) facilitates it." This may seem an obvious answer for principals, researchers, and students of education; however, it is sometimes difficult to apply. For principals in this role, it is necessary to cultivate and nourish a school culture that can be a viable medium to examine and entertain change as a process to improve and benefit school culture.

## **CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, COMMENTARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

### **Introduction**

This study examined how principals in selected suburban high schools influence change. The researcher examined the culture of four school sites from principals' and department chairpersons' perspective about processes, elements, concepts, ideas, and new initiatives surrounding change in each school culture. Data were collected through a series of interviews with both groups of respondents through a naturalistic method of inquiry, which enabled the researcher to focus and investigate themes and patterns of behaviors about how principals influence change in school culture.

This chapter will draw together the themes, processes, and concepts that emerged in this study as well as relate it to the evolution of change in school culture. Attention to current theories of practice, processes, and the needs of individuals in school culture will be highlighted to gain a better understanding and in-depth knowledge of how and why change occurred in these schools. The contents of this chapter are organized as follows: conclusion, discussion, and recommendations for further study.

### **Conclusion**

This investigation examined how principals influenced change in school culture. These principals were recognized as the primary change agent in their school who were able to influence change in their school communities. The distinct characteristics that identified these principals were the ability to communicate, facilitate, lead, and care about people on both a professional and personal level. The change agent principals saw the "big picture" and integrate these characteristics

as they interacted with students, parents, teachers, and the community. It was in this way, that principals were able to channel ideas and provide opportunities for people to examine change for a purpose. This also provide principals with opportunities to develop professional and personal relationship with school community members that nourished a school culture to improve and grow.

## **Discussion**

This study presented an investigation of a variety of ideas, concepts, and theories concerning change in schools. The themes that emerged from collected data are grounded in the practices of those who participated in the study. The findings of this research indicate that the principal was recognized as the primary change agent and the force behind a change was how it could ultimately benefit teachers and students. The process of change and how each school understood, developed, and implemented change was also critical. The synergistic effect of these three elements working together provided energy to keep change in motion.

Finally, results indicate that people cause and make change happen. Change is a human dynamic. Therefore, there is a strong need for a principal to address the human aspect of change on both a professional and personal level. The principal provided the opportunity for interaction to many members of the school community and was able to see the "big picture." Participants identified the ability of the principal to articulate new information as a catalyst for examining change. Chamley, Caprio, and Young (1994) stressed this same idea of the principal as catalyst and facilitator of change.

Through varied and different forums of communication principals were able to reach, open, and begin to influence different school community members and groups. Wolcott (1973) reported these forums were presented through one-on-one conversations, informal meetings, and telephone

conversations. This provided a principal with opportunity to communicate an idea and plant the seeds for change. Principals indicated their objectives were to "plant seeds" in hopes of getting them to germinate and flourish. This metaphor illustrates how principals see themselves as able to influence and manage change.

Successful change agent principals demonstrated a high level of interaction with each of the different groups within the school community. Specific characteristics were identified as critical to how principals influenced and managed change. The principal who invited active participation in decision-making, encouraged positive attitudes, and actively involved different members of the school community built trusting and collaborative relationships. The change agent principal characteristics most prominently identified were those of communicator, facilitator, and leader. Berman & McLaughlin (1977) in the Rand Change Agent Study reported that the principal was pivotal in leading change efforts. These two studies identified these same characteristics of communicator, facilitator, and leader in order to successfully guide the change process.

Huling-Austin and others (1985) found in their research that the ability of a principal to effectively communicate the message about how and why to change was the first step for influencing a school change. The second step involved providing leadership and opportunities for the staff, faculty and school community to become involved in bringing about and implementing change. This study revealed through the literature review, research, and findings that these two steps enhanced the prospect of a principal influencing school change. The principal needed to be savvy at the art of human networking. Principals in this study showed a responsibility for providing direction for their school communities. Department chairpersons reported that the vision

of their principal was to provide a guiding light for the school community as a whole in helping them to achieve their goals and objectives.

Department chairpersons reported it was important how a principal went about communicating and involving the school community in planning and implementing ideas. These forms of communication included a varied format of communication modalities (e.g., memoranda, meetings, presentations, conversations). Several research studies found that principals engaged in a variety of different activities, consistent with the findings of this study (Mojkowski & Bamberger, 1991; Louis & Miles, (1990); Goldman and others, 1993). Department chairpersons in this study consistently identified caring about faculty and staff member as professionals and individuals as an essential humanistic characteristic of an effective principal as a change agent. This personal quality affected and impacted how a principal led, facilitated, and communicated with staff. It was ultimately reflected in the style and personality of the principal and how he or she interacted and influenced different groups and members in the community.

The level of concern and interest a principal exhibited for people on a professional and personal level was also considered important. Department chairpersons reported that principals who took a personal interest in staff strengthened their relationships on an individual basis. Department chairpersons felt strongly that teachers needed to know that principals cared about them beyond their classroom doors. The principals in this study also reported a need to get to know their teachers both as professionals and as individuals. These same principals felt that it was important to know what was going on in the lives of their teachers and staff members because of the potential influence on their job performance.

Another essential humanistic characteristic was the drive and passion a principal demonstrated about his or her work. Concoran and Wilson (1991) and Fullan (1993) also addressed this

constant drive demonstrated by a principal to look for new and better ways of doing business. The mission for this type of principal was to always be fostering in others the drive to grow professionally and strive for continuous improvement. This type of energy level created an atmosphere and school climate that invited risk taking and encouraged innovative thinking.

Department chairpersons cited that the reasons behind a particular initiative were critical to the idea of change. Ultimately, department chairpersons wanted to know the purpose for entertaining a new method of teaching or doing business. If the idea of change was seen as meaningful to teachers, as a measure for improving the instructional program, and beneficial to the academic performance of students, it would be explored. Vandenberghe (1988) and Morse (1976) reported similar findings in the educational literature. Department chairpersons who felt strongly about their mission and job responsibilities in the classroom shared the same perspectives. The greatest reward for teachers was first to see students succeed. The second was to see students develop a true appreciation and passion for their particular subject area.

Change is a process, not an event that happens at a specific time (Hord et al., 1987). This process includes participation, communication, and involvement in decision-making. While these concepts are related to the change process, each is developed differently by the individual school community. In other words, the process of change is personalized by members of each school community. This framework for entertaining and examining change allows for all members in the school community to know and understand how new ideas and methods for change will be addressed. It also provides a format for individuals, departments, and groups to take a leadership role. In doing so, it creates a school atmosphere that allows change to be generated from the bottom up rather than being imposed from the top down.

The combination of the principal, the force behind a change, and the process for change fuel an idea for change. The synergistic effect of each of these elements supports a framework for change and provides a gateway for new ideas. The three elements that unfolded in this study are discussed in the research literature. The findings reinforce the substance of each element individually and as a whole.

The responsibility of the principal is to be the visionary who provides a guiding light and direction in a format that allows staff, parents, and students to become involved. Fullan (1993) highlighted the importance of developing a collaborative culture in which participants build a vision together. The context of this format also allows individuals to personalize their ideas and projects for improvement and fit into a framework that is created by the principal. Principals who are committed to change make change a priority. The change agent principal provides a direction which creates a vacuum for individuals in the school community to focus and direct their energy.

The synergistic effect of these elements creates a dynamic organism that enables a school community to function and work well together. The education literature and research on the idea of change support the highly personal experience of this dynamic (Hord et al., 1987; Hall & Rutherford, 1975; Berman & McLaughlin, 1975 and 1977). The thinking and the actions of each member of the school community are represented as parts of the whole. The idea of an organism best describes the premise that a school is constantly changing and adapting to internal and external influences. There is constant change in schools today: transition of faculty and staff, introduction of new textbooks, orientation of new students, and implementation of new programs. The responsibility of the principal is to manage, guide, and channel the energy of all of these different systems. The style, personality, and ability of the principal to communicate, facilitate, and lead will influence how the school community as a whole will examine and entertain change.

The degree to which a principal demonstrates these characteristic will determine how change is managed and implemented.

## **Commentary**

Over the course of interviews and analyses of data, threads of evidence were implied but never fully emerged. It should be noted that the number of interviewees who expressed these concerns represented a small number of the sample; however, the value of their viewpoints is evident and is reflected in educational literature. Because of the quality of interviewees' responses and related values, these findings are included and warrant consideration by both practitioners and students of educational administration.

There are several specific areas of focus in relationship to this study that future researchers should explore more deeply. These areas of focus are size, diversity, perceptions, first-order versus second-order change, and quality of life. Note the distinction between "large school" versus "small school" for the purpose of this investigation is different than in other school districts in the United States. There is not sufficiently strong evidence to support these findings as part of the conclusions. The following statements therefore are made on the merit of those who expressed these viewpoints.

A select number of respondents in the three small schools by study definition that participated in this study cited the benefits of implementing change in a small school. A number of respondents in the large school said the size of their school (i.e. student enrollment, staff, physical plant) was a barrier to change.

Sergiovanni (1996) argued that for people to bond together for mutual commitment and special relationships, they must be bound by shared ideas and values. This type of culture can develop

based on two conditions: continuity of place and manageable scale. Small schools are more conducive to providing both. Small school size should be considered as another condition for bringing about and facilitating change.

Barker and Gump (1964) studied the differences between large and small group settings. In their study large schools were denoted as schools with student enrollment of 1900 or more and small schools with student enrollment of less than 1000. A total of thirteen schools participated in the study. Two were classified as large and eleven were classified as small. The findings of this research indicate that certain predictable things happen to people in small school settings. These include participation in a greater variety of activities; involvement in more difficult tasks; greater responsibility; and less attention paid to differences between individuals. Teachers and students are beneficiaries of enhanced achievement, increased participation, and job satisfaction in such school settings.

School planners, superintendents, and school board members should examine political, economic, social, and academic ramifications of their policies and actions. Proponents of large schools will argue that the sheer economics of operation along with efficient management of human and financial resources outweigh other perhaps vague and intangible benefits. Those with opposing viewpoints disagree with this line of thinking and argue that small schools can operate just as effectively as their large counterparts.

The reality of these circumstances is that large schools cannot be totally avoided. Sudden growth in the number of school age children in suburban areas and decline in enrollment in urban areas may result in large schools because of slowed expansion or consolidation. School planners and facilities designers have faced the problem of large schools since the mid-1950s as the birth rate of baby-boomers expanded. The solution that emerged to address the large school dilemma

was a school-within-a-school. This concept can link students, teachers, administrators, services, and resources. It can be enhanced by building design and methods of communication.

The impact of how school culture is affected from organizational and operational perspective requires further study. The strength of communication in all school settings is a characteristic for shaping and defining the culture of a school. Establishing proactive forms of communication through the use of modern technologies such as electronic communication as well as employing modern architectural design to facilitate modes of human communication through regular daily routines and actions are recognized as essential for a large school.

The student populations that comprise three of the four schools that participated in this study represent a homogeneous groups from both an ethnic and socioeconomic stand point. Over the past several years, the fourth school has been in a period of transition, moving from homogeneous to heterogeneous student body therefore similar to the other three schools. A small number of respondents in the four schools cited diversity as a factor that could contribute to the change process. Some who identified diversity as a positive attribute for influencing change worked in one of the three smaller, more diverse schools. These individuals cited benefits of a diverse culture such as better understanding of and appreciation for cultural differences, a new mind set that would spawn professional and personal growth, and a school culture that better prepared students to enter society. Those in the fourth school did not share the same feelings about diversity. They felt that this was just another issue that needed to be addressed as the school population changes both in size and makeup.

Is this particular cultural attribute a true asset to change or is it merely the influence of the Hawthorne effect? Were the schools that identified diversity as a strength better prepared and adept at articulating the virtues of such a characteristic? Were the respondents in the fourth school

not as acclimated to cultivating and acknowledging the benefits? What factor did time play as a period of adjustment for those who had experienced change in the level of diversity of their cultures? Is diversity not an example of change?

There appears to be a connection with the theory that surrounds the idea of school size. In their study of small school culture, Barker & Gump (1964) found that less attention was paid to differences between individuals. In a small schools settings there are usually not enough students, teachers, parents, and administrators to fit all the roles that are available. An environment is present that is "undermanned" and require more of everyone. Consequently, risk-taking is more accepted, opportunities for leadership are more readily available, and the learning curve constantly presents new challenges and the mastery of new ideas (Sergiovarmi, 1996). Are elements of diversity a contributing factor that impact schools and accommodate the process of change? It would appear from the schools in this study that small and diverse school cultures are more effective at implementing change.

There appear to be differences in perceptions of department chairs and principals and their roles in effecting change. Department chairs feel that they and their teacher colleagues had less impact on the school culture than principals. This focus was directly related to the classroom and to new initiatives and programs that would affect students. Principals articulated the perspective of the "big picture" and the "scope of responsibility" for influencing and impacting the direction of change. Consequently, their outlooks differed significantly with respect to their personal job satisfaction and responsibilities. This could be attributed to the role of principals and department chairpersons in carrying out their day-to-day responsibilities and different level of interaction with the various members that comprise the school community. It is important to note that although

their approaches and techniques to addressing educational issues may have differed, their underlying motivations were tied to the same objective -- that of helping students gain an education.

Both groups of respondents realized how each other's responsibilities and methods for accomplishing their tasks differed; however, a tension existed more on the part of department chairs. Several department chairs stated that they were not always appreciated or understood. Principals were accused of moving forward with agenda items that had been reviewed but had created a formidable opposition. This only fueled a "them against us" mentality, reinforcing an industrial work model as opposed to a community or family of learners.

Perceptions need to be valued and addressed. Within an individual's perceptions exist the reality of the environment that affects their culture and other individuals who comprise it. Perceptions are potent elements that contribute to the makeup of an individual's values, ideas, and behaviors.

One department chair's solution to breaking down barriers often created by perception was to blur the lines between teachers and administrators. The solution was to assign each administrator one class to teach and assign each teacher one administrative responsibility per day. The department chair felt that the best way to better understand an individual's world was through personal experiences. This strategy was one way for each group to gain better understanding and to work toward better addressing and solving common problems.

Principals must be prepared to deal with both positive and negative perceptions. Communication is the greatest tool for addressing perceptions. It is important that all members of the school community realize the power and influence of perceptions and be prepared to address them in an appropriate and timely manner. Principals appear to assume greater responsibility for

managing this part of school culture because of their roles and frequent interactions with members of the school community.

A number of principals and department chairs identified several logistical and organizational factors that were necessary to influence change. This type of change is often referred to as first-order or mechanical change. A first-order change can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the operations of an organization. Educational researchers and psychologists cite that there is greater value in second-order change, which has deeper and greater influence in bringing about change. Second-order change alters the fundamental way a culture is comprised, affecting its goals, structures, and roles. The characteristics of second-order change directly influence cultural norms as well as values, shared ideas, activities, and behaviors of individuals.

Interviewees in this study cite only first-order change plans to improve their schools. It is important to remember that these schools were identified among a select group that had successfully implemented new change initiatives. Their school cultures were all seen as viable environments for change. The principals in these schools all demonstrated to their peers and superiors an ability to guide and foster positive school cultures. However, the majority of respondents focus on operational issues? The answer could possibly be found in the process and in the way that schools consider change. While these schools were more accepting of the idea of first-order change, second-order change that influenced the norms, values, ideas, and behavior of individuals appeared to be minimal. Perhaps this group of schools were recognized more for their mastery of embracing the idea of first-order change among their peers and school district leaders and the perception of bringing about second-order change.

Advocates of a change process will argue that it is a method for facilitating communication and keeping all members of the school community involved. If information is needed, individuals can

easily plug into the process. Participation by members of the school community can fluctuate depending on the level of their interest. These elements of the process make it a democratic and user-friendly method.

However, barriers that restrict ideas from being completely examined and analyzed may be inherent in the process. It is important to note that principals were identified by the majority of respondents as the source of change. Although a host of secondary forces were discussed, principals dominated the change landscape. It could be that institutional barriers are created that may harness individual thinking and establish a uniform pattern of behavior that becomes part of the change process.

If more changes were to be initiated from the bottom up, would the boundaries of thinking be stretched? Does the fact that many of the influential factors guiding change involve others in more of a participatory role than a decision-making role and thereby divert the advent of new paradigms of thinking about change? Can a universal change process be applicable to all settings and initiatives? Is a different process needed if current applications are just recycling old ideas that only cause "things to remain the same?"

Finally, some principals and department chairs addressed issues surrounding the quality of their lives. One principal realized that in his zeal to move his school forward and implement change more quickly, he had only created more organizational stress. When asked about a personal life, another principal said, "What personal life? I am going and doing school all the time." A department chair new to a school expressed concern about juggling a new position and a personal life. She worked on an adjusted clock on weekends, reducing the number of hours for sleep just to be able to meet all responsibilities at home and school.

As the idea relative to change continues to evolve, researchers are beginning to examine the quality of life related to the health and well-being of individuals who comprise an organization. Working hard and being successful at one's job is gratifying; however, the question needs to be asked: At what cost to the work culture and family? A great principal or teacher and an absent spouse or parent does not constitute a balanced life. It only points to extremes along a continuum that ultimately result in stress to individuals, their families, and those in the work culture. It is prudent for educational practitioners and students of educational change to continue to examine questions related to the quality of their lives and the effect it has on the performance of individuals in the work culture. Those participants in this study felt that working harder and raising the bar higher was the only way to really improve.

## **Recommendations for Further Study**

The findings of this study contribute to describing the evolution of change in school culture and the role of the principal as part of the process. The process of change and its effect on school culture is dynamic and differentiated, a result of many dimensions and influencing factors that comprise school culture. To continue to better understand and influence change in education, practitioners, researchers, and students of education need to continue to probe at the elements, complexities, and theories about change and culture. Based on the findings of this study and the educational literature, the following suggestions for further research may be of benefit:

- ◆ The trends that emerged from the data in this study indicated a strong link between the size of the school culture and the impact a principal has on influencing change. Replicating this study by identifying a larger sample of schools with three distinct groups, determined

by size of student enrollment, could help to better define the strength of this relationship.

How does the size of a school affect the role of a principal and the ability to effect change?

- ◆ The role of principals as facilitators of change is associated with the responsibilities of their occupations. A multidistrict cross-case analysis of principals and how they influence school culture to change could provide greater detail about their roles as change agents. Differences and similarities in style should be determined to identify characteristics that would help to better distinguish the roles of principals in school culture.
- ◆ A significant number of respondents in this study identified the element of ethnic and socioeconomic diversity as a positive demographic characteristic that strengthens school culture. The perceptions that evolve from cultural bias and stereotypes are deeply rooted in the values and behaviors of an organization and emerge as reality. Understanding issues associated with diversity in those schools studied appears to have a positive influence on school culture. Expanding on the theme of diversity in school culture as well as other perceived biases could provide greater insight into school communities and how they address these issues to positively influence change.
- ◆ First-order change is the most prevalent in the school culture over the last quarter century. Researchers indicated that to effect significant change second-order change is needed that influences the activities, behaviors, and values of members in the school culture. The difference between first- and second-order change is associated with how the culture of an organization evolves during the process of change. Identifying unique school cultures that implement second-order change and the processes that influence and shape change could provide greater insight into the values and behaviors of school community members in these cultures.

- ◆ The process of change can be initiated by a number of different school community members. The findings of this and other studies identify the principal as a crucial catalyst for change. Consequently, change is often perceived as initiated from the top down. The process of such change is often entrenched and static in the school culture with distinct and defined guidelines. Change that is initiated from other constituents in the school culture is often perceived as more dynamic and referred to as bottom-up change. This type of change is often suppressed because it does not follow a distinct path associated with the inherent mode of change. Examining bottom-up change could reveal distinct differences about how principals interact with school communities in these unique school cultures.

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# Appendices

# APPENDIX A

October, 1996

<Name>  
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Extensive research has examined the principalship from the standpoint of explaining "effective school leaders." Educational literature has reported the critical nature of their role in school-based leadership and management. Typically these studies have examined the effectiveness of principals in their role, as opposed to investigating the actual work of school principals and their interaction in school culture.

I am a graduate student currently working on my doctoral thesis in educational administration at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. I am also employed by Fairfax County Public School system as an assistant principal at Hayfield Secondary School. My dissertation topic is focused on examining the role of principals and how they influence change in school culture. Data will be collected through interviews with principals and department chairpersons as well as a review of school-based documents (principal memos and school newsletters). Interviews will be conducted at four different high schools sites with the principal and five department chairpersons. The purpose of this investigation is to identify the activities and behaviors of principals and how they interact in school culture to influence change.

The purpose of this memorandum is to solicit your assistance in identifying those high school principals you recognize as ones who influence change in their schools. Attached is a list of the twenty-three high schools and principals who presently serve in these school-based positions. Note that three schools and principals have been omitted from the survey because of the status and length of their principalship in Fairfax County Public Schools. Please indicate, by placing a check mark in the column next to the school and principal's name, six principals from your observations and interaction who influence change in their school-based operation.

Based on your feedback, a consensus will be drawn for the purpose of identifying four principals who are recognized as "change agents. These individuals will be contacted and requested to participate in this research study. Should a school site decline to participate for any reason an alternate will then be contacted.

This research study and data collection activity has been approved by the Office of Planning, Testing, and Evaluation, Regulation 3910.2 (see attached).

I appreciate your time and assistance in completing this portion of my research. I look forward to keeping you updated as to my progress and the findings.

Sincerely,

Patrick K. Murphy

## **APPENDIX B.**

### **First-Round Principal Interview Questions**

1. Could you tell me what is going on here at this school?
2. Could you describe for me what you do as the principal?
3. Could you tell me all the changes that you deem most significant here at your school?
4. Could you describe for me how this block scheduling, shared governance, school-based management was introduced at your school?
5. Could you describe for me your role in the initiative?
6. Could you describe for me others' role in the event?
7. Could you describe for me what happened when the faculty first heard about this initiative?
8. Could you describe for me what you did to introduce this initiative?
9. Could you give me an example of teachers' resistance to change?
10. You probably have had some interesting experiences as a principal bringing about these events. Could you share one of those situations with me?
11. Could you share with me an experience you had most recently regarding the implementation of block scheduling, school governance, and school-based management?
12. Could you tell me about the types of skills you utilize to influence this or any other event?
13. What are the different types of change you see happening here at your school?
14. What are the different types of processes used to bring about these changes?
15. What are all the different types of change you know about?
16. Are there different kinds of change?

## APPENDIX C

### First-Round Department Chair Questions

1. Could you tell me what is going on here at this school?
2. Could you describe for me what you do as the department chairperson?
3. Could you tell me all the changes that you are aware of that are taking place? Which do you see as the most significant?
4. Could you describe for me how this block scheduling, shared governance, and school-based management was introduced at your school?
5. Could you describe for me your role in the event?
6. Could you describe for me the principal's role in the event?
7. Could you describe for me what happened when this initiative was first discussed?
8. Could you describe for me what the reaction was when the school community first heard about this initiative?
9. Could you tell me who first introduced this initiative?
10. Could you give me an example of resistance to this change?
11. You probably have had some interesting experiences as a department chairperson. Could you share one of those situations with me?
12. Could you share with me an experience you had most recently regarding the implementation of a change initiative in your curriculum area?
13. Could you tell me about the types of skills you utilize when interacting with department chairpersons, administrators, and members of your department?
14. What are the different types of change you see happening here at your school?
15. What are the different types of processes being used to bring about these changes?
16. What are all the different types of change you know about?
17. Are there different kinds of change?

## APPENDIX D

### Contact Summary

CONTACT DATE \_\_\_\_\_ CONTACT # \_\_\_\_\_ SITE CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF CONTACT

\_\_\_\_ Visit      \_\_\_\_ Principal      Informant code \_\_\_\_      Coder \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Phone      \_\_\_\_ Department chair      Place \_\_\_\_      Date coded \_\_\_\_

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PAGE

SALIENT POINTS

THEMES/ASPECTS

## APPENDIX E.

### Domain Analysis -- First-Round Interviews

DOMAINS		
Barriers	Change	Communication
Teachers Ways that people cope Friction Detached Part of resistance Type of threat Being adamant Don't talk Busy Tremendous concern Gossip  Students Discipline Lack of motivation Don't do anything Not getting things done Kids' disrespect  Hurdles  Resistance	Need for change Looking for new adventures Getting better Areas of focus High Standards  Change process Data-driven decisions Feedback Dropping bread crumbs Ways of doing things Renewal programs School renewal  Major initiatives Implementing new programs Block scheduling nt. Baccalaureate Int. business and marketing  Demographic Change Population Ethnic  Creating cultural change Change turmoil State of flux  System change  Organizational change  What matters to teachers	Part of a team Working with people Making a difference together  Processes Mending things Fostering dialogue Hope / working it out Planting seeds/Butterfly  Cooperation of teachers  Respect/ understanding  Atmosphere/ climate  Lip service - not putting your \$ where your mouth is  Dept meetings  Support system  Small school syndrome  Breaking down barriers  Reducing resistance  All levels of school system  Reducing risk  Improving dept.  Redeeming quality - positive

## APPENDIX E, (CONT'D).

### Domain Analysis -- First-Round Interviews

DOMAINS			
Management Style	Motivating Factors	Traits	Role of Individual
Principal's attitude	Academic	Principal's personality	Professionalism (2)
Initiator	Achievement	vision	
	International	style	Dept Chairs (5)
Microcosm	baccalaureate	different kind of thinker	
	Focus on academics	confident	Principal's role (7)
Double-edged sword	* in-depth instruction	planner	
	Opportunities	values	Leadership style
	Benefits students	listener	*Manager
Win them over	Ready for life	Teacher's personality	*Advisor
Accountability	Being successful	being in charge	My job
	To be the best	teachers	
Paired situation / interdisciplinary	Most improved students	30 yrs. later	My involvement
	Payback	Pride in school	Gratifying role
Patterns of behavior	Attendance	Receptive	"Big Picture"
	Test scores		
Brain storming	Discipline	Ethical - professional thing	Aware of issues
	School Service		
Nothing new	Improving dept.		
Revote	Expectations of kids		
Top down syndrome	Multiple projects		

## APPENDIX F

### Results of Q-Sort as Related to Domains

	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Management Style</b>	<b>Motivating Factors</b>	<b>Traits</b>	<b>Role of Individual</b>
Person #1	Barriers	Change	Communication And Community Involvement	Management Style			Role of Individual
Person #2			Cooperative	Compartmentalized	Student-Centered		Mediator and Teacher-Centered
Person #3	Lack Of Support And Abdicate	Problems	Collaboration	Autocratic and Laissez-Faire			Support
Person #4	Resistance	Change	Communication And Cooperation	Support and Leadership	Education	Vision and Emotion	Responsibility

## APPENDIX G

### Recurring Themes for Second-Round Interview Questions

#### 1. What type of school culture do you feel is the most conducive to change?

##### ADMINISTRATOR

- \* trust
- \* openness / two-way communication
- \* culture use to change and open to new ideas
- \* supportive staff
- \* change is the norm

##### DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

- \* voice in change
- \* open environment
- \* team environment/effect
- \* benefits of small school culture
  - community
  - development
  - implementation
  - evaluation
  - redesign
- \* honesty and realism about what can be achieved
- \* level of participation in the change process

**2. Why do you think some people choose to be teachers and others choose to be administrators?**

**ADMINISTRATOR**

*Administrator*

- \* big picture
- \* affect teachers and students
- \* bigger impact on large scale

*Teachers*

- \* contact with students and individual growth
- \* direct impact

**DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

*Administrators*

- \* authority
- \* control
- \* money
- \* upper mobility (progression/career path)
- \* scope of responsibility
- \* paper work
- \* administrative challenges
- \* can't cut it in the classroom/poor teachers

*Teachers*

- \* contact with kids
- \* change at the student level
- \* good role model
- \* do not like administrivia
- \* personal satisfaction

### 3. What motivates you to teach or to be an administrator?

#### **ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* articulating a vision
- \* inspiring people
- \* more options
- \* see direct impact of decisions
- \* work with a variety of people

#### **DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* inspiring people on an individual level
- \* content area/subject matter
- \* making a difference for kids on a social, emotional, and physical level
- \* seeing kids grow
- \* interacting with kids
- \* personal challenges
- \* energy and satisfaction in seeing students learn
- \* acknowledgment on a personal level (one-to-one

**4. Describe how professional and personal growth of staff is nurtured.**

**ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* provide information to department chairpersons and staff
- \* present information for people to examine
- \* discuss staff development opportunities
- \* connect opportunities with needs and interests
- \* support opportunities for staff development (funding, leave time, emotional support)

**DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* facilitate opportunities for growth
- \* nurture individuals
- \* support (funding, leave, and emotionally)
- \* recognition of staff achievement
- \* provide information on staff development opportunities
- \* connect opportunities with personnel
- \* push people/set high expectations/challenge them to grow
- \* respect

**5. How have these activities impacted the school culture?**

**ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* staff development opportunities (school-based, county, and professionally)
- \* communication with department chairperson and leadership structures
- \* providing time to meet, discuss, plan, and analyze next steps
- \* individual growth opportunities

**DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* treated and felt like a professional
- \* mutual respect
- \* impacted school culture and climate
  - academically
  - intellectually
  - collegiality
  - focus on instruction
  - team atmosphere
- \* feeling of trust
- \* development of new programs, initiatives, and courses
- \* support through (funding, leave, and emotionally

**6. How does the process of introducing a new initiative to the school community begin?**

**ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* is it legitimate?
- \* fostering and providing opportunities to involve many people
- \* examine through a process
  - introducing
  - gathering information
  - connecting with different school groups
  - allow for feedback and ownership
- \* play the role of facilitator

**DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* generate ideas/brainstorming
- \* share in decision making process
- \* opportunities for dialogue and feedback
- \* make process valuable and meaningful for teachers
- \* sharing of information and research
- \* informal process

## **7. How is feedback concerning change solicited?**

### **ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* constant dialogue with all school groups (administrative team, department chairpersons, FAC, and parent groups)
- \* open door policy
- \* provide information to establish opportunities for dialogue (weekly newsletter)
- \* menu of informal opportunities
  - visiting departments
  - food feasts

### **DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* listening to various school constituents (FAC, department chairpersons, community members)
- \* generate opportunities for dialogue
- \* solicit information through formal and informal avenues
- \* accept and act on feedback in a meaningful way
- \* open door policy

**8. Name one thing you would like to change. How and why?**

**ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* OPERATIONAL - align clerical support with administrative ability
- \* TRANSITION - model for K - 12 for all kids and parents to raise expectations
- \* EXPECTATIONS/STANDARDS - all teachers to care and take a personal interest in all students
- \* LOGISTICS/RELATIONSHIP - size of building relative to the teacher staff community

**DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* LOGISTICS - size of classes/schedules/attendance/size of building
- \* FOCUS - reorganization of priorities "the main thing"
- \* EXPECTATIONS - motivate all students / set high expectations focused on the average student
- \* COMMUNICATION - strengthen the idea of education for students, parents, and school community
- \* CULTURE - strengthen school culture through team aspects
- \* ACCOUNTABILITY

## 9. What differentiates your school from others?

### **ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* willingness to take risks
- \* willingness to stand out and be different
- \* give them a chance to tell a life story
- \* school culture
  - size
  - commitment
  - openness
- \* diversity
  - ethnicity/socioeconomic

### **DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* school culture
  - diversity among students
  - caring and supportive faculty and staff
  - we are in this together
  - family atmosphere
- \* size of school (physical, enrollment, community)

**10. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding these issues?**

**ADMINISTRATOR**

- \* creating unnecessary tension that only heightens anxiety
- \* being impatient
- \* administrative/personal career development

**DEPARTMENT CHAIRS**

- \* concern about new teachers and the future of teaching profession
- \* concern about the future of education
- \* being able to better define the role of teachers and department chairpersons

# Appendix H

## VITA

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### Education

James Madison University, Virginia (B.S., 1981). Physical Education (K-12)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia (M.A., 1992). Educational

Administration

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia (Ed.D., 1999). Educational

Administration

### Professional Experiences

*Principal*

1998-Present

*Washington Irving Middle School*

Springfield, Virginia 22152

*Associate Principal*

1997-1998

*Hayfield Secondary School*

Alexandria, Virginia 22315

*Assistant Principal II*

1994-1997

*Hayfield Secondary School*

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*Assistant Principal I*

1993-1994

*Carl Sandburg Middle School*

Alexandria, Virginia 22308

<i>Assistant Principal I</i> 1994	<i>Area I Summer School Program</i> Alexandria, Virginia 22308
<i>Assistant Director of Student Activities</i> 1991-1993	<i>Mount Vernon High School</i> Alexandria, Virginia 22309
<i>Health and Physical Education Teacher</i> 1988-1991	<i>Francis Scott Key Middle School</i> Springfield, VA 22150