

**An Ethnographic Study of a Literacy Program in a High-Poverty, Ethnically Diverse
Elementary School within the Context of No Child Left Behind**

Barbara L. Howard-Anzalone

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Education

In

Curriculum and Instruction

Rosary Lalik, Chair

Gabriella Belli

Cecelia Krill

Susan Magliaro

August 30, 2011

Falls Church, Virginia

Keywords: literacy, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), staff development, achievement gap,
ethnography

An Ethnographic Study of a Literacy Program in a High-Poverty, Ethnically Diverse Elementary School within the Context of No Child Left Behind

Barbara L. Howard-Anzalone

ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic case study of a high poverty, ethnically diverse elementary school and the transformation that occurred there. The research describes what happened at the school within the context of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) during a nine-year period. The researcher documents the challenges faced, practices employed, and resources used at the school which has demographic and socioeconomic characteristics that are highly correlated with failing schools as defined by NCLB. The study used a qualitative research design in order to investigate the complexities and processes within a specific context and setting from multiple participants' frames of reference and from the researcher's perspective as a participant observer. The researcher analyzed the data, identified patterns, and categorized them into a set of assertions about this school. The discussion of the assertions and implications for future research is organized around the three research questions: 1) What were the challenges faced on the path to improved student academic achievement? 2) What practices were implemented during the process of improving student academic achievement? and 3) What resources were used during the process?

DEDICATION

For the students, teachers, and administrators of Commonwealth Elementary School
who demonstrate the strength, intelligence, and perseverance it takes to
beat the odds
and
to Stephen
who saw me through with faith and a light touch for which I will be ever grateful

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is a result of collaboration and contributions given by a group of talented, generous, and loving individuals. First in this group are my husband, Steve, and my son, Duke, who maintained a strong belief in me and my ability to accomplish this work. For the many weekends when I worked on the laptop instead of being with them, the many nights when I was too beat to cook and they brought home take out, for the times when they understood I was just so tired, thank you is not enough. This work is truly a family accomplishment.

Next, I am indebted to the students, teachers, and administrators of Commonwealth Elementary School. They let me into their lives and allowed me to tell their story so others might learn. They are a remarkable group of people who shall be with me forever.

To Dr. Rosary Lalik, my faculty advisor and professor, who guided me through this entire doctoral journey, I owe more than words can convey. She spent hours upon hours reading and rereading these pages. She directed me to literature which shaped my analysis, met with me regularly to discuss the direction that the work was taking and make suggestions for the writing. Dr. Lalik challenged me, supported me, and nudged me, and she always knew which I needed and when I needed it. This work reflects the extremely high standards she maintains and the rigor she expects in her own work and in the work of her students. I could not have had a better chairperson and am so fortunate to have been in the right place at the right time to meet and work with Dr. Lalik.

To Dr. Gabriella Belli, my committee member and professor, who shared with me her vast knowledge of statistics, research, and the doctoral process that resulted in such a significant impact on the work presented here. Dr. Belli is the best mathematics teacher I have ever had the pleasure of studying under; I owe her a huge debt of gratitude for demystifying the world of statistical research. I will always remember her high standards and rigorous expectations that made my work better than it would have otherwise been.

To Dr. Susan Magliaro, my committee member and professor, who is a model of a university professor who advocates for high quality public education. I learned from her the

important part staff development and public policymaking play in the creation of an educational system that keeps the emphasis on what is good for the children. She honors teachers with her work as a teacher of teachers, and I am grateful to have been one of those receiving teachers.

To Dr. Cecelia Krill, my committee member and professional colleague, whose work in the trenches as an assistant superintendent exemplifies those who “walk the walk,” and who continue to work to serve the best interests of teachers, administrators, and public education in general.

To my family who loved and supported me throughout this entire project, especially my mother, Theresa Howard, my sister, Susan Howard, my aunt and uncle, Ted and Lorraine Kwiatkowski, my cousins Debra Rohr and Lynn Kwiatkowski, I love you very much.

To a group of friends and colleagues who encouraged me and uplifted me not only throughout my doctoral work, but before and since, please know how I treasure you. They include Dr. Roberta Apostolakis, Judy Bailey, Dr. Carol DeFilippo, Jim Egenreider, Pat Fege, Cheri Fischer, Dr. Amy Conlin Hall, Pat Hansen, Catherine Lahr, Dr. Carol Miller, Dr. Tina Lucas, Mary Person, Mary Alice Soller, Suzanne Sorensen, Deborah Tyler, Andrea Warner, and Jeff Wilkinson,

To a number of colleagues who assisted me with data and other support services for this research, including Joann Beale, Bette Bollinger, Eric Burrell, Lisa Callahan, Sandra Curtis, Allison DeBruin, Lisa Felder, Dr. Chantal Follett, Lisa Holm, Joanna Kelley, Tina Lao, Lori Morton, Mary Musick, Dr. Kathy Oliver, Dr. Judith Pokorni, Laura Robinson, Chris Roeseler, Jovon Rogers, Kathy Thompson, and Patsy Vandiver, please accept my deepest thanks.

And finally, to two special friends and colleagues who passed away not long before I completed this work – Dr. Gloria McDonnell, who made a place for me at the table, and Susie McCallum, who showed me a way to live in this world. I miss them and think of them often.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..... ii

DEDICATION..... iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iv

LIST OF FIGURES x

LIST OF TABLES xi

PROLOGUE xii

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION 1

 Rationale for the Study 1

 Significance of the Study 3

 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 4

 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements 5

 The achievement gap 5

 Supporting Student Learning 7

 Supporting Teacher Learning 10

 Definitions..... 11

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 16

 No Child Left Behind..... 16

 The benefits of NCLB..... 18

 The problems of NCLB 20

 Schools That Are Beating the Odds..... 25

 The achievement gap 25

 Special strategies for beating the odds..... 26

 Effective Teachers 29

 Effective Reading Instruction 32

 Focus on reading comprehension..... 33

 One Effective Staff Development Model 36

 A definition of job-embedded staff development 37

 Key participant relationships of the job-embedded staff development design 40

 Coaching and mentoring 40

 Influence of knowledge and beliefs on disposition and stance..... 42

 Job-embedded staff development and building a professional learning community..... 43

 Comparative analysis with other staff development models 43

| | |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER 3 METHODS | 46 |
| Research Questions | 46 |
| Study Design | 46 |
| Preparation for the Study | 47 |
| Accessing the field site | 47 |
| Description of the field site | 48 |
| Recruitment of Participants | 49 |
| Data collection | 51 |
| Qualitative data | 52 |
| Quantitative data | 59 |
| Data Analysis | 59 |
| Qualitative data | 59 |
| Quantitative data | 62 |
| Reporting the Data | 63 |
| Organizing the findings | 63 |
| Member checking | 65 |
| CHAPTER 4 INTERPRETATION | 68 |
| The 1999–2000 School Year | 68 |
| The 2000–2001 School Year | 70 |
| Addressing management | 73 |
| Addressing community-school relations | 79 |
| Addressing instruction | 80 |
| Addressing the provision of instructional materials | 81 |
| Overview Comparison of the 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 School Years | 82 |
| The 2001–2002 School Year | 86 |
| Challenges for the new principal | 86 |
| Community relations–Parental concerns about her “moving around” | 87 |
| The role of the mentor teachers | 87 |
| Selecting an instructional focus | 89 |
| Discipline | 90 |
| Addressing the need for instructional materials | 96 |
| End of year state standards test results | 97 |
| End of year 2001–2002 teacher turnover data | 98 |
| The 2002–2003 School Year | 99 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Two new resources | 99 |
| In-service session | 101 |
| Establishment of collaborative working relationships | 103 |
| Grade-level teams | 104 |
| Summary of the 2002–2003 school year | 108 |
| The 2003–2006 School Years | 113 |
| Identification of next steps | 119 |
| Data for 2003–2005 | 121 |
| Hiring the new reading teacher | 122 |
| Collaborative learning team professional development | 122 |
| Continuing the gradual release of responsibility | 127 |
| Commonwealth ES gets a Gifted and Talented Center | 131 |
| Summary of the 2003–2006 school years | 132 |
| The 2006–2009 School Years | 137 |
| Assessment walls and data analysis | 144 |
| Testwiseness | 146 |
| Double-dipping | 147 |
| The 2007–2008 school year | 149 |
| August 2007 staff inservice | 150 |
| The 2008–2009 school year | 157 |
| Epilogue | 164 |
| CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION | 166 |
| Assertions and Relevant Recommendations Related to Challenges | 166 |
| Challenge | 166 |
| Related challenges | 166 |
| Related challenge | 167 |
| Related challenge | 167 |
| Related challenge | 168 |
| Relevant Recommendations | 169 |
| Assertions and Relevant Recommendations Related to Practices | 170 |
| Practice | 170 |
| Practice | 172 |
| Practice | 173 |
| Practice | 175 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Practice..... | 176 |
| Practice..... | 177 |
| Relevant recommendations..... | 177 |
| Assertions and Relevant Recommendations Related to Resources | 179 |
| Resources | 179 |
| Resources | 180 |
| Relevant recommendations..... | 182 |
| Last Word..... | 182 |
| REFERENCES | 184 |
| APPENDICES | 203 |
| Appendix A. Characteristics of Schools that are Beating the Odds1 | 204 |
| Appendix B. Gradual Release of Responsibility for Reading Workshop..... | 205 |
| Appendix C. Four Staff Development Models | 206 |
| Appendix D. Institutional Review Board Approval Letters | 207 |
| Appendix E. Research Participant Informed Consent | 209 |
| Appendix F. District “A” Requested Reports | 212 |
| Appendix G. Planning the Way Forward Agenda, August 23, 2001..... | 213 |
| Appendix H. Staff Development Reflections 2002–2003 | 215 |
| Appendix I. Classroom Walkthrough Form—Reading/Language Arts | 217 |
| Appendix J. Assessment Wall..... | 222 |
| Appendix K. Staff Survey May 2008 | 223 |
| Appendix L. Commonwealth ES—Non-Negotiables for Language Arts and Mathematics . | 230 |
| Appendix M. CLT September 2008 Answers to Four Questions | 233 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|------------|--|-----|
| Figure P-1 | Scattergram of White and minority enrollments, 1969-1999, of one second grade class at Commonwealth Elementary School. | xix |
| Figure 3.1 | Example of E-mail Exchange Seeking Clarification on Data. | 52 |
| Figure 4.1 | SMART Template for Grade Level Goal (Strategic and Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Results-based, and Time-bound) | 124 |
| Figure 4.2 | Sample CLT Meeting Agenda | 126 |
| Figure 4.3 | E-mail Communication Between Ms. DuBois and Team Members | 129 |
| Figure 4.4 | E-mail Communication from Ms. DuBois to Team Members | 130 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|------------|--|-------|
| Table P.1 | Demographic Shift, 1969–1999, of One Second Grade Class at Commonwealth Elementary School. | xviii |
| Table 1.1 | Researcher Time at Commonwealth Elementary School. | 3 |
| Table 2.1 | 2007–2008 AYP Ratings for School and Divisions in the “State” | 18 |
| Table 2.2 | Transfer of Learning by Types of Training | 37 |
| Table 3.1 | Commonwealth ES Student Membership by Ethnic Groups–September 1999 and September 2007 | 49 |
| Table 4.1 | Developmental Reading Assessment Test Scores for Grades 1 and 2 1999–2001. | 83 |
| Table 4.2 | State NCLB Tests–Grades 3 and 5 Reading 1999–2001 | 83 |
| Table 4.3 | Standards of Learning Grades 3 and 5 Commonwealth ES English Standards Results for Spring 1999–Spring 2002. | 98 |
| Table 4.4 | Commonwealth ES Grade Level Planning Blocks 2002–2003 | 106 |
| Table 4.5 | Standards of Learning Results Commonwealth ES Grades 3 and 5 Students Percent Passing Spring, 1999–Spring, 2003. | 112 |
| Table 4.6 | Commonwealth ES 2005 Number of Walkthrough Observations by Grade. | 116 |
| Table 4.7 | Commonwealth ES Schoolwide Performance Language Arts 2002–2009. | 121 |
| Table 4.8 | Transforming Traditional Teams into Powerful Learning Teams Sessions. | 123 |
| Table 4.9 | 2000–2009 Commonwealth ES Student Mobility Rates. | 133 |
| Table 4.10 | SMART GOALS by Grade for 2005–2006. | 136 |
| Table 4.11 | Teacher Turnover by School, Cluster, and District | 138 |
| Table 4.12 | Staff Survey Responses | 156 |
| Table 4.13 | Summary of “Here’s What...So What?...Now What? | 160 |

PROLOGUE

I am aware that my social location influenced the shape of this project, the specific aspects on which I focused, and the means of analysis that I chose to use. Biklen and Casella (2007) define social location as the “particular identity markers (like race, class, or gender), circumstances of one’s individual situation, and other things in relation to the informants” (p. 15). In keeping with the criterion of making the qualitative researcher visible (Gluck & Patai, 1991), I realize the need to explain the criteria I used to decide what to put into this work and why I focused on what I did in order to show some of the lenses that filtered how I saw people, events, and issues in my study, and to help define my relationship to the data and my analysis. Therefore, I begin with a Prologue.

This is a true story. It is the story of a girl, a child of poverty and cultural diversity, who, when she became a woman intersected with a school filled with poor children who were also ethnically and culturally diverse.

The girl began first grade in 1956—one year after the *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Kluger, 1977) landmark Supreme Court decision, and one year before the launching of Sputnik. Her class was populated by neighborhood friends named Lombardi, Xanthakos, and Dadalt. Like the girl, most of the students’ parents’ first languages were something other than English—Polish, Italian, Greek, French. Almost all of the students in the class, including the girl, attended church-run Saturday school (often at the insistence of their grandparents) so that they would learn their “native” language. For the girl, that language was Polish. It was her mother’s first language. The girl’s father died in 1955, leaving her and her baby sister to be raised by a very young single mother. Her mother and sister walked her to school on that September day in 1956.

It was the era of Joseph McCarthy, the height of the Cold War, and a time of staunch patriotism. It was also a time of perceived need for more academic opportunities for gifted students when academic tracking was front and center within public schools in the United States (Tyack, 1974), when the girl should have been by all rights the victim of a widening educational disparity between the gifted elite and children of the lower socioeconomic class to which she belonged. And so, when in fifth grade she was plucked from her neighborhood school and bussed across town to the “accelerated learning class” along with only two others from her side of town, her life took a significant detour from the path it most likely would have followed.

She was given abundant educational opportunities that her neighborhood friends were not afforded—she learned to speak French, she participated in advanced math and science courses, she went on field trips to Boston and New York City. It was also the first time in her life that she felt different from the other kids in her class. Now the names were Gibson and Phipps and Sandman. When she visited their homes after school, she learned about a kind of family life very different from her own. And when Mrs. Gibson drove the girl home, Mrs. Gibson's body language when she saw where the girl lived made her face hot and her stomach feel sick.

She went to the university on a National Merit scholarship in 1968—a time when democratic educational ideals had begun to emerge in the United States. It was the age of the War on Poverty with its groundbreaking 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (McLaughlin, 1974) which authorized funds for educators' professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs, and parental involvement. The basic premise of the law was “to provide targeted resources to help ensure that disadvantaged students have access to a quality public education” (National Education Association [NEA] Legislative Action Center, 2002). It was the time of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the era of legal commitments toward equal educational opportunity for minority citizens.

In college, the girl read Rousseau's *Emile* (1772), many of John Dewey's works on education, democracy, and individual freedom (1900; 1902; 1916; 1938), *Death at an Early Age* (Kozol, 1967), *Black Like Me* (Griffin, 1960), B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948), A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* (1960), and *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (Harrington, 1962). She wondered how, despite her economic and social origins, she had somehow been afforded the privileges of the time which differed tremendously from the experiences of most of her first grade peers. Most of them had been relegated to a basic grades 1–12 education followed by blue collar work or being drafted into the military and sent to Vietnam. Unlike her friends and neighbors, she was rewarded with scholarships and honors instead. She graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a specialization in reading in 1972.

She entered the work force with a commitment to improve an educational system that sorted students into a small elite destined for the top and a large mass destined for the middle and the bottom. During the summer of 1972, she taught a Head Start class. Project Head Start, launched as an 8-week summer program by the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1965, was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income

families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs. By the definition of the legislation that funded Head Start, all of her students were poor. She began to read them *James and the Giant Peach* (Dahl, 1961). When she discovered that her students did not know what a peach was, she took them to the grocery store where they bought peaches and sat on the curb and ate them until their little tummies bulged.

Her first year-long position was as a middle school remedial reading teacher. She had 125 students, almost all of whom were poor and minority. She was 20 years old and had grown into a woman. Some of her seventh and eighth graders were 16 and 17 years old. They could not read, but they knew much more about some aspects of life than she. All of the woman's teaching experiences following her undergraduate education were as a Title I (McLaughlin, 1974) reading teacher and her students were poor, minority, and disenfranchised. She experienced frustration as their teacher when, despite all of her best efforts, there continued to be an ever growing gap between her students' reading achievement and what was defined as "reading at grade level" (Spache, 1953). She sought a way to be a better teacher for them.

In 1978, she applied for and was accepted into a master's/doctoral program at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst (UMass). It was a heady time at UMass. The School of Education enjoyed a reputation as one of the most progressive schools in the country. During this time in graduate school, she synthesized what she read and heard with what she had experienced in ways that began to help her make sense of "school" as a social institution and of herself as a "teacher" and, more importantly, as one who could empower her students toward individual agency that would result in social transformation (McLaren, 1989). She learned about critical pedagogy—a stance of critique and interpretation of pedagogy in its wider sense as including curriculum, social relationships in the classroom, and the ways in which the classroom reflects the larger social context (Weiler & Mitchell, 1992). The woman devoured works like Bowles and Gintis's *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) about the interaction between schooling and the labor market and the impact that educational policy had on American society.

As a reading teacher, she gained new understanding when she read Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973) and studied his distinction between "reading the word" and "reading the world"—terms he used to distinguish between an examination of the power structures surrounding the poor and that serve to

perpetuate the status quo and the power of the dominant society. Other influential works included *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (Carnoy, 1974), *Marx & Engels Basic Writings on Politics & Philosophy* (Feuer, Ed., 1959), *Marxism and Education* (Sarup, 1978), *Ideology and Curriculum* (Apple, 1979) and *Creating Alternative Futures* (Henderson, 1978) in which the authors wrote eloquently about school as a powerful instrument for the perpetuation of the status quo and how children in schools are trained as a matter of course to submit to authority with the result that habits of mind are formed which in adult life are all to the advantage of the “ruling class.” And the woman began to examine her own life to understand how she had gotten to where she was despite overwhelming odds within a system so powerful as to take her breath away.

She eventually completed the Master’s degree and became a Title I Reading Supervisor in a small farming community in Massachusetts. Many of her students were children of immigrant farmers who attended school during the spring, when they harvested asparagus, and in the fall, when they picked apples. They were sponges that soaked up learning when they were in school, but would lose ground when they disappeared to other places for the winter and then returned once again in the spring. But now the woman could make sense of the social conditions under which her students operated.

In 1984, the woman and her family moved to Virginia. She stayed at home with her infant son, and returned to teaching when he began preschool in 1986. She taught preschool for several years, and then became a full-time reading specialist in a large suburban school district in Northern Virginia. She worked for 7 years as the reading teacher in a Title I school where the children spoke 34 different languages and a majority was on free and reduced lunch. During her tenure as reading teacher, she had opportunities to participate in leadership roles at the district and state level. She was invited to apply for the position of elementary language arts specialist for the district and was hired into the position. A large percent of her time in that position was spent working with schools with large achievement gaps between majority and minority students. These schools almost always had high numbers of children who spoke English as a Second Language and lived in poverty with their families.

This is also the story of a school. For the purposes of this study, I will call the school Commonwealth Elementary School (Commonwealth ES), a pseudonym.

Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1955, the public schools in the Commonwealth ES district were not integrated until 1964. Until 1964, there were separate school facilities for White and Negro¹ children. The Negro children living within the Commonwealth ES boundary attended the Sandy Spring School for Negroes (pseudonym) until 1964 (Russell-Porte, 2000). By the time Commonwealth ES was built, integration had been in place in the district for 4 years. In the *Southern Education Report of 1966*, John Egerton described the county of which Commonwealth ES is a part:

[The district] has a public-school system which ranks among the 25 largest in the nation, and if there were some way to measure quality objectively it would probably rank among the 25 best... If there is a local government unit anywhere in the country which can eliminate poverty and develop a truly outstanding school system, with complete racial integration, [the] County should have as good a chance as any... the number of families which could be considered poverty-stricken, even by [the] County's high standards, is less than 3,000, and the Negro population of about 10,000 is less than 3 per cent of the total—a fact that has eased the process of school desegregation. There are a few concentrations of low income families in the county, but nothing to compare with a big-city slum (pp. 1-2).

When the Sandy Spring School for Negroes was closed in 1964, all of the African-American students were sent to a single public elementary school in the district. Later, as more African-Americans moved from the nearby metropolitan city into this area of the suburbs and the racial imbalance became high, the boundaries were changed and the students were reassigned to surrounding public schools, including Commonwealth ES (S. Conlin, personal communication, July 23, 2007). According to Susan Conlin, a classroom teacher, this occurred around 1978.

Commonwealth ES opened its doors to students in the fall of 1968. Norma Miller, one of the original teachers who opened the school, visited the building site in April of 1968. All she found was a hole in the ground and many pipes. She wondered how the building would ever be ready by the opening of school in September. In fact, the building was not finished on opening day. The teachers had to meet at a nearby school during the teacher work week before school started for the students. Needless to say, no bulletin boards were ready when students arrived. Teachers did not know to which room they were assigned until the day before school opened.

School began without many necessary materials. The cafeteria was not finished so students ate lunch in the classrooms. The clinic was not ready so the teachers weighed and

¹ I am using the term “Negro” here instead of African-American in keeping with the historical references cited in this section of the paper.

measured their students themselves. The school office was located in a classroom. Students had to walk to neighboring schoolyards for recess and physical education classes. The parking lot was unpaved. There was no grass and lots of mud. (S. Conlin, personal communication based on a conversation with N. Miller, July 2007.)

By 1969, the building was more complete. However, students continued to walk to nearby schools for recess and P.E. County officials were searching for the source of an unpleasant sewage gas smell often present in the building. The source of the odor was finally traced to a missing elbow connection behind a wall that was supposed to carry the sewage gas out of the building. The problem was repaired.

In 1968, most of the student population was White. Commonwealth ES was built due to a large population growth in the community which at the time was largely middle class. Almost all of the students lived close enough to walk to school. Parent involvement was described by one of the teachers as “very good.” The school had very large class sizes—29, 32, as many as 35 students. Class sizes changed throughout the years as enrollments increased and decreased.

At some point, Commonwealth ES was designated as a “special needs” school and was granted a reduced teacher-student ratio which resulted in smaller classes. The special needs status was granted to schools in the district with high poverty and diversity, so the inference can be drawn that the neighborhood changed from mostly White, middle class to a more diverse, poorer population.

Around 1976 (after the Vietnam War), several South Vietnamese students joined the school. They were children of wealthy Vietnamese families who fled Vietnam and moved into the neighborhood. There were no special ESOL teachers for these students. Teachers remember labeling things in the classroom and working with the ESOL students themselves within the classroom. By 1978, the cultural diversity of the students increased with more minorities including African-American, African, Hispanic, Asian, and Eastern Indian students. The school had become very multicultural. Table P-1 displays the changing demographics in one teacher’s classroom between 1969 and 1999. The extreme demographic shift in the school is represented in this teacher’s second grade classes which changed from being very large, all White, and English speaking to being small, minority-majority with multiple cultures and multiple languages other than English as the students’ first language. This extreme shift is evident when examining Figure P-1.

Table P-1***Demographics Shift, 1969–1999, of One Second Grade at Commonwealth Elementary School***

| Year | Class Size | Number of | | | | | | |
|-------|------------|-----------|------|----|----|---|---|---|
| | | Girls | Boys | W | B | H | A | I |
| 69–70 | 29 | 10 | 19 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 70–71 | 26 | 9 | 17 | 22 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 71–72 | 32 | 16 | 16 | 29 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 72–73 | 26 | 12 | 14 | 24 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 73–74 | 32 | 19 | 13 | 28 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 74–75 | 28 | 15 | 13 | 26 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 75–76 | 30 | 18 | 12 | 29 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 76–77 | 31 | 16 | 15 | 28 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 77–78 | 29 | 13 | 16 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 78–79 | 25 | 9 | 16 | 19 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 79–80 | 21 | 9 | 12 | 12 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 80–81 | 24 | 12 | 12 | 14 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 81–82 | 22 | 7 | 15 | 18 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 82–83 | 24 | 11 | 13 | 19 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 83–84 | 24 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 84–85 | 21 | 11 | 10 | 12 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 85–86 | 17 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 86–87 | 20 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 87–88 | 23 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 88–89 | 22 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 89–90 | 21 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 90–91 | 22 | 8 | 14 | 13 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 91–92 | 20 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| 92–93 | 18 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 93–94 | 24 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| 94–95 | 23 | 12 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| 95–96 | 22 | 9 | 13 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| 96–97 | 18 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 97–98 | 20 | 8 | 12 | 3 | 12 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| 98–99 | 17 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 1 |

KEY: W = White; B = Black (African-American or African); H = Hispanic (Mexican, Guatemalan, Salvadorian); A = Asian (Korean, Japanese, Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese); I = Indian (Indian, Pakistani, Afghani, Bengali)

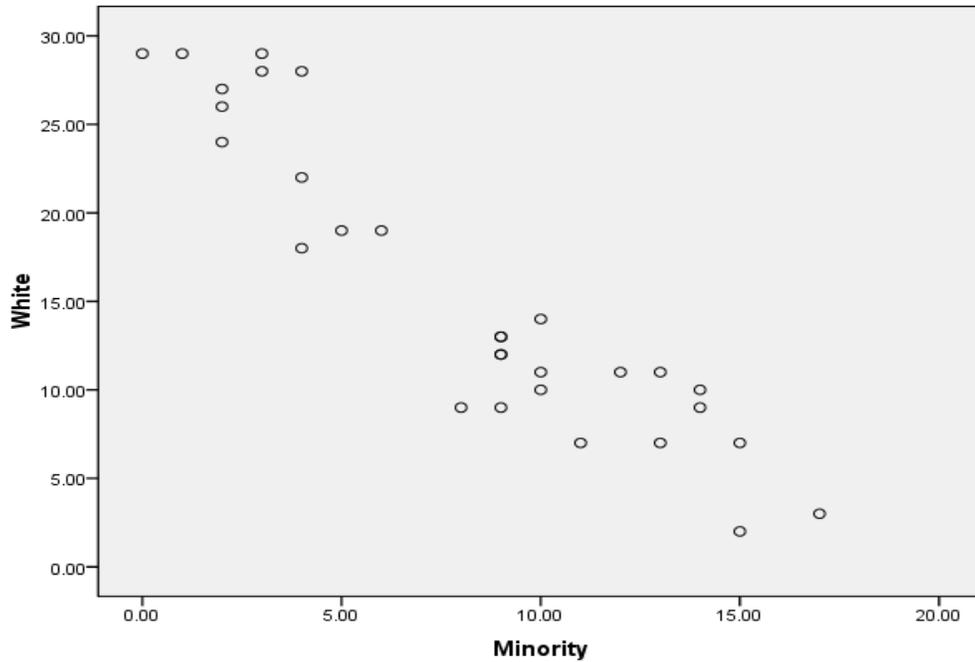


Figure P-1. Scattergram of White and minority enrollments, 1969-1999, of one second grade class at Commonwealth Elementary School

Mr. Henry Turner was the principal for the first 11 years. In the beginning years, Commonwealth ES had a rash of bomb scares and teachers remember standing outside in the mud, rain, and cold. Commonwealth ES was one of the few air conditioned elementary schools in the district, which was wonderful considering the fall and spring heat in that part of the state. Sometime between 1982 and 1989, it was the first school in the district with a kindergarten student known to have AIDS which meant many meetings with school board members, parents, NIH people, and the head of AIDS research for the State Department. It also required the installation of hot water in the child’s classroom and the warding off of reporters. Student enrollment decreased.

As class sizes decreased, the number of minority students increased. One teacher reports that the demographics of the last class she taught at Commonwealth ES during the 1998–1999

school year were totally opposite those of the first class she taught during the 1969–1970 school year. Of 29 students, the first class had zero minorities. The last class in 1999 had 15 minorities out of 17 students. She reports that “My last class was very diverse and very challenging. It was a very difficult time for Commonwealth ES.”

Many curriculum changes took place between 1968 and 2000 in attempts to improve the teaching of reading. In 1969, teachers were using the *Language Experience* method (Stahl & Miller, 1989), *SRA* (SRA/McGraw-Hill, 2003), and traditional basal readers (Durkin, 1984). They next adopted the *Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction* (ECRI) approach to reading instruction (Reid, 1986) and newer basal readers. Next came *Integrated Language Arts* (Templeton, 1991), *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 1985), and an emphasis on phonemic awareness. With the advent of the state mandated tests, language arts instruction was planned around social studies. By 1999, the school was using *Success for All*, a highly scripted program in which students are grouped by ability for instruction on the basis of proscribed measures, and teachers use instructional scripts from which they are not allowed to deviate (Slavin, 1996).

Susan Conlin reported that a variety of management approaches that were introduced between 1968 and 2000 “...to improve discipline as behavior problems increased or decreased” (S. Conlin, personal communication, July 23, 2007), including Glasser’s *Schools Without Failure*, Lee Canter’s *Assertive Discipline*, Fred Jones’ *Positive Classroom Discipline*, conflict resolution, and peer mediation. Methods for reporting to parents changed, going from simple basic checkmarks, to hand written narratives, then to computer generated comments, and finally totally computer generated report cards. Test scores at Commonwealth ES were a concern to the School Board and the Administrative Leadership Team through the years and became a particular anxiety with the advent of the state mandated tests.

By 1990, Commonwealth ES put into place after-school programs for students labeled as being “at risk” for school failure. A Crisis Team was created to respond to classrooms when serious problems occurred. By this time much time and effort were being spent trying to improve and increase parent involvement and participation. These efforts continued throughout the 1990’s (S. Conlin, personal communication, July 2007).

Commonwealth ES began a new journey in literacy education in 2001, the same year as the passage of No Child Left Behind. It was then that the woman was sent to Commonwealth ES by the school district for which she worked as a language arts specialist because the school had

been identified by the state as “failing,” as defined by NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). Unless some intervention was undertaken, the school would officially be deemed a “failing” school, subject to all of the consequences of NCLB. In an effort to prevent that from happening, she and a team of other specialists from the district were sent by Central Administration to Commonwealth ES to support the administrators and the teachers, and ultimately, to improve the students’ achievement.

In early August of 2000, the woman began her duties at Commonwealth ES. She drove from her office and parked on the street in front of the school. She clicked the remote to lock her car and secure it and its contents. With curiosity and a little trepidation, she walked the 50 yards from the street, across the expanse of yellowed lawn, up to the front door and entered Commonwealth ES for the first time (Field notes, August 2000). The intersection had occurred. It was a partnership that would continue for the next nine years. This is the woman’s story of that partnership. I am that woman.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The perilous and immense task ahead of us is to engage the real needs of the oppressed and to foster an unending commitment to their empowerment. We must work hard to reverse the current decline of moral passion and the socially induced depletion of the human spirit. The anger and sullen outrage that fills the gaps between need and fulfillment for many of our youth must be met in the classroom. Teachers must be agents of transformation and hope (McClaren, 1989, p. 242).

Rationale for the Study

This is an ethnographic case study of Commonwealth Elementary School (Commonwealth ES) (pseudonym) and the transformation that occurred there. Between the summer of 2000 and the summer of 2009, I worked at the school first as a staff developer, and later as both a staff developer and researcher. I describe what I observed during the nine years that I worked at this high poverty, highly diverse elementary school as it survived within the context of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. NCLB is the most recent reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA, Public Law 89-10). I document the challenges faced, practices employed, and resources used at Commonwealth ES in order to formulate a set of assertions about a school with demographic and socioeconomic factors that are highly correlated with failing schools as defined by NCLB.

Commonwealth ES shares many of the challenges identified with failing schools in the literature. That is, it is ethnically and culturally diverse, serves a population with a high rate of poverty, and has an achievement gap - the recognized disparity between Caucasian student achievement and achievement of students who are non-Caucasian, referenced in the literature as minority (Haycock, 2001).

Research Focus

One main objective of my research is to describe what I observed at Commonwealth ES in a manner that reflects the perspectives of the teachers and administrators (Marshall, 1985). Specifically, I describe:

- the context of NCLB under which the school operates;
- the demographic and socioeconomic factors operating within the school that research (Haycock, 2001) has shown are highly correlated with poor academic performance on standardized tests;
- the nature of the professional and informal interactions among the administrators and staff;
- the instructional practices implemented in the school;
- the staff development model implemented in the school;
- the degree to which, in light of the school's demographic and socioeconomic profile, it has been successful as defined by the NCLB of 2001 (specifically student achievement as measured by standardized tests); and
- the degree to which, in light of the school's demographic and socioeconomic profile, it has been successful as measured against itself (i.e., student achievement and other indicators).

I particularly focused on three research questions about Commonwealth ES:

1. What were the challenges faced on the path to improved student academic achievement?
2. What practices were implemented during the process of improving student academic achievement?
3. What resources were used during the process?

How is it possible to understand Commonwealth ES? Rather than simply examining student achievement, changes in mobility, or other school statistics, I worked inside the school community between 2000 and 2009 and recorded what I observed. Table 1.1 displays the time I spent at Commonwealth ES in my roles as staff developer and participant observer.

Table 1.1
Researcher Time at Commonwealth Elementary School

| School Year | Number of Visits | Total Number of Visits |
|--------------|---|------------------------|
| 2000-2001 | 3 each week x 40 weeks | 120 |
| 2001-2002 | 3 each week x 40 weeks | 120 |
| 2002-2003 | 3 each week x 40 weeks | 120 |
| 2003-2004 | 2 each week x 40 weeks | 80 |
| 2004-2005 | 2 each week x 40 weeks | 80 |
| 2005-2006 | 1 each week x 40 weeks | 40 |
| 2006-2007 | 1 each week x 40 weeks | 40 |
| 2007-2008 | 3 per month x 11 months | 33 |
| 2008-2009 | 1 per month x 11 months plus 10 extra visits | 21 |
| Total | | 654 |

Significance of the Study

The importance of this research is its timeliness. We are operating in an era when the number of majority-minority schools is increasing (Haycock, 2001; Hrabowsky, 1998). Public education is grappling with the effects of NCLB on its public standing. The reauthorization of NCLB legislation is now overdue, and is being held up as legislators and policy makers disagree about what kinds of educational reforms should be reflected in the new version of the legislation. Changes in policy will have huge ramifications for public education funding and policy, as well as for the country’s economy.

This research is also informative. It adds to the body of research available as Congress and the Obama administration move forward with the revision of NCLB, with public school reform efforts at the local, state, and federal levels, and as educational reform efforts focus on closing the troubling achievement gap (Strickland & Alvermann, 2004) in our public schools. That is, we must address the recognized disparity between Caucasian student achievement and achievement of students who are non-Caucasian, referenced in the literature as minority (Haycock, 2001).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001

In 2001, the U. S. Government legislated, for the first time in the history of American education, that 100% of all students in public schools will meet reading and mathematics benchmarks. The benchmarks are defined by the NCLB Act of 2001. The 1,000 page *NCLB Act of 2001* requires individual states to set annual measurable goals of proficiency in (a) reading and mathematics, (b) participation in testing, and (c) graduation and attendance. Schools and school divisions that meet the annual objectives required by the federal education law are considered to have made adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward the ultimate goal of 100% proficiency of all students in reading and mathematics by 2014. This reauthorization of ESEA was signed into law on January 8, 2002, and is now titled the NCLB Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education).

NCLB was a bipartisan effort by the U.S. Congress. NCLB's overarching goal is to raise the achievement levels of all students, especially underperforming groups such as African Americans, Latinos, and students whose first language is something other than English, in short, to close the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 2004). It is premised on three goals. First, it focuses on low-performing schools and students by holding school districts accountable for raising reading and mathematics achievement of every student via the disaggregation of subgroup scores on standardized tests. That is, rather than judging a school's success based on the overall average or mean scores, data for each identified group are measured against an expected benchmark score (AYP). The disaggregation requirement was a conscious effort by lawmakers to put an end to what they saw as school districts' ability to hide achievement scores of subgroups of students by reporting overall mean scores only. Second, it promotes teaching methods ostensibly backed by scientifically-based research (Wood, 2004).

To reach these goals, NCLB is designed to provide the following: (a) hold schools and school districts accountable for results; (b) give parents report cards so they can see which schools in their district are succeeding and on what grounds; (c) allow parents to transfer their child to another public school if the state deems the child's school to be "in need of improvement" for two consecutive years in the same subject area; and (d) provide a child with free tutoring outside the regular school day if the state deems the school has been "in need of improvement" for at least three consecutive years. This extra help is called supplemental educational services (SES) for which the school district must pay. Tutoring services are limited to state-authorized companies. Finally, the legislation provided one billion dollars a year

through *Reading First* for programs believed to ensure that all children will read on grade level by the end of third grade (U.S. Department of Education).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements

For a school or school division to make AYP under the federal education law, it must meet or exceed multiple requirements and objectives. That is, a school or school division that falls short on a single requirement or objective is not considered to have made AYP. These requirements are related to the following: (1) participation in reading and mathematics testing, (2) achievement in reading and mathematics, and 3) attendance (elementary and middle schools) or graduation (high schools).

Regarding reading and mathematics testing, AYP requires participation of a minimum of 95% of a school's total student body and 95% of students in each of seven subgroups: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English proficiency. Students may be counted in more than one subgroup. For example, an Asian student on free and reduced lunch who is also a special education student is counted in three subgroups—Asian, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities. Students overall and in each subgroup must meet the annual measurable objectives (AMO) for proficiency in reading and mathematics or reduce the failure rates on tests in reading and mathematics by at least 10%. Schools and divisions must also meet the annual objectives for specified groups, or show improvement on other designated academic indicators (retrieved from State website).

There is considerable debate about the effectiveness of NCLB to meet its goals (Meier & Wood, 2004; Ravitch, 2010; Ravitch and Meier, 2011; Robinson & Aronica, 2009). Studying schools like Commonwealth ES within the context of NCLB provides administrators, educators, citizens, and policymakers with insight into the present conditions under which schools must operate in order to be deemed effective and successful.

The achievement gap

The current strong focus on test scores in public schools and the erosion of affirmative action policies in university admissions (*Education Week on the Web*, 2000; Schoenfeld, 2002) have pushed the achievement gap issue to the forefront of the national debate about schools and created a renewed sense of urgency for something to be done. It is well-known and widely accepted that school achievement gaps are large and have been persistent (Christie, 2002;

Coleman, 1972; Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). African-Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans now account for one-third of the 54 million children in the nation's K-12 classrooms. Statisticians predict that they will soon represent two-thirds (*Ed Week*, March 15, 2000). Studying schools like Commonwealth ES referred to in the research as "majority-minority" and "high poverty," in which a majority of the school's student population is both minority and living in poverty, contributes to a deeper understanding of efforts to address the barriers to school achievement for so many children.

Under NCLB, schools must use state approved standardized tests to document and report the meeting of benchmarks called Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). There is a large body of research that demonstrates that low reading achievement correlates particularly with low socioeconomic status (Ainsworth, 2002; Battistich,; Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2004; DeGarmo, Forgatch & Martinez, 1999; Rodriguez, 2003; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000; Turkheimer, Haley, Waldron, D'Onofrio, & Gottesman 2003; Watson, & Schaps, 1995;), and that children from diverse backgrounds tend not to do well on achievement tests (Battistich et al., 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Haycock, 2001; Karp, 2004; Marzano, 2004; Meier & Wood, 2004; Prendergast, 2003). Despite this pattern, there are individual, high-poverty schools showing unexpected success on these measures (Allington, 2005; Compton-Lilly, 2004; Hrabowsky, Maton, Greene, & Greif, 2002; Hrabowsky, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Taylor, Pearson, Clark & Walpole, 2000). Studying these schools (which include Commonwealth ES) in ways that identify their unique characteristics should provide important insights for educators and policy makers as the first group works to close the achievement gap and the second group identifies effective ways to close that gap.

The gaps in school achievement among racial and ethnic groups and between students from poor and more affluent families are well-documented (Christie, 1987; Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). Closing those racial and ethnic gaps in literacy achievement is currently a focus of public policy, legislation, and educational research (Rothstein, 2004). In the last decade, policymakers' main strategy has been to impose rules, incentives, or threats (depending on one's perspective) without sufficient resources, especially financial, to support what is being demanded of schools and teachers (Strickland & Alvermann, 2004). These new rules have served as catalysts for many efforts.

Nationally, school leaders have intensified the search for ideas to raise achievement and narrow gaps. Research documents both the existence and nature of the literacy gap (Strickland & Alvermann, 2004; Williams, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Samway & McKeon, 1999; Ford, 1996). The knowledge and skills of non-Caucasian students and those from low-income families are not just low compared with White and more affluent students. They are also low in absolute terms, shutting these students out from meaningful civic engagement and economic opportunity (Hrabowsky et al., 1998; 2002). Some say that today's schools are turning out students unprepared to do any type of reading or writing beyond the personal narrative and that this is especially true for those learners who do not have access to the more academic and expository language of highly literate homes (Christie, 1987; Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007).

The disparity in school performance related to race and ethnicity referred to in the research (Ferguson, 1998; Haycock, 2001; Haycock, Jerald, & Huang, 2001; Strickland & Alvermann, 2004) as the "achievement gap" shows up in grades, test scores, course selection, and college completion. That is, the effects of the achievement gap are more far-reaching than simply test scores. It also affects student access to broader educational opportunities.

Supporting Student Learning

Present-day educators are at a point in time when the art of teaching is more informed by the science of learning (Ornstein, Lasley, & Lasley II, 2003). Up until about 30 years ago, teaching had not been systematically studied in a scientific manner. During the 1960s, educators believed that school actually made little difference in student achievement. The authors of the famous, but highly flawed, Coleman Report (1966) concluded that the quality of schooling a student received accounted for only about 10% percent of the variance in student achievement. At the beginning of the 1970s, researchers began to examine the effects of instruction on student learning in more depth. They wanted to know what influenced the other 90% of student achievement. Coleman and his colleagues attributed it to factors that included a student's natural ability (aptitude), socioeconomic status, and home environment (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). These findings were corroborated by Jencks and colleagues (1974), who concluded that "Most differences in ...test scores are due to factors that schools do not control" (p. 109).

Research conducted since 1966 has shown that an individual teacher can have a powerful effect on student achievement even if the school doesn't (Brophy & Good, 1986; Darling-

Hammond, 2004; Fisher et al., 1980; Hoffman, 1991; Taylor et al., 2000; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2002). Researchers have identified practices of highly effective teachers that result in profound positive influences on student learning (Brophy & Good, 1986; Sanders & Horn, 1994; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). For example, effective teachers who are aware of their students' prior knowledge as they plan instruction are able to scaffold student learning by providing necessary background knowledge that some children may not possess when they come to school.

Marzano and colleagues (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of selected research studies on instructional strategies used by teachers in K-12 classrooms. One of the primary goals of that study was to identify instructional strategies that have a high probability of enhancing student achievement for all students in all subject areas at all grade levels (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). They found that there are specific instructional strategies that enhance student learning such as identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and note taking; reinforcing effort and providing recognition; homework and practice; nonlinguistic representations; cooperative learning; setting objectives and providing feedback; generating and testing hypotheses; and questions, cues, and advance organizers (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

With respect to support for children's reading success, a large volume of work indicates that we can help students acquire the strategies and processes used by proficient readers, and that such instruction improves their overall comprehension of text (Duke & Pearson, 2002). For example, research on proficient readers tells us that they read across a wide variety of genres (Beaver & Carter, 2003). By encouraging and even requiring students to select books that represent a variety of genres, instead of reading many books from a single genre, teachers can give students valuable opportunity to apply reading strategies widely and deeply.

Other relevant research reveals a set of best practices for teaching and learning that have been shown to increase student achievement and help children reach their academic potential (District "A" Best Practices online site). One goal of best practice is to close the achievement gap for students, which requires meeting the needs of all students (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). The reality of working in education today is that, to be effective, educators must be accomplished in best instructional practices which include teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, understanding how people learn, possessing subject-specific knowledge, presenting

content for different learning styles using a variety of assessments, mobilizing organizational change, ensuring a safe environment for students, analyzing and utilizing data to inform instruction, having high expectations for all students, being committed to their students, and conducting situational audits and responding appropriately while ensuring that students understand they are accountable for their actions (Wilson & Peterson, 2006).

When best practices are set within a student-centered learning environment, teachers are able to accommodate the needs of many types of learners (Tomlinson, 1999). Within such environments, teachers assume multiple roles as they create appropriate learning experiences for their students and build relationships that promote a safe and positive environment in which students are responsible, self-motivated, and reflective (Dufour et al., 2006; Marzano et al., 2001; Schlechty, 2002; Robinson & Aronica, 2009). That is, teachers work to establish:

- **Relationships:** They build collaborative and respectful relationships with students, colleagues, and parents. They consistently encourage, support, and appropriately challenge students to ensure student success. They facilitate development of relationships among students to promote mutual respect and support in the classroom.
- **Procedures and Routines:** They structure the classroom to create an orderly learning environment, communicate expectations that support positive student behavior to facilitate high levels of student engagement, and build a shared community of learners.
- **Arrangement of Classroom:** They organize the classroom for a variety of learning opportunities that encourage both whole group and small group teacher-directed activities and independent and cooperative learning experiences.
- **Displays:** They support academic learning by using instructional resources (such as word walls, models, and anchor charts) that are clearly accessible. They make student work a focal point in the classroom. They post classroom, school, and district expectations.
- **Tools:** They make appropriate materials that support learning and make them accessible for all students (District “A” Best Practices online site; Wilson & Peterson, 2006).

Studying schools like Commonwealth ES, which have placed best practices for teaching and learning at the center of their own reform efforts, will be informative to other schools attempting to “beat the odds” and raise student achievement in the face of major challenges such as poverty, cultural diversity, and language. It will also assist policymakers and administrators

as they make critical decisions for the direction of on-going reform efforts that include the revision and reauthorization of No Child Left Behind.

Supporting Teacher Learning

Because it has been shown that skilled teachers can positively affect student learning, it becomes essential to learn how to help novice and less skilled teachers develop identified skills. The term staff development has been used to identify such efforts. One effective teaching design for providing this help has been referred to in the literature under several names including: “job-embedded staff development” (Joyce & Showers, 2002), “coaching” (Barkley, 2005), and “guided practice” (Feiman-Nemser, 1983). Understanding the effectiveness of job-embedded staff development as a specific professional development model provides useful information to guide policymakers and school reformers who seek to promote effective staff development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

Research tells us that there are models of staff development for teachers that are effective. Effective models include a variety of attributes, one of which is that learning is continuous (Joyce & Showers, 2003; Lyons & Pinell, 2001). The effective models support learners as they incorporate new information into what they already know and respect and help beginners (Lyons & Pinell, 2001). Effective staff development provides extended learning to help teachers reach a point where they are able to solve their own problems, make their own analyses, and help others, since the ultimate goal of staff development is the transfer of the new learning to the teacher’s active repertoire (Joyce & Showers, 2003). As Lyons and Pinell (2001) indicate, all the staff development in the world will not improve education if teachers do not independently apply what they learn.

Research on learning to teach indicates that context-based practice is important (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001) and that professional development should be primarily school-based (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Grossman, 1992; Guskey, 1995; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Little, 1993; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Smylie, 1995). According to Munby et al. (2001), “resolving the learning-to-teach question requires tying knowledge to situations” (p. 880). Teachers’ skill development increases when they are provided opportunities for practice in context followed by feedback. This feedback must be specific and descriptive (Barkley, 2005). In their book *Student Achievement through Staff Development*, Joyce and Showers (2002) state that staff development training often presumes that once teachers learn and

develop a skill, they will automatically use it in the classroom. But their research reveals it isn't a sure thing that learned knowledge and skills will transfer (Barkley, 2005).

Given the rapidly increasing demands of our knowledge-based economy, we need to make sure that we take more students to higher levels of achievement. Nothing will make up for a lack of commitment to raising teacher quality. Studying schools like Commonwealth ES whose teachers have implemented instructional practices that have been identified as enhancing student achievement for all students (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Hrabowsky et al., 1998; 2002; Taylor et al., 1999; 2002) provides insight to administrators, educators, curriculum developers, staff developers, and policymakers.

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this study.

- *Annual Measurable Objective (AMO)*—one of the requirements for schools and divisions to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) that they must meet certain benchmarks or Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in reading and mathematics. The AYP determination for a certain school year is based on the testing data from the previous year.
- *Authentic literacy*—the results of recent research into efforts to make literacy instruction relevant, motivating, and effective for students, pre-K through adult. Authentic literacy instruction draws on extensive research into the real-life literacy of children and adults. For a description of this body of research, see <http://cpls.educ.ubc.ca>, the official website of the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study, directed by Victoria Purcell-Gates (University of British Columbia) and co-directed by Kristen Perry (University of Kentucky).
- *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*—under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), each state establishes a definition of "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) to use each year to determine the achievement of each school district and school. The definition of AYP is diagnostic in nature, and intended to highlight where schools need improvement and should focus their resources. The statute gives states and local educational agencies significant flexibility in how they direct resources and tailor interventions to the needs of individual schools identified for improvement.

- *Balanced Literacy Instruction*—an instructional framework that includes reading to, with, and by students. The teacher uses ongoing assessments to match material and instruction to the individual needs of students. Instruction is delivered during daily reading and writing workshops. Components of the reading workshop include read aloud, shared reading, focus lessons, guided reading, literature study, buddy reading, and independent reading with application. Literacy centers and independent study reinforce classroom instruction. They allow students to independently practice skills learned during word work, shared and guided reading and writers' workshop. Components of writing workshop include read aloud, focus lessons, interactive writing, shared writing, and independent writing during which the student takes writing through the writing process (plan, draft, revise, edit, publish).
- *BART – Benchmark Assessment Resource Tool*—A district wide testing program whose purpose is to provide data that will be analyzed in a timely fashion to guide instruction. The data are disaggregated by NCLB groups and used to differentiate instruction.
- *Beating the Odds* – a term used to refer to high poverty schools that are also high achieving schools as measured by student achievement scores.
- *Book levels*—books are arranged along a continuum of levels of difficulty based on the characteristics of books (such as word familiarity, word length, and sentence length) at each level. Leveling supports the teacher when matching students with appropriate texts for instruction.
- *Collaborative Learning Team (CLT)* —as part of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), school grade level teams meet to create a culture of collaboration. They identify a regular time to collaborate, focus on learning questions, generate instructional resources, establish team meeting norms, use SMART goals, and provide relevant information (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).
- *Cultural symbols*—representations of an individual culture's reality. Every culture has its own set of symbols associated with different experiences and perceptions. As a representation, a symbol's meaning is neither instinctive nor automatic. The culture's members must interpret and over time reinterpret the symbol and their relationship to the symbol. Marshall and Rossmann (1989) identify these relationships as part of the

discussion of the larger culture. Symbols occur in different forms: verbal or nonverbal, written or unwritten. They can be anything that conveys a meaning, such as words on the page, drawings, pictures, and gestures.

- *Curriculum map*—a tool to organize teaching that defines a sequence for delivering content and provides a scope for what *must* be taught to *all* students, based on state curriculum documents.
- *Drift phenomenon*—an occurrence of loss of interrater reliability related to performance assessment measures. Assessors can combat drift by regular recalibration training sessions on the performance assessment criteria.
- *Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI)*—an initiative to provide early reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through the third grade who demonstrate reading deficiencies reflected in each student's performance on the Phonological and Literacy Screening (PALS) assessment. As the result of the intervention services, the essential reading skills of the identified students are monitored and improved by the end of each grade level, kindergarten through third grade. This initiative assists school divisions in their ongoing efforts to have all children reading well and on grade level by the third grade. The initiative, which has served either kindergarten or first grade students, was established by the 1997 “State” Acts of Assembly, Chapter 924, Item 140. In January 2000, the General Assembly approved funding to expand the EIRI to students in first, second, and third grades.
- *Embedded staff development*—job-embedded professional development is learning that occurs as educators engage in their daily work activities. It can be both formal and informal and includes, but is not limited to, discussion with others, peer coaching, mentoring, study groups and action research.
- *Guided reading*—a small-group teaching technique that enables teachers to differentiate reading instruction. It can be used at all elementary grade levels. It is characterized by four elements: analyzing reading assessments to identify an instructional focus; prompting students to use reading strategies when they encounter difficulties; teaching skills that are necessary and appropriate for a specific reading stage; and utilizing guided writing to support and accelerate the reading process.

- *Instructional Gateways*—a school district website created for teachers and administrators. It provides access to all aspects of instruction in the district including, but not limited to assessment, materials, job opportunities, professional growth opportunities, and other related resources.
- *Leadership Team*—a decision-making group headed by the District Superintendent. Members include the Deputy Superintendent, Division Counsel, Area/Cluster Assistant Superintendents, Department Assistant Superintendents (Professional Learning and Accountability, Special Services, Communication, Information Technology, Instructional Services, Human Resources, Facilities and Transportation).
- *Professional Learning Community (PLC)*—the community of teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seeking and sharing learning and then acting on what they learn. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit. This arrangement has also been termed communities of continuous inquiry and improvement (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2006).
- *Reading First* – a federal education program in the United States mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act and administered by the federal Department of Education. Program funding is allocated to Title I schools for scientifically based reading programs and for hiring coaches.
- *Reading workshop*—an instructional model for reading that combines explicit instruction in reading strategies with opportunities for students to practice each reading strategy independently, with a peer, in small groups, and in large groups (Serafini, 2001).
- *Reflective practice*—the capacity to reflect on action in order to engage in a process of continuous learning which is one of the defining characteristics of professional practice. It involves paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions by examining practice reflectively and reflexively. This leads to developmental insight (Schon, 1987).
- *Self-efficacy*—people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such

beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes (Bandura, 1986) .

- *Shared reading*—a collaborative learning activity developed by Holdaway (1979). It builds from the research that indicates that storybook reading is a critically important factor in young children's reading development. The storybook reading done by parents in a home setting is particularly effective. In school, in most cases, a teacher reads to a group of children rather than to a single child. The shared reading model allows a group of children to experience many of the benefits that are part of storybook reading done for one or two children at home.
- *Testing windows*—designated time periods during which assessments may be administered.
- “*State*” *Grade Level Alternative (SGLA)*—is available for students in grades 3 through 8 as an alternative assessment for the Standards of Learning (SOL) testing. Students who qualify to participate in the SGLA are required to demonstrate individual achievement of grade-level content standards as presented in the SOL test blueprint for the academic content area in which they are being assessed. The SGLA is only available to eligible students with disabilities and eligible students with limited English proficiency.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classrooms can be places of hope, where students and teachers gain glimpses of the kind of society we could live in and where students learn the academic and critical skills needed to make it a reality (Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner & Peterson, 1994, p. 4.)

This literature review addresses five major areas intricately linked to the focus of this research: (a) No Child Left Behind and its benefits and problems; (b) schools that are “beating the odds” (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999); (c) effective teachers; (c) effective instructional practices, especially related to effective reading comprehension instruction; and (e) effective staff development.

No Child Left Behind

The philosophical underpinnings of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) have deep historical roots in educational and curriculum reform. At its heart, NCLB is a classic example of a federal program whose aim is social control (Meier & Wood, 2004). Its ultimate goal is the standardization and shaping of a national program for education. This concept is known as reproduction theory in the literature and has been well-documented in works such as Hamilton’s *Curriculum History* (1990).

NCLB embodies Spencer’s notion of some knowledge being of more worth than other knowledge (Spencer, 1860), and Thorndike’s faith in statistical research and measurement (1904; 1913). The NCLB bill talks about quality education designed around practices and curriculum grounded in scientifically based research. Specifically, the whole Reading First initiative of NCLB is classic Spencerian-Thorndikian (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000). The initiative mandates that:

- all children will read by the end of Grade 3 (as measured by standardized testing formulated around a very specific definition of reading),
- that federal money will only be used for scientifically-based reading instruction programs,

- that students will be screened and diagnosed using approved, scientifically-based instruments, and
- that teachers will be provided professional development to learn the essential components of reading instruction— à la Spencer’s essential knowledge (U.S. Department of Education).

The legislation further states that assessment results will be broken out by subgroups based upon poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency. Like the 1890’s Committee of Ten (Pinar, Reynold, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000), the NCLB legislation pays no attention to pupil abilities, social needs, interests, capacities (particularly the ability to speak and understand English), or differentiated training. Reminiscent of faculty psychology (Pinar et al., 2000; Rippa, 1988), the bill represents its position as an objective, practical method of curriculum selection when, in actuality, it is based upon a very specific social and political agenda.

NCLB’s requirement for designated, incremental Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks is reminiscent of Thorndike’s education as a form of human engineering (Thorndike, 1922). With no consideration for what individual children bring to the classroom with them, NCLB mandates that all children, identified by subgroup *will* made AYP and *all* children, regardless of individual differences, *will* reach 100% attainment of the specified goals by 2014. There are strong punitive consequences tied to federal and state funding for schools that cannot demonstrate AYP for all subgroups via standardized test performance. These consequences appear to be the new twist for the NCLB legislation.

NCLB goes even further with its recommendations of specific reading programs (e.g., *Open Court*) which the law describes as scientifically based in the systematic (i.e. sequential), explicit teaching of the skills necessary for reading (U.S. Department of Education website). Like Taylor’s belief in task analysis to identify essential components of a task (e.g., reading) and then to teach the components sequentially (as described in *Principles of Scientific Management*, Taylor, 1911), the selection of programs like *Open Court* indicates a strong belief in the superiority of “bottom-up” teaching and learning. This notion is consistent with Bobbitt’s position in *What the Schools Teach and Might Teach* (1915) that it is the responsibility of the

schools to directly and specifically prepare students for tasks in the adult world, *as seen through the adult eyes of the decision makers* (emphasis is mine).

The new aspect of NCLB appears to be the stipulation that, when a public school is found to be “failing” according to the law’s AYP specifications, federal and state funds can be diverted to transport children to schools of their parents’ choice and to be used for supplementary educational support from either private or public institutions. Up to 25% of funds currently earmarked for Title I funding are accessible for these purposes. Parents have the same options as they relate to schools that are deemed “persistently dangerous” by virtue of the violence and/or drug abuse level in a school.

In the state, the objectives of NCLB are in addition to the standards for learning and achievement required as part of the state’s standards. Table 2.1 displays the state’s school report card listing the 2007–2008 AYP ratings posted on the state website. In the 2008–2009 school year, the required percentages increased from 77% to 81% for reading and from 75% to 79% for mathematics (State Department of Education).

Table 2.1
2007–2008 AYP Ratings for School and Divisions in the “State”

| | Made AYP No. (%) | Did Not Make AYP No. (%) | Total No. (%) |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Schools | 1,377 (74.7%) | 467 (25.3%) | 1844 (100%) |
| Divisions | 57 (43.2%) | 75 (56.8%) | 132 (100%) |
| All Title I Schools | 538 (74.7%) | 182 (25.3%) | 720 (100%) |

Now in its tenth year of implementation, NCLB has affected states, districts, schools, and students in many ways. A review of the benefits and problems associated with NCLB follows.

The benefits of NCLB

Achievement for all students. NCLB has resulted in some benefits to students, schools, and public education in general (Ravitch & Meier, 2011). NCLB has established a framework intended to ensure that all children receive a quality education. This includes holding schools

accountable for the academic progress of every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, income level or zip code (Retrieved July 13, 2007 from the United States Department of Education website). Closing the achievement gap is more of a national priority than it has been prior to NCLB. NCLB requires annual assessment of students in Grades 3–8 and once more in high school in the core areas of reading and mathematics. The law requires states and school districts to give parents detailed report cards, telling them which schools are successfully meeting the NCLB requirements. When schools do not meet those requirements, families are given the following options: school choice (sending their child to another district public school or a public charter school that is not in need of improvement) along with transportation to that school; and free tutoring or other academic services to eligible low-income students. In addition, for the schools found to be in need of improvement, support from the school district is provided to develop a plan to turn the school around (U.S. Department of Education).

NCLB and the disaggregation of subgroups. NCLB requires states to annually test all students in Grades 3–8 in reading and mathematics; to disaggregate the scores by race, gender, English-language proficiency, disability, and socioeconomic status; and then to publish the data. While disaggregated data moves the focus off schools' and districts' average student achievement, it sheds light on student groups. Advocates for limited English proficient, special education, and other non-majority populations strongly support this aspect of NCLB (Minnesota Department of Education, 2007). The disaggregation of scores by group is meant to ensure that minority populations are improving, since aggregated school performance data can conceal disparities in achievement among students.

The resulting disaggregation of scores by group has led, in some cases, to focused differentiation of instruction for students whose achievement is seen to have not shown growth under previous instructional practices. The end result of such differentiation can be focused instruction that is more effective and, therefore, leads to greater academic achievement by students (Tomlinson, 1999). It can also result in increasing a teacher's understanding of the importance of ongoing assessment, analysis of that assessment to inform instruction, and a deeper understanding of the reasons for differentiation of instruction and its benefits for all student populations. And, lastly, it can result in the recognition that differentiation of instruction is absolutely necessary for minority students.

NCLB and highly qualified teachers. NCLB requires that all classrooms are staffed by highly qualified teachers. Teacher competence is the most important factor in student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2004). While the ability to define “competence” had been emerging from research and policymaking prior to NCLB, the law has defined what it means to be “highly qualified” (Lewis, 2005). Highly qualified teachers, according to NCLB, must have a standard license, possess a degree in the subject to which they are assigned, or have successfully passed tests in the subjects or met some other standard set by the state. Although I discuss this aspect of the law as one of the benefits of NCLB, it must be noted that some educators, researchers, and policymakers disagree with the law’s definition of highly qualified (Lewis, 2005).

NCLB and professional discourse. Professional journals, newspapers, magazines, and education conferences are filled with articles and presentations about the benefits and problems associated with NCLB, what constitutes “explicit instruction,” “effective instruction,” “highly qualified teachers,” and a myriad of concepts that are key to the public school system in the United States. For example, at the May 2011 *Innovation in InSight Leadership Forum*, speakers focused on these and related issues (Ravitch & Meier, 2011). Whether pro-NCLB or anti-NCLB, these presentations and professional writings have contributed to the elevation of professional discourse in the field. Teachers, school administrators, district administrators, and educational policymakers more often assess students’ progress in reading and mathematics achievement; analyze those assessments in order to document gain, or, if no gain has been made, to inform instruction; and determine staff development objectives for teachers and administrators based upon student achievement and areas of non-achievement.

The problems of NCLB

Since the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, at least 20 states and a number of school districts have officially protested the enactment of NCLB by voting to withdraw from participation, withholding local funding for implementation, and resisting specific provisions (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Their actions reflect a number of the problems resulting from implementation of NCLB.

NCLB and the diversity penalty. Under NCLB, the larger and more culturally diverse a school or school district is, the more likely it is to be labeled as “in need of improvement” or “failing.” The chances that a school is designated as failing increases in proportion to the number of demographic groups it serves (Novak & Fuller, 2003). Specifically, NCLB deems

that if just *one* subgroup fails to meet the standard, the entire school fails. The more subgroups a school tries to serve, the greater the likelihood that the school will not make AYP. A close look at schools in Ohio that have been named as 2003–2004 Blue Ribbon schools under the NCLB reveals that those Blue Ribbon schools:

- spend 17% more per student than the state’s average per pupil spending;
- have a low (1:15) teacher-pupil ratio;
- have fewer than 2% minority students;
- have only 2% poor students;
- have only 7.7% special education students;
- pay teachers at least \$10,000 more than the state average; and
- have between 2% and 4% student mobility rates (Wood, 2004).

In other words, we might reasonably conclude that NCLB standards will most likely be met by well-funded districts with few minority, poor, or special education children.

NCLB and SES. Under NCLB, all schools receiving federal funds are required to reach passing rates of 100% for all student groups on state tests by the 2014 school year. This mandate is now the main preoccupation of schools and school districts across the country. Under AYP, the only thing that counts is the number of students who score above the passing level on the state test. Other improvements, even if they are large, are not considered in the calculations of state success rates. So on a state test with a passing score of 400, a test score that goes from 150 to 399, counts for nothing if the student is bilingual, comes from a low-SES household or receives special education. In fact, such a score counts as a failure in four different subgroups, whereas moving a student from a state standards test score of 399 to 400 is counted as a success.

Educational research has established a strong correlation between student performance on standardized tests and family income. A study by the Economic Policy Institute (2002) found that, prior to entering kindergarten, children in the highest SES group have average cognitive scores that are 60% higher than the scores of the lowest SES group. Yet the gaps in education funding between schools populated by high-SES students, which receive greater funding, and those populated by low-SES students, which receive lower funding, continue to exist and are not addressed by NCLB. Accountability must be a two-way street. State and federal support to close economic gaps between rich and poor students and rich and poor schools must accompany

the expectations regarding high stakes accountability of poor students and schools (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

NCLB—the unfunded mandate. Since the inception of NCLB, full funding has never been provided (Karp, 2004). A large gap exists between the promised funding of NCLB and the funding that has actually been provided. The George W. Bush administration’s 2004 budget called for about \$12 billion in funding instead of the \$18 billion that Congress authorized. Estimates in nearly 20 states show that it would take about a 30% annual increase in current school spending for states to meet NCLB’s mandates. That’s about \$130 billion a year, or almost ten times the current funding. Although money alone will not result in school improvement, it is neither fair nor reasonable to hold students and schools to high-stakes testing accountability without adequately funding the costs or fixing the inequalities built into our school funding. Educational excellence in poor, low-performing schools and school districts must be built on equitable educational funding (Karp, 2004).

NCLB narrowing assessment and curriculum. NCLB regulations are pushing states back to the lowest common denominator in testing (Darling-Hammond, 2004). It is delaying the move from norm-referenced, multiple choice tests to criterion referenced assessment systems that measure and help develop important kinds of performance and learning. Analysts have raised many concerns about how the law’s requirements are leading to a narrower curriculum, to less useful and engaging education, and to test-based instruction that ignores critical real world skills, especially for poor and at-risk students (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Robinson, 2011; Robinson & Aronica, 2009).

NCLB has created incentives for schools to keep out struggling students, to retain them in non-testing grade levels, or to encourage students to drop out of school altogether. Recent data from Massachusetts, which began high stakes testing in the late 1990s, show more grade retention and higher dropout rates between 1997–1998 and 1999–2000, greater proportions of students dropping out in ninth and tenth grades, especially African-American and Latino, and fewer dropouts returning to school (Darling-Hammond, 2004). The state of Texas, whose statewide high stakes testing program was a precursor to the NCLB legislation at the national level, has a dropout rate reported to be as high as 80% for poor students of African-American and Latino heritage (*Washington Post*, November 9, 2003). The “Texas Miracle” boosted test scores partly by keeping many students out of the testing count and making tens of thousands of

students disappear from school altogether. The “disappeared” are mostly students of color (*Washington Post*, November 9, 2003). In a number of states, high school completion rates for African-American and Latino students have returned to pre-1954 levels (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

One of the great early supporters of NCLB, Diane Ravitch (2010) has recently written:

In education, this belief in market forces lets us ordinary mortals off the hook especially those who have not figured out how to improve low-performing schools or to break through the lassitude of unmotivated teens. Instead of dealing with rancorous problems like how to teach reading or how to improve testing, one can redesign the management and structure of the school system and concentrate on incentives and sanctions. One need not know anything about children or education. The lure of the market is the idea that freedom from government regulation is a solution all by itself. (p. 11)

NCLB and a single source of evidence. All the sanctions in NCLB are triggered by year-to-year changes in standardized test scores. Researchers (Mathis, 2003) have shown that up to 70% of these changes can be caused by “random fluctuation”—things like variations in transient student populations or statistical errors in the tests themselves. “The AYP system cannot tell the difference between a learning gain and random noise” (Mathis, 2003, p.56). The one-size fits all assessment requirements and the accountability provisions attached to them promote bad educational practices and undermine curricula in significant ways. Large scale testing is also a poor tool for diagnosing individual students’ needs and for assessing higher order learning. According to Neill (2004), accountability requires the use of multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative evidence from both academic and nonacademic areas to arrive at judgments about whether or not a school or school division is being successful. No important academic decision should be made solely on one type of evidence such as standardized test scores. Progress should be evaluated via multiple measures including school attendance, school progress, course passage, and classroom performance on tasks beyond multiple choice tests (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

NCLB narrowing the school experience. According to Wood (2004), test preparation for NCLB has resulted in students in many schools no longer having recess, naptime in kindergarten or electives (e.g., art, music, shop). Nor are students taking field trips or creative writing. Instead, students in schools are:

- spending less time reading and writing;

- engaging in drill and kill practices;
- receiving DVD players and televisions in return for attending school during “test week”; and
- earning exemptions from final class exams if they do well enough to earn the school a good NCLB rating (Wood, 2004).

Meanwhile, schools are:

- diverting scarce instructional dollars away from instructional materials to buy test prep materials;
- aiming instruction at the lowest level of skills and information (Robinson, 2011; Robinson & Aronica, 2009);
- providing teaching and test prep practices that violate what is known about how children learn best (Ravitch, 2010; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998); and
- widening the gap between the education of children in the poorest schools and schools available to more privileged children (McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001; Ravitch & Meier, 2011).

NCLB and scientifically-based instruction. Ostensibly, one billion dollars a year has been spent to help low income schools adopt strategies that have been proven to prevent or remediate reading failure through rigorous peer-reviewed studies. However, an accumulating body of evidence from reports, interviews and program documents suggests that NCLB has had little to do with science or rigor. The billions have gone to what is effectively a pilot project for untested programs with friends in high places (Grunwald, 2006). Department officials and a small group of influential contractors have strong-armed states and local districts into adopting a small group of unproven textbooks and reading programs with almost no peer reviewed research behind them (Grunwald, 2006). The companies behind those textbooks and programs have paid royalties and consulting fees to key NCLB contractors who also served as consultants for states seeking grants and chaired the panels approving the grants (Robinson, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Ravitch & Meier, 2011) . Both the architect of NCLB and former Education Secretary, Roderick Paige, have gone to work for the owner of one of those programs who is also a top Bush fundraiser. On September 22, 2006, the DOE’s Inspector General released a report exposing some of NCLB’s favoritism and mismanagement (Grunwald, 2006). Program Director, Chris

Doherty, resigned after his internal emails, vowing to deny funding to programs that weren't part of the department's in crowd, were made public. "They are trying to crash our party and we need to beat the [expletive] out of them in front of all the other would be party crashers who are standing on the front lawn waiting to see how we welcome these dirtbags" (Grunwald, 2006).

Schools That Are Beating the Odds

The achievement gap

The literature is filled with discussion about the achievement gap that separates low-income and minority students from other American students. For more than a generation, we focused on improving the education of poor and minority students. Between 1970 and 1988 we made real gains. The achievement gap between African American and White students was cut in half, and the gap separating Latinos and Whites declined by one-third. That progress came to a halt around 1988 and, since that time, the gaps have widened (Haycock, 2001). This achievement gap has huge implications for students' economic and social futures. It is resulting in the creation of two groups within our society with respect to literacy and access in general—the "haves" and the "have nots."

The gap between the achievement of Black and other minority students and that of White students is a problem that is plaguing education (Haycock, 2001). The problem is one that can and should be solved, and yet we have been unsuccessful at doing so despite honest, hard-working efforts. Why?

Adelman (1999) found that a measure of academic resources (defined as a composite of curriculum, test scores, and class rank) has much greater power than SES in predicting college degree completion. The impact of curriculum is greater for African-American and Latino students than any other measure and consistently overwhelms demographic variables such as gender, race, and SES. Adelman (1999) found that improving the curriculum has a disproportionately positive effect on students from groups that traditionally underachieve. Singham (2003) has suggested that reductions in achievement gaps were achieved by a general focus on improving the educational achievement of *all* students, whatever their ethnicity, gender, or SES.

An analysis by Haycock, Jerald, and Huang (2001) shows that, in general, Black students receive a disproportionate amount of poor teaching. This gap in teaching quality is especially significant when we consider that the impact of teacher expectations is three times as great for

Black students as for White students. Teacher expectations are also larger for girls and for children from low-income families (Singham, 2003). The impact of the teacher is far greater for minority students. Since effective teachers produce as much as six times the learning gains produced by less-effective teachers, it should not be surprising that good teachers can have such a differentially positive effect on minority students (Haycock et al., 2001).

The research evidence is quite clear that three components go into making effective teachers: content knowledge, generic teaching skills, and pedagogical content knowledge. These findings are also supported by a large body of research (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Griffin, 1999; Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001; O’Dea, 1994; Richardson & Placier, 2001). School systems need to have a sustained program of planned professional development for new teachers that lasts over a period of about 10 years (National Research Council, 2000).

Recent research has shown us that what students learn depends enormously on what schools do. And some of what matters most is good teaching (Boston Public Schools, 1998; Ferguson, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996;), access to books, and high teacher expectations.

Special strategies for “beating the odds”

In a report of a three-year study of schools implementing special strategies to improve reading achievement, researchers described classroom instruction as “distressing” (Stringfield, Millsap, & Herman, 1997). The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children discussed the importance of systematic, school-wide restructuring efforts in reading (Snow et al., 1998). The committee recommended that poor performing schools consider reading reform efforts with a dual focus on school-wide organizational issues and improved classroom reading instruction. In a report of a large, national study of 400 Title I schools, Puma and colleagues (1997) found that higher levels of poverty, greater application of grade retention policies, and higher levels of student disciplinary actions were related to lower student achievement. Only 5 of the 400 schools studied were identified as exceptional. According to Taylor and colleagues, (1999) these schools tended to have more experienced principals, school-wide Chapter I programs, some tracking by ability in Grades 1–6, lower rates of teacher and student mobility, a balanced emphasis on remedial and higher-order thinking in classroom instruction, and higher levels of community and parent support.

Hoffman (1991) documented research on effective schools and reading achievement in the review, *Teacher and School Effects in Learning to Read*. Hoffman described eight characteristics of effective schools frequently summarized in the literature. They included: a clear school mission; effective instructional leadership and practices; high expectations; a safe, orderly, and positive environment; ongoing curriculum improvement; maximum use of instructional time; frequent monitoring of student progress; and, positive home-school relationships.

Weber (1971), in a study of four effective schools, identified the following characteristics they shared: strong leadership, high expectations, positive school climate, strong emphasis on reading, ongoing evaluation of pupil progress success on the median achievement-level criteria on a standardized reading achievement test, and a relatively small number of children with serious reading difficulties.

In a study of compensatory reading programs, Wilder (1977) found that the five most effective schools, out of the sample of 741 schools, shared the following characteristics: reading was identified as an important instructional goal; leadership in the reading program was provided by either the principal or a reading specialist; attention was given to basic skills; a breadth of materials was made available; and, ideas were communicated across teachers by a program leader.

In a more recent study, Stringfield, and colleagues, (1997) found that schools demonstrating the greatest achievement gains worked hard at initial implementation and long-term maintenance of innovations; systematically self-improved; continuously evolved and expanded; and used externally developed research based-programs and programs that focused on whole school reform (versus locally developed programs and pull-out programs). The same study also found that students identified as “at risk of academic failure” could achieve at levels that met national averages.

In a study of five effective Title I schools, Puma and colleagues (1997) found that high-performing, high-poverty schools had lower than average teacher and student mobility, principals with more years of experience, more orderly school environments, better school climates, better relationships with administration and the community, greater parent involvement, more parents with higher expectations for their children’s future educational

attainment, some tracking by ability in Grades 1–6, and teachers in three of the five schools emphasized both remedial and higher order comprehension skills.

Taylor and colleagues, (1999) examined the instructional and organizational factors in 11 moderate to high poverty schools selected because of their reputations for “beating the odds” by promoting greater than expected reading achievement. They found that a combination of school and teacher factors, many of which were intertwined, was found to be important in the most effective schools. These factors included strong links to parents, systematic assessment of pupil progress, strong staff communication, strong collaborative model(s) for the delivery of reading instruction, teachers who taught in small-group settings, students who spent time in independent reading, high levels of student on-task behavior, strong home communication, teachers who supplemented explicit phonics instruction with coaching in which they taught students strategies for application to their everyday reading, teachers who employed higher level questions during text discussion, and teachers who asked students to write in response to reading.

Hrabowsky, Maton, and Greif (1998) and Hrabowsky, Maton, Greene, and Greif (2002) looked at young African-Americans who were achieving at the highest levels of academic success in the United States. Of those studied, these researchers found that, while 73% of the Blacks 25 years or older had completed high school (compared with 83% of Caucasians), only 14% had completed four years of college (compared with 27% of Caucasians). Although the 1995 average, combined SAT score of African-American high school students whose parents lacked a high school diploma was 655, the average combined score of African-American students in families where the highest level of parental education was a graduate degree was 844. This is 191 points below the national average score of 1,035 for Caucasian students in the same category. African-Americans whose family income was below \$10,000 had SAT scores of 675 compared to 849 for African Americans with family incomes of at least \$70,000. This score of 675 is significantly below the national average score of White students with families with comparable incomes (Hrabowsky et al., 1998).

Hrabowsky et al. (2002) also identified a number of factors that contributed to the success of these students including parents’ reading in the home to their children at a young age, the parents’ view that education is both necessary and valuable, active encouragement on the part of the parents toward academic success, close interaction between the parents and their children’s teachers, strong parental interest in homework, considerable verbal praise from

parents, strong parental limit-setting and discipline, and strong role of the church as part of the upbringing of the children.

In summary, looking across all of this research related to schools that are beating the odds, findings were consistent (though not unanimous) regarding the important role of effective leadership, high percent of time spent on academics and reading, continuous monitoring of student progress, positive school communication/climate, and positive home school relationships.

Effective Teachers

Studies have demonstrated the enormous impact on student achievement of teachers providing high-quality classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In an analysis of the impact of higher-quality instruction, Bemby, Weerasinghe, and Mendro (1998) found that students in classrooms offering higher-quality instruction achieved standardized reading test scores that were 40 percentile points higher than students enrolled in classrooms with lower-quality instruction. Such findings point to the incredible power of providing children with high-quality classroom instruction. Both Ferguson (1991) and Snow and colleagues (1998) found that nothing was as powerful as the quality of the teacher in predicting the achievement of students. Neither parental education nor the SES of the family were as powerful in influencing academic performance of students as good instruction (Allington, 2001).

In his research on the factors influencing the academic performance of students, Allington (2003) identified “summer reading setback.” He has defined this phenomenon as the time when the achievement gaps between rich and poor children grow larger. The low SES students come into kindergarten achieving at lower levels than the high SES students. However, Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson (1997) found that poor children had comparable achievement gains during the school year (fall to spring) as higher income students. But by the end of Grade 5, the achievement gap between rich students and poor students widened to almost three years. Likewise, Hayes and Grether (1983) found that achievement gains made during the academic year were substantially similar when school was in session (fall to spring). Differential progress made during the four summers between Grades 2 and 6 accounted for 80% of the achievement gap between high and low poverty students. This is Allington’s (2003) summer reading setback. The low SES students spend the period of almost three months away from school also away from most literate activities. They have almost no access to books and, therefore, spend almost no

time reading. Studies such as Allington's point to the important role that schools play in the overall achievement of all students, especially those students living in poverty. They highlight the importance of schools that serve the needs of poor children by increasing their achievement and, therefore, their educational opportunities.

Hoffman (1991) summarized a considerable body of research on teachers who were exceptionally effective in helping students learn to read. Hoffman reports on a literature review of effective teaching by Rosenshine and Furst (1973) in which they found multiple teacher behaviors consistently related to student achievement. These behaviors included clarity, variability, enthusiasm, task orientation, teacher directness, student opportunity to learn, use of structuring comments, multiple levels of questions, and criticism (which was negatively related to achievement).

In a study of the achievement of the students of 165 second- and third-grade teachers conducted over three years, Brophy (1973) reported on the characteristics of the most effective teachers (one-third of the total). He found that the most effective teachers were business-like with a strong sense of task and direction, had high expectations for their students' achievement, redoubled efforts when failure was experienced (especially in low SES schools), had strong managerial skills (but classrooms were not stern or oppressive), had high levels of pupil engagement, were proactive in preventing classroom disruptions, and engaged in probing individuals when incorrect responses were offered (instead of calling on someone else or giving the answer themselves). The students in low-SES classes with the most effective teachers had a success rate of about 80% for correctly answering teacher-directed questions, almost all of which were explicitly stated in the text.

In a follow up study, Anderson, Evertson, and Brophy (1979) found that greater achievement was related to more instructional time spent reading, more active instruction (i.e., interaction between the teacher and the students or students with each other), shorter transitions, introduction of lessons with an overview, and follow-up by teachers to incorrect responses with attempts to improve them.

In a study (Stallings & Kaskowitz, 1974) of 166 first- and third-grade teachers of children who had been in Head Start, variables related to positive gains in reading included: time spent in academic activities, frequency of small group instruction on basic skills, and frequency of

supervised seatwork activities. Students from families with the lowest SES benefited most from intense, small group instruction.

In a study of 25 second-grade and 21 fifth-grade classrooms, Fisher and colleagues (1980) found that the more effective teachers had higher amounts of time allocated to academics and higher pupil engagement than less effective teachers. High student success rates on tasks were also found to be related to learning gains.

Over a two-year period, Knapp (1995) studied 140 Grade 1–6 classrooms in high poverty schools in California, Maryland, and Ohio. He found that, compared to students in classrooms with skills-oriented approaches to reading instruction, students in Grades 1, 3, and 5 who were exposed to meaning-oriented reading instruction performed better at the end of the school year. Students in Grades 1, 3, and 5 scored 5.6 national curve equivalents (NCEs) higher while students in Grades 2, 4, and 6 scored 1.4 NCEs higher. Knapp also studied effects in math and writing and concluded that meaning-oriented instruction was effective in high-poverty classrooms. The teachers who taught for meaning wanted to give children more responsibility for learning, provide academic tasks that asked more of students, and sustain engagement in learning among children (Knapp, 1995).

Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, and Hampton (1998) found that the effective teachers in their study demonstrated instructional balance between literature and skills; taught decoding skills explicitly; provided their students with many opportunities to engage in authentic, integrated reading and writing; used scaffolding to help their students learn; encouraged self-regulation by teaching their students to monitor their learning, the quality of their work, and their work time; encouraged self-regulation by teaching students to use strategies to be good readers and to fix problems they encountered as they read; had high expectations for their students; had masterful management skills (both time and behavior); were well prepared for their lessons; identified routines as important, and were clear about the purposes of their instruction.

Looking across these large bodies of research on effective schools and effective teachers of students in moderate- to high-poverty schools, it is clear that schools that are “beating the odds” share many characteristics. Effective schools have effective teachers, effective leadership, high expectations, high percentage of time spent on academics/reading, and continuous monitoring of students’ progress. These schools also have positive school climates, are collaborative, self-regulating, clear on their curricular and instructional objectives, and have

good communication both among the staff and with the parents. Effective teachers also have high expectations for all of their students, encourage children to be self-regulated about their expectations for themselves and their practice as readers, encourage students to be strategic and reflective, provide scaffolding, explicit instruction, and timely feedback, differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students, and use assessment to identify the strengths and needs of their students (see Appendix A for characteristics of schools that are “beating the odds”).

Effective Reading Instruction

Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole (2002) conducted research in which they observed and recorded the following teacher behaviors during classroom observations: coaching/scaffolding, modeling, engaging the children in recitation, explaining how to do something, telling, and engaging students in discussion. The observers in the study completed a summary of each lesson that included a statement about each of the following characteristics: overall impression, teacher instruction, teacher-student interaction, activities and materials, student engagement, classroom management, and classroom environment.

As part of their research, Taylor and colleagues (2002) investigated the relationship between school effectiveness and classroom reading instruction. They conducted a multivariate analysis of variance with the school effectiveness rating serving as the independent variable and eight teacher variables (home communication, time on task, time in small group instruction, time in whole group instruction, time in independent reading, preferred interaction style of coaching, preferred interaction style of telling, and preferred interaction style of recitation) serving as outcome measures. The follow-up univariate analyses revealed three significant variables: home communication [$F(2, 65) = 5.25, p < .01$], time in small group instruction [$F(2, 60) = 9.63, p < .001$], and time spent in independent reading [$F(2, 60) = 4.24, p < .05$]. Variables that were not significant included: student time on task [$F(2, 67) = .82, p > .05$] and preferred interaction styles—coaching [$F(2, 67) = 2.32, p > .05$], telling [$F(2, 67) = 2.01, p > .05$], or recitation, [$F(2, 67) = .17, p > .05$] (Taylor et al., 2002).

There were five key findings of Taylor and colleagues (2002). First, time spent in small-group instruction characterized the most accomplished teachers and the teachers in the most effective schools. The greater time allotted for small group instruction was made possible by the collaboration of a team of teachers (classroom, special education, ESL, and/or a resource teacher). Second, the most accomplished teachers exhibited a general preference for coaching

over telling or recitation. The researchers found the practice of coaching during reading to be characteristic of both the most effective schools and the most accomplished teachers. Third, a majority of teachers in Grades 1 and 2 taught phonics explicitly. What distinguished the most accomplished teachers and the majority of teachers in the most effective schools was their use of coaching to help students learn how to apply strategies to real reading. Fourth, more of the most accomplished teachers and teachers in the most effective schools frequently encouraged higher level responses to text. Fifth, the most accomplished teachers exhibited more balanced instruction regarding variable grouping patterns, support for reading, approaches to word recognition instruction, modes of interacting with students, and practices to support text comprehension. The very best teachers expressed commitment to the principle that they would do whatever it took to meet the wide array of individual student needs in their classrooms.

Taylor et al. (2002) concluded that students in the primary grades make the greatest growth in reading achievement when a high proportion of their reading instruction is delivered through small groups, when their progress is monitored regularly, and when they have ample time to read and to learn needed skills and strategies. Teachers who are the most accomplished in helping children thrive in reading are skilled in coaching and in keeping all children academically on task. A combination of sound building decisions and collaborative efforts as well as effective practices within individual classrooms are needed if schools are to succeed in promoting the reading achievement of primary grade students.

Focus on reading comprehension

Most of what we know about effective reading comprehension instruction has been learned since 1975. Much work on the process of reading comprehension has been grounded in the studies of proficient readers (Block & Pressley, 2001; Pearson, Roehler, Dole & Duffy, 1992; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). We know that when proficient readers read, they are actively engaged, have clear goals for their reading, and evaluate whether their reading of the text is meeting their goals. Proficient readers also look over the text before they read, make predictions about what is to come, and read selectively, continually making decisions about their reading. Proficient readers construct, revise, and question the meaning they make as they read, determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts, and integrate their prior knowledge as they read. Finally, proficient readers think about the author of the text, monitor their understanding; and read different kinds of text differently (Duke and Pearson, 2002).

Researchers have addressed whether or not we can teach students to engage in the productive behaviors employed by proficient readers. According to Duke and Pearson (2002), a large volume of work indicates that we can help students acquire the strategies and processes used by proficient readers and that such instruction improves their overall comprehension of text. In order to be effective, comprehension instruction should be balanced. Good comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading of, writing about, and discussion of text. The components of balanced comprehension instruction include a supportive classroom and a model of comprehension instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002).

A supportive classroom context includes several important features of effective reading instruction. According to Duke & Pearson (2002), these include:

- a great deal of time spent actually reading;
- experience reading real texts for real reasons;
- experience reading a range of text genres;
- an environment rich in vocabulary and concept development through reading, experience, and discussion of words and their meanings;
- substantial facility in the accurate and automatic decoding of words;
- lots of time spent writing texts for others to comprehend; and
- an environment rich in high quality talk about text.

The model of comprehension instruction best supported by research connects and integrates instruction in specific comprehension strategies with opportunities to read, write, and discuss texts. The model proposed by Duke and Pearson (2002) includes five components:

1. An explicit description of each reading strategy and when and how it should be used.
2. Teacher and/or student modeling of each reading strategy in action.
3. Collaborative use of the strategy in action.
4. Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility.
5. Independent use of each reading strategy.

According to Duke and Pearson (2002), it is important to coordinate the use of comprehension strategies. Strategies are not to be used singly; proficient readers use multiple strategies simultaneously.

There are specific comprehension strategies that research has shown to be effective in improving students' comprehension of text. Duke and Pearson (2002) recommend explaining and modeling effective strategies for students and then emphasizing their use in shared, guided, and independent reading. The effective strategies include: prediction, thinking aloud, visual representation of text, summarization, questioning, and use of text structure. These researchers suggest that the comprehension strategies be embedded into comprehension routines—an integrated set of practices that can be applied regularly to one text after another. Three examples of such routines include reciprocal teaching (Brown & Palincsar, 1985; Palincsar, 1982), transactional strategies instruction (Pressley et al., 1994), and questioning the author (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, & Worthy, 1996).

The gradual release of responsibility. Pearson and Gallagher's (1983) early work on comprehension instruction proposed a conceptual model of the orchestration of reading instruction. This model is graphically represented in Appendix B—The Gradual Release of Responsibility. In this model, teachers move from a situation in which they assume all of the responsibility for performing a task while the student assumes none, which is called modeling or demonstrating (shown in upper left corner), to a situation in which the students assume all the responsibility while the teacher assumes none, which is called independent strategy use (shown in lower right corner). The far right side of the continuum represents situations in which teachers can shift to a participation mode, performing tasks in much the same way as any other group member. This gradual release of responsibility moves the child from dependence on the teacher to a guided practice situation where the responsibility is equally shared by the teacher and the student and, finally, to independence where the student is able to independently apply what was learned earlier (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Theory and research into practice. In 1997, Keene and Zimmermann wrote *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop*. Based on the research of reading comprehension and their own work, they proposed a new instructional paradigm that focused on in-depth instruction in the strategies used by proficient readers. They proposed seven essential reading strategies that all readers—kindergarteners through adults—use when they read. These strategies include making connections, determining importance, questioning, using sensory images, inferring, summarizing, and synthesizing. The authors wrote:

If you wish to understand these skills, observe them in operation as you do your own reading. This is not a book for nonreading teachers. . . .if we are to take children into the upper reaches of comprehension we have to have been there ourselves. (Keene & Zimmermann, 1997, p. x)

In 2000, Harvey and Goudvis, two research colleagues of Keene and Zimmermann, from the Denver-based Public Education and Business Coalition, wrote *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding* based on research of the essential reading strategies discussed by Keene and Zimmermann. While Keene and Zimmerman presented the theoretical underpinning, Harvey and Goudvis perceived reading as thinking and understanding and translated the underpinnings into educational practice. They operationalized the teaching of comprehension strategies—making connections, asking questions, visualizing, inferring, determining importance, summarizing, and synthesizing—through modeling of the teaching of the strategies by thinking aloud, coding text, lifting text and reasoning through it. They advocated teaching these strategies within the context of the framework of a gradual release of responsibility. They provided explicit instruction through modeling and guided practice, and then had students try techniques on their own through collaborative practice, independent practice, and application. Their goal was for students to learn to use the strategies flexibly across a variety of texts, topics, and subject areas (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005).

The emphasis in the classrooms described by Harvey and Goudvis (2000) was on active reading, i.e., students involved in lots of discussion about what they were reading and teachers giving students long blocks of time to practice comprehension strategies independently with their own reading. For these researchers, engagement of readers was the goal. They believed that when students were engaged in their reading, they enhanced their understanding, acquired information, and remembered what they read. And, most importantly, they wanted to read more (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

One Effective Staff Development Model

Much staff development is based on the assumption that conceptual knowledge can be generalized from the situation in which it is learned to the situation in which it is used. The research suggests the limits of such transfer. One body of research (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989) suggests that knowledge is situated and is a product of both the context in which it is developed and the context in which it is used. This view of knowledge affects our understanding

of learning. The two key categories here are “knowing what” (declarative knowledge) and “knowing how” (procedural knowledge). When methods of education assume a separation between knowing and doing, the activity and context in which learning takes place are regarded as ancillary to learning. Brown, Collins & Duguid’s (1989) investigations of learning challenged this separation of what is learned from how it is learned and used. By embedding staff development within the classroom, staff developers pull together “what we know” and “how we know” into a unified context.

A definition of job-embedded staff development

Extensive research on learning to teach indicates that context is important (Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001) and that professional development should be primarily school-based (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Grossman, 1992; Guskey, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 1995; Little, 1993; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Smylie, 1995,). According to Munby et al. (2001), “resolving the learning-to-teach question requires tying knowledge to situations” (p. 880). Teachers’ skill development markedly increases when opportunities are provided for practice in context followed by feedback. This feedback must be specific and descriptive (Barkley, 2005). In their book, *Student Achievement through Staff Development*, Joyce and Showers (2002) indicate that staff development training often assumes that once teachers learn and develop a skill, they automatically use it in the classroom. But Joyce and Showers’ research reveals that learned knowledge and skills do not always transfer.

Training or coaching that provides transfer of skills into instructional settings is crucial for learning. Table 2.2 illustrates the findings of Joyce and Showers (1993) related to increasing the transfer of learning.

Table 2.2
Transfer of Learning by Types of Training

| Training Provided | Skill Development | Accurate Use in Class |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Theory/Knowledge | 5% | 0 to 5% |
| Theory/Modeling | 50% | 5% |
| Theory/Modeling/Practice/Feedback | 90% | 5% |
| Theory/Modeling/Practice/Feedback/Coaching | 90% | 75 to 90% |

Source: *The Coaching of Teaching* by Joyce and Showers 1993.

In a job-embedded design, teachers have the opportunity to learn and reflect about new instructional strategies and ideas within the context of their own classroom practice (Borko & Putnam, 1996) and to receive feedback that clarifies confusions or omissions and leads to more effective teaching practice (Barkely, 2005). The key characteristics of job-embedded staff development are that it is embedded, ongoing, analytic, learner-centered, scaffolded, and reflective. Furthermore, job-embedded staff development provides teachers the opportunity to:

- observe expert teachers (modeling),
- try what they observed in a risk-free environment,
- receive feedback, and
- work in a collaborative/collegial setting.

As both preservice and inservice teachers attempt to incorporate new pedagogy into their ongoing classroom practices, they benefit greatly from support and supervision (scaffolding) provided by members of a staff development team (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Job-embedded staff development supports teachers as they transform universal, formal, and explicit knowledge into situational, intuitive, and tacit understanding for use as part of their classroom practice (Munby et al., 2001).

The immediate concern of prospective teachers is to be able to manage the systemic functions of the school. In order to support them, we are well-advised to design teacher education programs that give more emphasis to the experience of working in the schools. This will support preservice teachers by enabling them to develop a solid understanding of the nature of teaching as a complex endeavor, the effectiveness of which depends on the context in which they teach. Context includes grade level, achievement levels of students, and subject matter (Richardson & Placier, 2001).

When new teachers were asked to rate aspects of staff development that were important to them (Public Education Network, 2004), they indicated that their highest priority was the ongoing onsite opportunities for them to obtain support from experienced teachers. The second priority for the new teachers was having common meeting times for teachers in similar grades or disciplines to plan and reflect. The third priority was the opportunity for teachers to observe and be observed by experienced teachers; and the fourth priority was adequate time to participate in on-site induction activities.

Similarly, Johnson and Kardos (2002) found that what new teachers want are experienced colleagues who will

- take them seriously,
- watch them teach and provide feedback,
- help them teach and provide feedback,
- help them develop instructional strategies,
- model skilled teaching, and
- share insights about student work.

These responses of novice teachers are consistent with Schon's (1987) view of knowledge in action. Schon suggests that student teaching should be a setting in which prospective teachers identify what they already know (in action) and what they need to learn (in action). Beginning teachers have learning needs that cannot be fully grasped outside the contexts of teaching. New teachers need to learn situationally relevant approaches to their subject matter (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

It is important to note that no preservice teacher preparation program teaches everything important to know about teaching. Rather, teachers' continuing classroom work informs and improves their practice (Munby et al., 2001). Ball and Cohen (1999) distinguish "learning in and from practice" from simply becoming "experienced." By enabling teachers to experience encounters with very different practices within classroom contexts, effective staff development broadens and diversifies teachers' knowledge. In addition, teachers have more opportunities to see new versions of teaching and learning and to deepen the contexts of their understanding (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

This concept of job-embedded staff development shares some key characteristics with those of Japanese lesson study (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2004). In both models, teachers determine how to explore their chosen goals and address student needs through their examination of practice. The main activities are embedded in the realities of the everyday classroom. Both models are collaborative since teachers work together with a common purpose and draw from one another's experience and expertise. Content knowledge is learned in an embedded context because the task of learning the content is closely intertwined with the authentic activities of teaching and can be immediately applied to the classroom. Both models offer opportunities to

teachers of all levels of experience to learn from one another. Constructive criticism plays a major role in both models and is offered in the spirit of leading to more effective practice.

Studies of the effects of school contexts on teachers and their changing response to it indicate that certain aspects of the school context itself (structure, supervision, peers, students) actually cause teachers to change in particular ways (Richardson & Placier, 2001). Hawley and Valli (1999) found that motivation to learn and to engage in school change efforts increases when these efforts are experienced as job-embedded learning. The optimal workplace is one in which learning arises from and feeds back into the actual work experience, where learning is considered a part of the work (Smylie, 1995).

Key participant relationships of the job-embedded staff development design

There are distinct differences between expert and novice teachers. For example, expert teachers assume effective instruction relies on an understanding of students' prior knowledge. Experts monitor student comprehension on an ongoing basis during instruction, and they rely on multiple features of the classroom environment as they analyze and generate hypotheses in the process of recognizing and solving classroom problems. For experts, the strategies they employ are dependent on the nature of the particular problem. Novices assume effective instruction links more directly to a teacher's ability to communicate clearly. They attend to more surface features of classroom events (Hogan, Rabinowitz, & Craven, 2003).

Teachers need to know how to frame, guide, and revise tasks and to pose and reformulate questions in order to learn more about students' understanding and ideas. Expert teachers use predictive anticipation and actively learn as they teach (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

For novice teachers to become expert, they must develop oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills, willingness to confront and deal with social and cultural complexity, self-awareness, disposition toward reflection, and a well-developed social conscience (Griffin, 1999). Coaching and mentoring are two types of job-embedded staff development that encourage and support the development of these capabilities.

Coaching and mentoring

Teachers are more likely to feel ownership and change their own instructional practices when expert teachers come into their classrooms and model instructional techniques (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). Of all the techniques these coaches use, modeling instruction in classrooms is most

likely to result in changes in instruction. In order for changes to be incorporated into a novice teacher's permanent teaching repertoire, coaches must also engage teachers in reflective conversations that loop back to the use of techniques in the classroom that address the needs of students (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

When learning to teach is the goal, coaches and mentors become teachers of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Even good classroom teachers may not know how to make their thinking visible, explain the principles behind their practice, or break down complex teaching moves into components understandable to a beginner. Being a master teacher includes the ability to do all of these things. Coaches must also be able to effectively critique and provide useful feedback to teachers (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). Induction programs must take the professional development of mentor teachers seriously. A mentor/coach must be skilled in constructive critical conversation and in the creation of authentic job-embedded teaching experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Novice teachers are helped by opportunities to receive feedback on their experiences. This feedback helps them to adapt their existing instructional strategies and routines and solidify changes in their knowledge and beliefs (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Novice teachers report that getting direct feedback and guidance is critical to their growth (Public Education Network, 2004).

Mentoring and coaching provide a new lease on teaching for many veteran teachers. These experienced educators need ongoing challenges in order to remain stimulated and excited about the profession. Coaching and mentoring create incentives for them to remain in teaching as they learn from and share with their colleagues (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Well designed coaching and mentoring programs raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills. Novice teachers in mentoring programs also stay in the profession at higher rates and become competent more quickly than those who learn by trial and error (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Following peer coaching, teachers report a substantial increase in the use of skills and strategies to support instructional change. Joyce and Showers (1990) reported that 80% of the teachers who had received coaching implemented new strategies as opposed to only 10% of teachers who received instruction without coaching.

Influence of knowledge and beliefs on disposition and stance

A teacher's knowledge and beliefs are both the objects of change and important influences on change (Borko & Putnam, 1996). In fact, research shows us that teachers' perceptions and beliefs are the most significant predictors of individual change (Richardson & Placier, 2001).

There are distinct differences between expert and novice teachers with respect to knowledge and beliefs, but for both groups of teachers their knowledge and beliefs function as perceptual filters (Hogan et al., 2003). Perspective serves as a filter that determines how staff development experiences will be interpreted (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Compared to novice teachers, expert teachers possess more complex schema for teaching, demonstrations, feedback, and content which influence their practice and their sense of efficacy (Hogan et al., 2003).

If we expect teachers to be thoughtful about their practice, we must provide opportunities for guided practice to be informed by theory, and theory to be tested against guided practice. Too often novice teachers find themselves in situations where they are told to "do as I say and not as I do." In these cases, staff development takes the form of intensive course work, with inadequate time for reflection and with an emphasis on the teacher as technician and consumer of knowledge rather than as reflective practitioner (Munby et al., 2001). Long term, collaborative, and inquiry-oriented programs with inservice teachers have been shown to be successful in changing beliefs and practices (Richardson & Placier, 2001). Characteristics of job-embedded staff development include encouraging teachers to reflect deeply on their teaching practice, to see it from a variety of perspectives, to uncover and bring to consciousness the multiple levels of presuppositions that inform their perceptions and that determine their interpretations of particular situations (O'Dea, 1994). For effective staff development, a school needs structures that support (teaming, space, time, resources) and a culture of support (exploring beliefs and creating norms of collegiality and experimentation (Richardson & Placier, 2001).

Collegial self-reflection, in which teachers are trained in observation, interview, and analytic skills, increases teachers' self-awareness, critical thinking, collegiality, and interdisciplinary teaching. Teachers rate learning from other teachers as the second most valuable source of information about effective teaching (Smylie, 1989). They rate only their own teaching experiences as more valuable. Teachers value learning from their colleagues more than from university professors, administrators, consultants, or specialists (Smylie, 1989).

Job-embedded staff development and building a professional learning community

In most schools, teachers are separated from one another and work in isolation. Barkley (2005) refers to this as “parallel teaching.” Many feel reluctant to share problems or ask for help, believing that good teachers must figure things out on their own. Many teachers do not know how to engage in productive talk about teaching and learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Little (1999) refers to schools as individual classrooms connected by a common parking lot.

Job-embedded staff development is a shared, public process (Barkley, 2005). It promotes sustained interaction among teachers. It emphasizes school related issues and relies on internal teacher expertise. Teachers are expected to be active participants. They engage in discussion and reflection on both the “what” and the “how” of teaching, and learn to relate a theoretical research base to their instructional practice. Participants understand that lasting change will be a slow process (Hawley & Valli, 1999).

In the same way that schools must be student-centered, professional learning communities of educators must be teacher-centered (Dufour et al., 2006). Job-embedded professional development builds on educators’ knowledge and beliefs, develops reflective capacities, attends to motivational issues, and builds on social relationships in the school. It provides preservice, novice, and experienced teachers with opportunities to work together in ways that support their professional learning. Collaboration and collegiality are important features of job-embedded staff development (Griffin, 1999).

As teachers work in the company of other professionals, they are able to compare their interpretations and decisions with colleagues, to expand their content and pedagogical knowledge base, and to break down the traditional isolation of their work and broaden their opportunities to learn within the context of a social enterprise. Ball and Cohen (1999) refer to this as the development of communities of practice. The ideal setting for teacher learning and for providing the professional development opportunities which enhance this learning is the school as a professional learning community (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Dufour et al., 2006; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002).

Comparative analysis with other staff development models

Job-embedded staff development offers multiple benefits to those teachers who participate. Although there are many staff development models, what follows is a brief comparative analysis of job-embedded staff development and the following;

- the direct transmission model of staff development;
- individual investigation; and
- simulation via the use of computer or student artifacts.

Direct transmission model. Sometimes referred to as the empirical-rational approach, the direct transmission model assumes that teachers are the recipients of research and practice (Pinar et al., 2000). It assumes that behaviors and techniques are worthy of replication by teachers and that teachers can learn or change their behaviors to replicate expert behaviors in their classrooms. This model most often occurs in workshop-type sessions in which the presenter is the expert who establishes the agenda. It relies on outside experts as trainers. In this model, the professional knowledge and growth is held by someone other than the teachers themselves (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The greatest concern about the transmission model is that the new knowledge that is introduced may not become well integrated with existing knowledge and beliefs, and will not result in change in teacher practice (Richardson, 2009). Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987) estimate that this model results in an implementation level of only between 5% and 15%.

Individual investigation model. Because so many teachers work in isolation, it is quite common that individuals pursue professional growth opportunities by themselves. Although individuals should be applauded for such initiative, this model has some serious drawbacks. Teachers may design their own learning experiences and determine their own goals. But these goals are often based on personal interest and may be disconnected from teachers' daily practice and a coherent school improvement plan (Hawley & Valli, 1999). The teacher works outside of any school perspective, and there is no development of a set of shared values and understandings with respect to instruction (Griffin, 1999). By working alone outside of the larger community, teachers often miss the opportunity to engage in professional discussion, reflection, and collegial challenge that create a zone of disequilibrium necessary for change to occur (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

Simulations model. Sometimes schools saturate professional development with scenarios and examples which simulate actual classroom situations. Teachers have the opportunity to role play or interact via computer software to stimulate some productive disequilibrium that creates a basis for new learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Artifacts may include

written cases of teaching situations, multimedia cases of teaching situations, observations of videotaped teaching situations, the writing and reading of teacher journals, and the analysis of student work. When teachers engage in these analyses with colleagues, they have the opportunity to discuss, reflect, and challenge one another's instructional and pedagogical beliefs. The transfer to actual practice for such a staff development model is probably greater than that associated with direct transmission and individual investigation, but not as great as that associated with guided practice and coaching embedded within the context of the teacher's own classroom (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Refer to Appendix C for a table comparing these four staff development designs.

Job-embedded staff development compares favorably with other staff development models in that it embodies the positive attributes of effective staff development that lead to changed teaching practices and increased student achievement. Most high quality professional development involves consideration of content, purpose, control, and discourse (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Job-embedded staff development is a model that can meet such demands in a way that leaves teachers feeling professionally validated and empowered (Barkley, 2005). Although it is not the easy way or a quick fix, it serves a pivotal function in the creation of balance between what teachers need and what is realistic for them to be able to accomplish.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Chapter 3 includes the research questions, a description of the study design, and the methods I used to complete the research. I include a description of procedures for accessing the site, gaining participant consent, conducting observations, collecting artifacts and documents, and analyzing the data.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What were the challenges faced on the path to improved student academic achievement?
2. What practices were implemented during the process of improving student academic achievement?
3. What resources were used during the process?

Study Design

This study uses qualitative research methods to address the research questions within the context of a real setting using ethnographic models as guides. Qualitative research is useful for numerous reasons. It delves in-depth into complexities and processes for which relevant variables have yet to be identified. It is exploratory and descriptive; and it stresses the importance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference (Marshall, 1985, 1987; Marshall & Rossmann, 1989). I used a qualitative approach in order to research the complexities and processes within a specific context (the requirements of NCLB) and setting (Commonwealth ES), and from multiple participants' frames of reference (the teachers and administrators at Commonwealth ES), as well as from my own perspective as a participant observer.

The methodological design I used was an emergent design. I decided to write this chapter as personal narrative in order to invite other researchers into my thinking as I evolved from my role as district staff developer at Commonwealth ES to that of researcher for the purposes of conducting this study.

Preparation for the Study

Accessing the field site

It was necessary for me to gain access to Commonwealth ES as the field site for my research. Field sites are “foreign” in different ways for different ethnographers. Some ethnographers are native to the communities they study. Some enter as complete strangers. Both types of researchers are legitimately able to undertake ethnographic research (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). In the case of my research, I entered Commonwealth ES as a fellow educator, but definitely as an outsider (i.e., a foreigner) with respect to the school community. Yet the staff of Commonwealth ES and I were employed by the same school district. My position in the district was that of elementary language arts specialist whose job description emphasized providing support for teachers while excluding any responsibility for teacher evaluation which might interfere with efforts to support learning among school staff.

Extended fieldwork is one characteristic of ethnographic research (Patton, 2002). My fieldwork extended from the 2000–2001 school year to the 2008–2009 school year, first in my official role and later as participant observer. Prior to 2007, I worked at Commonwealth ES for six years. During that time, I took part in a wide range of professional activities that occurred there. As an elementary language arts specialist in the school district, one of my job responsibilities includes working with schools that are labeled as “failing,” because they did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the regulations of NCLB (*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*). Commonwealth ES was one of those schools.

At the request of the regional assistant superintendent of the district in which Commonwealth ES is located, I was assigned to the school as a human resource to support the implementation of pedagogy considered by district language arts staff to be “best practice” for language arts. My task, as defined by the district director of elementary instruction, was to work closely with the administrators, reading teachers, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers to provide whatever the school participants deemed necessary to improve instructional practice.

Gaining full access to a research site depends on more than merely gaining permission to enter (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Likewise gaining access to Commonwealth ES depended on more than my official assignment by the school district. My first encounter with the administrators and staff was very much as an outsider who had been “sent to fix them.” Patton (2002) refers to this concept of outsidership as the *etic*. Access to ethnographic research

information rests on the development of trusting relationships between the researcher and the research participants (Defilippo, 2007). In order to perform my assigned duties well, a similar trusting relationship was needed. In summer 2000, I was well acquainted with the principal and assistant principal in their roles in other positions in the school district and had worked with them on other district language arts initiatives. However, since they both had been newly named to their positions at Commonwealth ES, my relationship with them was brand new in terms of their roles and responsibilities *vis à vis* my role and responsibilities. Thus, my efforts included developing and sustaining trust between myself and the many teachers and several administrators with whom I worked and who later participated in this research. By the time I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this research in 2007, I had already collected or had at my disposal volumes of data from my assigned role and had developed trusting relationships with Commonwealth ES staff members. Both these data and the relationships were invaluable as I embarked on this research in a formal way as a participant observer in a setting I now knew very well.

Description of the field site

In pages 7–14 of the Prologue, I describe the history of Commonwealth ES in some detail, from its construction to the beginning of my involvement at the school in summer 2000. The year before I began working at Commonwealth ES, the school had a total student population of 468. Of those, 47.83% were female and 52.17% were male. The percent of students labeled as Limited English Proficient (LEP) was 14.29%. The number of students receiving free or reduced meals was 56.52% (*County Public Schools Selected Demographics, Commonwealth ES Report*, July 22, 2009). The student membership by ethnic group in September 1999 is reported in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Commonwealth ES Student Membership by Ethnic Groups—September 1999 and September 2007

| Year | American Indian Alaskan | | Asian Pacific Islander | | Hispanic | | Black Not Hispanic | | White Not Hispanic | | Multi-Racial | | Not Designated | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|----------|------|--------------------|------|--------------------|------|--------------|-----|----------------|------|-------|-----|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 1999 ^a | 2 | 0.4 | 33 | 7.1 | 84 | 17.9 | 234 | 50 | 98 | 20.9 | 17 | 3.6 | 0 | 0 | 468 | 100 |
| 2007 ^b | 2 | 0.4 | 35 | 6.4 | 173 | 31.4 | 217 | 39.4 | 92 | 16.7 | 3 | 0.5 | 92 | 16.7 | 551 | 100 |

^aTaken from District “A” Report No. SI9330-01, page 5; ^bTaken from District “A” Ethnic and Gender Distribution Report

In 1999, student mobility was 27.24% (District Elementary School Student Mobility Rates 1999–2000) and teacher turnover was 28.90%. The same year, teacher turnover was 22.35% in the cluster (i.e., neighboring elementary schools) and 20.37% in the district as a whole (District Teacher Turnover by School, Cluster, and District, September 2009). At the time I received IRB approval for this research in September of 2007, I began collecting demographic data and noticed that the student membership had changed, as reflected in Table 3.1.

In 2007, student mobility at Commonwealth ES was 26.12% (Student Mobility Statistical Report, 2008) and teacher turnover was 18.50%. That same year, teacher turnover in the cluster was 18.81% and in the district as a whole it was 15.57% (Data Request Teacher Turnover by School, Cluster, and District, September 2009).

Recruitment of Participants

To conduct the doctoral research, I obtained three levels of official consent. In the spring of 2007, I began by asking the administrators of Commonwealth ES if they would be willing to support my research, knowing that it would involve the writing of an ethnography of the school. I gave the principal and assistant principal a written copy of the research proposal.

The following week, we formally met and talked about the purpose of my research and how I planned to share the research once it was completed. I provided them with a copy of the formal request for permission packet that I had prepared for submission to the Institutional

Review Boards (IRBs) of both the local university and the school district. The packet included a project abstract, a timeline for the research, consideration of the research's relevance and validity, a brief description of the data collection, analysis, and reporting methods, my understanding of any costs and benefits to participants in the study, and a draft of a request for participant consent. After listening to my presentation, the principal and the assistant principal both indicated their support for the project.

Once I had school-level permission, I submitted a Request for Approval of Investigation Involving Human Subjects' to the two IRBs (see Appendix D). I received approval from the district's IRB in June 2007 and from the university's IRB in August 2007. I requested and received extensions of the original request in September 2008, September 2009, and again in September 2010.

I met with all participants during the last week of August 2007 at their first full school staff meeting. I explained the purpose and parameters of the research, reviewed the permission form with the staff, and distributed a copy of the form to each staff member. I asked them to take a week to consider participating and to return signed consent forms to me during the second week of September 2007 during their first collaborative learning team (CLT) meeting (see Appendix E for a copy of the consent form). Participants were informed that only pseudonyms would be used in any documents related to the research. Thus, all names in this document are pseudonyms and do not correspond to any study participants. All but one staff member (a classroom teacher) agreed to participate. The principal and the assistant principal were unaware of which staff gave permission to participate. Each time I extended the research in 2008, 2009, and 2010, I repeated this procedure, obtaining newly signed permission forms from all administrators and teachers.

I invited all of the K–grade 6 teachers and administrators working at Commonwealth ES between the summer of 2000 and the summer of 2009 to become participants in this research. At the beginning of each school year, I explained the research project to the teachers and administrators at their first staff meeting in August. At that time I distributed participant consent forms, and invited them to participate in the research by returning the signed slips to me during their next CLT meeting. Between 2007 and 2009, all but one classroom teacher agreed to participate in the study. Participating administrators included the principal and assistant principals. Participating staff and teachers included all K–grade 6 classroom teachers, all

reading specialists, all ESOL teachers, all special education teachers, all coaches, and some instructional assistants.

As I wrote this dissertation, I protected the identity of the participants and the school by replacing actual names of persons and places with pseudonyms. In addition, when names of people or places were a part of official document titles, such as district reports, I sometimes replaced the actual title with one using pseudonyms. Sometimes, I simply deleted the identifying name from the title and used the official document title minus the identifying name or other identifying information. In all cases, the goal was to protect the privacy of research participants and others associated with Commonwealth ES, the cluster, or the district.

Data collection

The data collected for this study included observations at the school, official district reports, archival work produced at the school in my role as language arts specialist, and other relevant documents and artifacts. I collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The earliest data were collected during the summer of 2000 while I worked at Commonwealth ES as part of a specialist team that supported the school in its goal to improve student achievement in language arts. Final data were collected during the summer of 2009.

As I analyzed the data, I identified gaps that needed to be investigated and closed. Since I had a continuing relationship with all of the major players at the school and in the school district, I was able to successfully complete those investigations and fill in the gaps. The investigations were possible because of the three IRB extensions that I received from both the University and the school district. Figure 3.1 is an example of one e-mail exchange related to one of the gaps I investigated in July of 2010.

Hi Cecily!

Here I am again, working on chapter 4 of the dissertation. Can you help me fill in two holes in my notes? I know that you hired Veronica Smart as the second RT at Commonwealth for the 2002-2003 school year. As part of her hiring, you asked her to become Reading Recovery trained. Was that the beginning of RR at Commonwealth? Was the implementation of RR one of the changes you made as principal? If not, do you know when RR began at Commonwealth?

Also, in my notes I have written that kindergarten was all-day in 2002-2003. Was that the first year K was all-day at Commonwealth? If no, do you know when it went to an all-day program?

Thanks in advance for any help you can give me on the questions.

Take care,

Barbara

Barbara Anzalone
 (Deleted) County Public Schools
 Instructional Services
 Language Arts Specialist

Figure 3.1. Example of E-mail Exchange Seeking Clarification on Data

Qualitative data

Recording and extending field notes. I recorded notes each time I worked at Commonwealth. I began my record during the 2000–2001 school year and continued until the 2008–2009 school year. I refer to the notes I took between 2000 and 2006 as historical notes. I refer to the notes I took between 2007 and 2009 as field notes. I make this distinction to make clear the change in my role at Commonwealth ES. Between 2000 and 2006, the notes I took were as a staff developer from the district working in support of a school that did not make AYP. Between 2007 and 2009, the notes I took were both as a staff developer and as a participant observer conducting research for this study.

My historical notes are descriptive in nature. Their purpose is to document the salient behaviors, events, beliefs, attitudes, structures, and processes that occurred (Marshall & Rossmann, 1989). These include:

- my interactions with the teachers, administrators, and other staff;
- the context in which those interactions took place;

- direct quotes made by staff relevant to the interaction being described; and,
- paraphrasing of my observations of conversation, discussion, and decisions related to a specific interaction.

I organized these notes in separate notebooks in which I recorded the date of each entry, noted the context of the interaction, and wrote the names and positions of every person present. I also included specific facts, numbers, and details of what happened at the site along with artifacts such as meeting agendas or data spreadsheets collected contemporaneously with the note taking.

In 2007, when my role changed to include researcher, I revised the nature of the field notes that I collected in the notebooks. As a participant observer, in addition to everything described above, I also included notes of conversations that I had with teachers. I included a wide range of notations including: sensory impressions, descriptions of sights, sounds, and feelings; questions about people or behaviors at the site for future investigation; specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language; descriptions of what happened during the course of interactions; descriptions of the nature of the interactions including, in some cases, speakers' voice, tone, body language, and other physical manifestations when I judged them to be relevant (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 1997). I created a notebook for each year from 2000–2001 through 2008–2009 for a total of nine notebooks. Each large notebook includes a plethora of recorded and collected information such as agendas, professional articles, data charts, templates for data analysis, SMART Goal documents, emails, and other relevant artifacts.

Analytic memos. In addition to the field notes, I also created analytic memos (Delamont, 1992) as soon after recording the notes as possible. I wrote these memos in the form of short notes to myself as a way to reflect upon and synthesize my thoughts as I reviewed the notes I recorded. The focus of these notes was on *what* I was doing, *why* I was doing it, and *where* I might go next. I also included questions that nagged at me, wonderings about *why* someone said or did something, and thoughts that I had as I reflected upon my participant observations (Delamont, 1992). I wrote these notations in the margins of each notebook.

Documents and artifacts. From 2000–2009, I collected a wide range of artifacts. These included calendars, agendas, schedules, e-mails, assessments, lists of grade level and school-wide instructional objectives, assessment data spreadsheets, reports, teacher resources, articles for professional reading, student work, and other artifacts. These historical and research

documents and artifacts serve as a supplement to other records of the social interactions at Commonwealth ES (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Observations. My primary data collection method consisted of participant observations. I engaged in participant observation in the same manner that, according to Burnett (1974), ethnographers do when they use observation as a primary data collection technique:

Participant observers live as much as possible with the individuals they are investigating, trying to blend in and tak[e] part in their daily activities. Participant observers watch what people do, listen to what people say, and interact with participants. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.196)

According to Patton (2002), there is a continuum of participant observation which varies in the extent to which the observer is a participant in the setting being studied. One end point of this continuum is the researcher who is heavily involved as a participant while doing the research. At the other end of the continuum is the researcher who avoids being involved as a participant and distinguishes herself from the group by focusing exclusively on the role of outside spectator. The degree of my participant observation for this study varied over time. At some points, I was simply an onlooker. At other times, as staff developer, I was completely immersed in the workings of a specific aspect of the school and the staff interactions. The teachers and administrators were aware at all times that I was making observations at the same time that I participated as a member of the group.

As a participant observer, I followed the suggestion offered by Tedlock (2000) that ethnographers are expected to “maintain a polite distance from those studied and to cultivate rapport, not friendship; compassion, not sympathy; respect, not belief; understanding, not identification; admiration, not love” (p. 457).

To this end, it was imperative that, as the researcher, I remained cognizant of the voices of the people being researched. LeCompte (1993) argues that it is the responsibility of serious qualitative research to make every effort to include all of those being researched especially those who tend to be silent since their perspectives are the ones that will most often be counter hegemonic. At the same time, as McLaughlin and Tierney (1993) point out, my research needed to maintain “traditional social-science standards of accuracy and representation...Postmodern research demands that the researcher be involved both with the research subject and with changing those conditions that seek to silence and marginalize (p.5).” In my role at

Commonwealth ES, I often had the opportunity to facilitate discussions and formal CLT meetings. As a facilitator, I was able to invite comments from members who were silent during ongoing discussions. Sometimes they declined the invitation to speak, but more often they added their input to the conversation at hand.

As I conducted my research, I paid particular attention to several of the criticisms that have been directed at qualitative research associated with ethnography. Ethnography is seen by some as reifying social phenomena, as claiming illegitimate expertise over the people studied, and as being based on relationships of hierarchy and control. Some have argued that it represents a subtler, more insidious (Gluck & Patai, 1991) form of control than quantitative research because it is able to get closer to the people studied, to discover the details of their behavior, and the inner workings of their experience (Finch, 1986; Stacey, 1988). In an effort to work against these possibilities, I attempted to always work from the mindset of reporting the phenomenon that I saw and heard as it occurred. I tried as often as possible to use the actual words spoken by the participants at the time of the observations and not to “interpret” what was being seen or heard as I recorded the data. In this way, I sought to record what was being studied as it unfolded in front of me without inserting my own insight or interpretation at the time of collection.

I faced challenges related to my central office position. As a researcher, I tried to understand the Commonwealth ES staff as they were. I was not trying to impose myself and my beliefs on them, but rather to help them to co-construct a set of beliefs, expectations, and practices based on their students’ strengths and needs and research (both most current and seminal work) that would result in increased student achievement. Even so, the genesis of my relationship with the staff was as a result of being sent to Commonwealth ES to work with them in a staff development capacity. This placed me as a researcher in a tenuous position.

I worked to minimize the silencing influence on the staff that could easily occur by virtue of my position as a specialist from the elementary language arts office. I did this in various ways. For example, I reinforced with positive comments and expressions of thanks those participants who questioned or challenged as we worked collaboratively as teams. I solicited feedback and questions as we progressed, especially when that feedback was not initiated by the participants. I used paraphrasing of the participants’ remarks as a means of clarifying my understanding when I was not clear about a point being made. I asked questions such as “Can

you tell me what that would look like?” or “What would I see teachers or students doing in the classroom if we followed the position you are taking?” or “How would that be different from what I see now?”

Within the first two years, participants’ contributions of comments, feedback, questions, and sometimes challenges became more frequent. They seemed to accept that the paraphrasing and questioning were efforts at clarification and not criticism or rejection of their contributions. Even so, my efforts were not always successful as readers will discern from reading Chapter 4.

I frequently reminded the teachers that I had no evaluative authority over them, and I avoided evaluative statements and nonverbal gestures that might suggest otherwise. As we worked together over nine years, the Commonwealth teachers and administrators were often quite frank with me regarding matters about which we disagreed. In fact, they often shared their opinions about district initiatives (some positive, some negative) and asked that I share their thoughts with the people in decision-making positions in the district.

Verbal exchanges and interviews. I audio-recorded informal conversations, individual, and group interviews as part of this research. Interviewing is a data collection technique used extensively by qualitative researchers. Interviews have been described as “conversations with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p. 149). I began the research by audio-taping all verbal exchanges (always notifying participants prior to turning on the recorder that the conversation was being taped). However, frequently as I observed the nonverbal behavior of the participants, I inferred that the discomfort level of the teachers was noticeably higher when the tape recorder was running during the course of everyday meetings and daily interactions. I based this inference on the marked decrease in the length of teachers’ utterances, as well as my assessment of the level of candor those utterances suggested. I noticed that teachers’ bodies tensed as many sat silently, and some of them made eye contact with one another during the silences and stared at each other while making little or no eye contact with me. Consequently, I decided to discontinue audio-recordings during daily discussions. Instead, I listened closely to those verbal exchanges, and quickly jotted down key ideas in my notebooks that I used later to trigger my memory as I reconstructed those conversations in a more complete form during field note extension.

In contrast, during formal interviews with individual administrators and teachers, or formal focus group sessions with teachers selected for specific reasons (which were always made

explicit to them as part of the invitation to participate in the group interview), it appears to me that their comfort level can be described as relaxed. They seemed to speak freely in this more structured interview situation when they were asked to give their recollections and/or reactions to broad general prompts from me. For example, I began the focus groups with the nine teachers who had been at Commonwealth ES from the time I began working there (2000) all the way through to the end of this research study (2009) by saying:

My three big foci in my dissertation (it's called a High Poverty, High Diversity School under the Conditions of NCLB), I'm focusing on the challenges that were faced in this school over the last nine years, the practices you put in place to respond to those challenges, and the resources you used including human resources to respond to those challenges. I was a human resource. First question—when you first came to [Commonwealth], what would you identify as the greatest challenge going on in the school? You might have a couple (Focus Group, October 2009).

In addition to the broad prompts that I used with teachers and administrators, I also used repetition of their own words to encourage them to clarify their responses. I explicitly encouraged them to expand on their responses. As soon after the interview as possible, I transcribed the interviews, numbered the transcripts by line, and saved each transcript as a separate document for further analysis. The transcripts are verbatim, word-for-word representations of what was said during each interview or focus group. For the purposes of quoting from those transcripts for this dissertation, I deleted most verbal placeholders (these included “um,” “you know,” and “like”) for easier readability.

I conducted two kinds of ethnographic interviews during this study: elite and focus group. Spradley (1979) describes an ethnographic interview as a particular kind of speech event, similar to informal conversation but differing from informal conversation due to its structure and purpose. During the ethnographic interviews, I asked most of the questions and used repetition to clarify participants' responses. I also encouraged participants to expand on their responses. Following the completion of an interview, I analyzed the data collected from an ethnographic perspective: “Ethnographic analysis is the search for the parts of a culture and their relationships as conceptualized by informants” (Spradley, 1979, p. 93).

Elite interviews were those during which I interviewed members of the community considered by its members to be the influential, the prominent, and the well-informed. I selected participants for elite interviews based on “...their expertise in areas relevant to the research”

(Marshall & Rossmann, 1989, p. 94). These participants included former and current school administrators, former and current reading specialists, former and current instructional coaches, and current teachers and instructional assistants.

Finally, I conducted two focus groups whose members included nine of the ten teachers who worked continuously at Commonwealth ES from the 2000 or 2001 school years until the end of the 2008–2009 school year. I extended invitations to all ten teachers. Nine of those teachers agreed to participate. One teacher failed to respond to multiple invitations.

A focus group is a formal, taped interview led by a moderator (Belli, 1999). Focus group interviews are particularly useful for this study because they provide “opportunities for members of a group to interact with each other and stimulate each other’s thinking” (Lichtman, 2006). They are also useful because they offer a less intimidating forum for participants than individual interviews (Defilippo, 2009; Madriz, 2000). Interviewing multiple subjects allowed me to gather a wide variety of information.

I produced a total of ten separate interview documents. Those documents included transcripts of two elite interviews with the ES principal, one elite interview with the school’s assistant principal, one elite interview with the time out room instructional assistant, and two focus group interviews with nine of the ten teachers who worked at Commonwealth ES from August 2000 or 2001 until June 2009.

I was unable to audio-tape two elite telephone interviews due to lack of access to necessary recording equipment. Instead of recording them, I took copious notes during the interviews, which included one interview with the former reading specialist, Mattie Norton, and multiple short interviews with the principal, Cicely Dubois. My notes from these interviews are additional documents that I referenced as I wrote the dissertation.

Finally, there were several face-to-face interviews which I was unable to audio-tape due to technical difficulties with the equipment. These included one interview with Ms. Dubois (batteries died) and one interview with a former reading specialist, Veronica Smart (lack of recording space). The notes from these interviews were used in place of audio-recordings.

I transcribed all recorded interviews and saved each transcription as an individual electronic file. I numbered the lines in each transcript using the line numbering feature of Microsoft Word.

Quantitative data

I formally requested official reports of several categories of data from the district's Professional Learning and Accountability Office of Student Testing, the Technology Division of the Department of Human Resources, and the Office of Decision Support's Department of Information Technology. The reports included the following data: student district test result by grade, by year; student state test result reports by grade by year; student mobility rates by year; teacher mobility rates by year; student demographics including ethnicity, gender, poverty, and Limited English Proficiency status by year. I received copies of all requested reports (see Appendix F). By the end of the data collection phase of the study, I had amassed a large corpus of data.

I organized the collected documents in two ways. I inserted hard copies of collected artifacts that were shared during the course of meetings or other interactions with teachers and administrators into the section of the notebook in which I scribed my notes (both historical and field). Some artifacts (most especially official reports and data reports) were given to me electronically. I created folders for each type of data and stored the electronic files on my laptop, my PC and on memory sticks to ensure they would not be inadvertently lost.

Data Analysis

I sought to represent my findings within a non-judgmental framework. In keeping with an interpretivist tradition, my goal was to accurately describe the lived world experiences of the *other* (Defilippo, 2007; Spradley, 1979) and to avoid imposing my personal view on the participants (Erickson, 1986). In order to maintain this non-judgmental framework, I refrained from offering my personal observations or commentary as I recorded my observations. I saved my own commentary and reflection for the analytic memo writing as I reflected on the observation notes at a later time.

Qualitative data

I analyzed the qualitative data to identify major categories of meaning. Following Guba (1978), I used a process of category generation that involved noting regularities in the setting or people being studied. I identified the categories on the basis of their internal convergence and external divergence. By this I mean that I created categories that were internally consistent but distinct from one another (Marshall & Rossmann, 1989).

Coding the notebooks. I began coding the notebooks by first arranging them in chronological order. Following from Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) who maintain that “writing field notes gives way to reading them” (p. 142), I read each notebook in chronological order. I focused my reading on the three general areas of focus for this study: challenges faced, practices implemented, and resources used. Following my first reading of the notebooks, I designed the following color coding system:

- yellow highlighting indicated challenges;
- pink highlighting indicated a practice implemented;
- blue highlighting indicated a resource used.

In addition to the three general areas of focus, my first reading of the notebooks revealed the need to code my researcher notes that included direct quotations of others and the notes made in the margins of my own reflections, comments, observations, and questions. I coded these notations with green highlighting.

During a second reading of the notebooks, I continued the color coding process, and simultaneously inserted asterisks on text I deemed to be significant and something I would likely want to cite explicitly. For example, during the course of an entry I wrote: “Team asked for their reflections on this year’s CLT meetings...Much silence. Long, silent pauses.” Later, when I wrote my analytic memos in the margin, I notated: “Team was reticent to talk. I wonder why? I feel tension coming from the group.”

During the process of coding the text, it appeared that similar kinds of comments for grade level teams occurred over the course of multiple years. I reread the highlighted notes, this time by grade level and chronologically, to see if any patterns emerged for grade levels. As I reread my coded entries for the grade level team cited above, I came to an entry that I made during my last year of work at Commonwealth ES with the teachers. At that time, I wrote: Said “We are a dysfunctional team.” And in the analytic memo in the margin, I later noted: “Apocalyptic acknowledgement!”

By reading the entries in this way, I developed context for each observation and noted patterns and anomalies that emerged chronologically over the years. I was able to draw out “recurrent patterns and instances that [ran] contrary to those patterns” (Delamont, 1992, p. 150). As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) maintain, this coding work represented a link between the raw

data and my thought processes about that data. Using the chronological readings of the codings, I sorted my codings into categories and subcategories based on recurring patterns and themes I identified in the data. For example, *practices used* was one broad category that I identified and several of its subcategories included *academic* and *classroom management*. A subcategory under academic included *differentiation* and a subcategory under classroom management included *time out room*.

Following the work of Erickson (1986), I began to create assertions related to the data. I developed those assertions relevant to my research questions. Then I was able to return to the data to test whether it supported my assertions or indicated a need to revise early assertions or compose new ones as warranted. One of my early assertions was that teachers are unable to address instruction until they have control of their classroom management. For example, in 2000, the ways that Commonwealth ES teachers dealt with disruptive students was to send them out of the classroom to one of three different time out rooms or to the office. Part of the management assertion included the need to explicitly work with teachers to develop procedures, routines, and common expectations for classroom behavior. In tandem with this work, the principal planned to disband the time out rooms. As we worked on teachers' management skills and strategies, the principal decided that one of the time out rooms needed to stay in place in order to give teachers sufficient time to gain control of classroom management. Therefore, the two most intensive time out rooms were disbanded in 2001, but the least intensive was kept in place as a resource for teachers when their own classroom management techniques proved to them to be unsuccessful. It was eventually disbanded in 2009. These occurrences influenced my assertion about classroom management.

Coding the transcripts. I used the same color coding system for the transcripts as I used for the notebooks. I analyzed the transcripts to search for cultural symbols and to identify relationships among those symbols. Cultural symbols are representations of an individual culture's reality. Every culture has its own set of symbols associated with different experiences and perceptions. As a representation, a symbol's meaning is neither instinctive nor automatic. The culture's members must commonly and regularly interpret the symbol and their relationship to the symbol. Following Marshall and Rossmann (1989), I identified these relationships as part of the discussion of the larger culture at Commonwealth ES. Symbols occur in different forms

including verbal or nonverbal and written or unwritten. They can be anything that conveys a meaning, such as words on the page, drawings, pictures, and gestures.

For example, one common symbol for the Commonwealth teachers and administrators was the time out room. The teachers and the administrators recognized the room as an important temporary resource they used when their classroom management techniques were inadequate to meet a particular student's needs. The room symbolized their belief that some of their students' behaviors were beyond their personal control. Also, for some teachers, the time out room served a punitive function and symbolized a consequence for students' bad behavior.

During the same time frame as I read my notes from the early years, I was able to triangulate the following:

- my early written observations,
- the documents and artifacts collected contemporaneously, and
- the teachers' and administrators recollections of the events during the interviews.

This process, according to Patton (2002), enabled me to measure the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. Triangulation enabled me to identify places where the data confirmed one another, and places where the data were in conflict with one another. I used this method to overcome any intrinsic bias that might have resulted from a single method, single observer, or single theory study (Denzin, 1989). Through the process, I became more analytical across the data sources: historical notes, field notes, interviews, and reports. It also promoted a step-by-step reflection on and interpretation of the data which led to the development and refinement of assertions about efforts at Commonwealth ES.

Quantitative data

For each category of quantitative data, I created separate charts that I organized chronologically by year. I used a compare and contrast strategy to analyze the changes in the data by year and by category. I compared the changes for the school with itself across time and for the school with the cluster and district for like years. Through these comparisons, I am able to evaluate changes in the data in relation to the changes I observed at the school. For example, I analyze a chart of the teacher turnover rates at Commonwealth ES from 1999–2000 through 2008–2009. My analysis indicates that the teacher turnover rate at Commonwealth ES in the 1999–2000 school year exceeded the rates of both the cluster and the district. By the 2008–2009

school year, the school rate dropped to a rate considerably lower than both the cluster and the district rates. I use this as evidence to assert that something happened at the school that was different than what happened at the cluster or district levels that probably contributed to this drop in the teacher turnover rate.

Reporting the Data

Organizing the findings

My work at Commonwealth ES began in the summer of 2000 and extended to the summer of 2009. The corpus of data I collected and analyzed during that time was very large. I felt it necessary to devise a mental template to guide me as I wrote chapter 4. I first organized the results presented in Chapter 4 into two large time periods:

- Part 1 - the time period from the summer of 2000 to the summer of 2007, prior to the beginning of the IRB-approved study; and
- Part 2 - the time period beginning in the fall of 2007 and continuing through 2009.

During the period from the summer of 2000 to the summer of 2007, I worked at the school solely in the capacity of an elementary language arts specialist for the school district. I refer to all of the notes, artifacts, conversations, and interactions collected during Part 1 as my *historical data*. Beginning in the fall of 2007, my role at Commonwealth ES changed to include that of researcher. I consider this time period 2. I refer to notes written during this period (between 2007 and 2009) as *field notes*. I refer to all other collected data and artifacts as *research data*.

I decided to organize and present the findings chronologically, describing in detail the challenges faced, practices implemented, and resources used at the school. I wrote the dissertation, and especially Chapter 4, with policymakers in mind, including members of legislatures at both federal and state levels, School Board members, educational policy think tanks, and District-level Superintendents responsible for instructional policy decision-making. As I wrote I realized that the contents of this work might also interest additional stakeholders such as classroom teachers, literacy specialists, staff developers, and school-level administrators including principals and assistant principals, because, as part of my analysis, I develop a rich description of the efforts of a school staff as it worked to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind over a number of years. This description became the basis for further analysis in which I

clarified the challenges faced, the resources available, and the practices used over the years. I chunked the years in Chapter 4 according to decision rules that I generated.

The study findings are organized into the following time periods:

- the 1999–2000 school year at Commonwealth ES which included a detailed description of the year prior to the beginning of the research which I deemed important to include to provide some context for the reader as the study began.
- the 2000–2001 school year at Commonwealth ES which includes detailed descriptions of the challenges, resources, and practices observed during the year.
- the 2001–2002 school year at Commonwealth ES which described in detail the major changes that occurred at the school.
- the 2003–2006 school years at Commonwealth ES which included a somewhat briefer description of the challenges, (including ongoing challenges such as classroom management) and the various practices implemented and/or resources used with respect to ongoing challenges.
- the 2007–2009 school years at Commonwealth ES which describes the low morale and other reactions to the sanctioning of the school in 2007 and the regrouping during the following two years as the school regained its status as a successful school.

Because there were major changes that occurred during the first three time periods, I determined that their descriptions required their own stand alone sections. For the first longer time period (2003–2006), I noted the various practices implemented and/or resources used with respect to those ongoing challenges. I did not write about those ongoing challenges in as great detail as I had for the early years. Instead, I described in detail the two or three most salient issues for a given year. For example, during this time period, the staff incorporated regular analysis of student achievement data (both formative and summative) as part of their monthly team discussions and began to use the data to formulate instructional objectives and students' instructional groupings. That same time period marked the creation of curriculum maps that explicitly linked daily instruction with the state standards, benchmarks, and indicators.

The final time period (2007 through 2009) began with a year of anxiety, low morale, and loss of focus when the school did not make AYP, was labeled a failing school, and went into

sanctions. The followed year was marked by regrouping and consolidation to achieve AYP and regain successful school status.

Member checking

In order to ensure accuracy to as great a degree as possible, I asked participants in the study to engage in member checking following Lincoln and Guba (1985). Member checking is when data, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of the group from whom the original data were collected. This can be done both formally and informally during the normal course of observation and conversation. I employed two forms of member checking: recursive, and draft reading by participants.

Recursive member checking required me to return to certain years to add information as work on one year brought new insight to another. This included contacting informants by telephone, e-mail, or in person to clarify or fill in gaps in the data. For example, when I wrote about the school going into sanctions in 2007, I needed more specific information about the *choice schools* offered to Commonwealth ES parents. As a result, I e-mailed the principal, the cluster director, and the Title I coordinator to get the names of the two choice schools. Through this recursive member checking, I was able to add the information about the choice schools and describe some important ways in which Commonwealth ES was equal or superior to at least one of those choice schools based on my professional observations in those schools.

The second form of member checking provided participants with an opportunity to read and react to a draft of my dissertation. In July 2011, Ms. DuBois responded enthusiastically to my invitation for her to participate in the member checking process. She told me that she preferred reading the document in sections and giving me feedback about each piece. We agreed that she would begin by reading the Prologue, give me her feedback, and then move to the next section of the document.

On Ms DuBois' suggestion I e-mailed the assistant principals, the resource teachers, and the nine teachers who had been part of the focus groups, explained the member checking process, and invited them to participate. The 11 members of the staff included the following people who had either worked at Commonwealth ES since 2000 or 2001, or who had been significantly referenced in the draft document: Cicely DuBois, principal, Meredith Jolie, assistant principal, Juliana Ortiz, instructional assistant, Veronica Smart, former reading specialist, George Florida, classroom teacher, Heather Damon, Reading Recovery teacher,

Mattie Norton, former reading specialist, Katie Cornell, Literacy Collaborative Primary Coach, Harriet Truth, former reading specialist, Carole Towson, former assistant principal and former member of the specialist team, and Gary Olson, classroom teacher. I gave them a choice of reading the whole document, or just the parts that referenced anything about Commonwealth ES (prologue, Chapters 1, 4, and 5). I asked them to give me feedback as to the accuracy and degree to which what they read conformed with or diverged from their memories of events and discussions described. I heard back from eight people. Of the eight, six asked to read the dissertation in its entirety. Two asked to read just the parts that referenced Commonwealth ES. Of the eight readers, I received feedback from five. The feedback included identification of one instance where I inadvertently used the real name of a staff member, one instance where a url citation included information that could potentially identify the name of the school, and one instance where the first name of a participant (pseudonym) was paired with last name of a second participant. I corrected all of these. The feedback also included acknowledgement that the account in the document matched their memory of what happened and was accurate. Two of the readers commented that it was like “walking down Memory Lane.”

This member checking provided participants with three important opportunities. They were able to:

- correct errors and challenge that they perceived as wrong interpretations,
- add missing information which might have been stimulated by the playing back process, and
- refute particular aspects of the data or entries.

I took careful notes of all feedback. I then used that feedback to cross-reference my data and made decisions about what sections to modify and what sections to leave intact. In no cases did any of the readers report places where my interpretations and theirs diverged.

Morse (1994), Angen (2000), and Sandelowski (1993) have identified some concerns related to member checking. I kept two of those occasions upper-most in my mind. The first concern arises when participants disagree with the researcher’s reporting and/or interpretation of events. None of the participants reported any disagreement with my reporting or interpretation of what occurred. The second concern results from the realization that the participants and I were all stakeholders in the research with potentially different stories to tell and agendas to

promote. In the end, their memories and interpretation of the events were consistent with my reporting and interpretation of those same events. Throughout, my intention has been to make the process I used transparent to both the participants and future readers of the document.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION

In this chapter, I identify and interpret the challenges that presented themselves, the resources that became available, and the practices used during the nine years I worked at Commonwealth Elementary School (ES). During those nine years, I collected an extensive volume of data. During the first six years, I collected data in my capacity as a staff developer working with the staff at the school. During the last three years, I collected data as a participant observer engaged in the research for this doctoral dissertation.

I analyzed the data to detect discernible patterns. The pattern that emerged is one of peaks and valleys as the participants strove to meet the requirements of NCLB. In addition, I noticed an intertwining nature of the resources and practices as I observed them at work in the school. A detailed account of my observations follows. This chapter is organized chronologically according to the following school years: 1999–2000, 2000–2001, 2001–2002, 2002–2003, 2003–2006, and 2006–2009. As described in Chapter 3, I decided on those year groupings during which salient temporal dynamics occurred at Commonwealth ES in District “A” during a given year or group of years. Both school and district designations are pseudonyms. Some reports and documents cited in this chapter are relabeled using those pseudonyms².

The 1999–2000 School Year

In the spring of the 1999–2000 school year, three school district leaders, the director of elementary instruction, the assistant superintendent for instruction, and the head of the department of accountability, concurred that student achievement at Commonwealth ES as measured by the state Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) testing data was unacceptable. In the spring of 2000, only 44% of Grade 3 and 37% of Grade 5 students achieved a passing score on the state reading and language arts standards test. That year, the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for reading and language arts set by the state was 60.7% (“State” Department of Education, 2010–2011). To improve student achievement, the district leaders developed a multifaceted plan (Historical notes, 1999–2000).

² Although not cited in the reference list, these reports and documents are available upon request.

First, the district leaders changed the school administration by removing the sitting principal and assistant principal (who had both served in those positions for four years), and replacing them with two carefully chosen successors. Both Dr. Natalie Brown, the new principal, and Ms. Mitzi Meisel, the new assistant principal, had specifically asked the superintendent to name them to these positions. Both had also participated in district conversations regarding the “problems” at Commonwealth ES, and both had indicated they were highly motivated to be a part of “the solution” there (Historical notes, 1999–2000).

Dr. Brown had previously served as a director of elementary instruction and as a building principal, a role for which she had received recognition for her accomplishments with respect to both student achievement and parent satisfaction. Although Ms. Meisel was new to building administration, she had previously served as Title I coordinator for the district. During the summer of 1999, the two were assigned to Commonwealth ES by the assistant superintendent for instruction with the approval of the superintendent, the leadership team, and the school board (M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009).

Second, the district superintendent asked four National Board-Certified Teachers (NBCTs) (Education Week, 2001) to leave their assigned schools and join the staff at Commonwealth ES in order to serve as mentor teachers there. (I will refer to the NBCTs as mentor teachers throughout the remainder of this dissertation.) It was the district superintendent’s expectation that the mentor teachers would help other teachers at Commonwealth ES to develop knowledge about and skill in using instruction considered effective by district leaders [e.g., *Primary Purposes: Reading* (District “A,” 1995b); *Primary Purposes: Writing* (District “A,” 1995c); *Expanding Expectations: Reading* (District “A,” 1996a); *Expanding Expectations: Writing* (District “A,” 1996b)]. In addition, the mentor teachers were to support other teachers in attaining National Board certification by guiding them through the year-long qualifying process (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2010).

It was the district superintendent’s and the cluster assistant superintendent’s goal for Commonwealth ES to have at least one mentor teacher at every grade level. To this end, the school district also forged a formal partnership with a large metropolitan graduate school of education in the southeastern United States as a support system for these efforts. To highlight the significance of this goal, a committee comprised of the district superintendent, the district

assistant superintendent for instruction, the principal of Commonwealth ES, and the dean of the graduate school renamed the school, from Commonwealth ES to the Commonwealth Professional Academic Center (Historical notes, 2000; *Education Week*, May, 2001; personal communication with M. Abercrombie).

Third, the director of elementary instruction assigned a team of seven elementary instruction specialists (referred to as the “specialist team” throughout this document.) to work with the new administrators and teaching staff, providing support in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies instruction. In my role as district elementary school language arts specialist, I was assigned to serve as one member of this team (Historical notes, 2000).

The 2000–2001 School Year

The specialist team first met with Commonwealth ES’s principal, Dr. Natalie Brown, and assistant principal, Ms. Mitzi Meisel, in July 2000. Because school was not in session, we did not have the opportunity to meet with teachers, see the school, or observe the reading program in action. The principal explained that all of the teachers at Commonwealth ES were using *Success for All* (SFA) (Slavin, 1996) as their reading program. She explained that the teachers had selected this instructional reading program in 1998. At that time, due to declining test scores, Commonwealth ES, along with all of the other Title I schools in the district, was directed by the school district’s leadership team to choose one of five different reading instruction models judged by district leaders (who were influenced by vocal members of the district school board) to be research based (Historical notes, 2000).

After observing the SFA reading program at a nearby elementary school, the staff selected that program for implementation at Commonwealth ES. The teachers and administrators had been drawn to this reading program particularly because of its classroom and school-wide management module and its home-school connection module—two areas that they had identified as significant problems facing Commonwealth ES at the time. Ms. Meisel explained her assessment of the teachers’ early enthusiasm for SFA. “They did really buy into it. . . . They really loved that program” (M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009). “I think [the teachers] saw [SFA] as a way of getting some control. . . . I think that more than the instruction, that [the two modules] was what they really liked about the program” (M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009).

The school principal asked the specialist team to meet with the teaching staff the week before students returned to school in August 2000 (Historical field notes). To begin the meeting, Dr. Brown introduced us to the staff and explained that we would be there all year to support the school's needs. We divided the teachers and staff into smaller working groups for which members of the specialist team acted as discussion facilitators. While in those groups, we asked the teachers and administrators to identify what they saw as Commonwealth ES's strengths and needs related to language arts and mathematics instruction. Each facilitator recorded the group's contributions on large pieces of chart paper and posted the lists on the walls of the meeting room (Historical notes, August 2000).

As a whole group, the teachers and staff discussed numerous ideas related to language arts. Spokespersons for each small group shared their group's list with the large group, and the large group looked for commonalities across the charts. The teachers and staff at Commonwealth ES identified one instructional program and a host of challenges:

- They identified SFA as an effective reading program and overwhelmingly indicated their wish to continue its implementation.
- They described the Commonwealth ES students as unmotivated to learn.
- They described the Commonwealth ES students as lacking background knowledge and prior experiences necessary to be successful as readers.
- They described discipline and management as areas of great concern and in need of improvement.
- They attributed the discipline and management problems at the school to the change in demographics of the student population.
- They identified the home-school connection as important to student achievement.
- They described the state of the home-school connection at that time as in need of improvement.
- They explained that many students at Commonwealth ES came to school from homes where parents were missing for various reasons, including abandonment, imprisonment, and drug and alcohol addiction (Historical notes, August, 2000).

After the staff meeting, the specialist team discussed the commonalities that had been identified by the teachers and staff. Specialist team members questioned the teachers' devotion

to SFA in light of the declining achievement scores. We met with the principal and assistant principal to share our questions and to gain their continued input. The principal remained adamant that since the teachers overwhelmingly wanted to continue with SFA, and since she believed it would take longer than one year to see results from the program reflected in student achievement scores, the school would continue with SFA during 2000–2001 (Historical notes, August 2000).

In an interview, the assistant principal elaborated on her belief that the two fundamental challenges facing the school (student behavior and parent communication) would be addressed in 2000 by the SFA classroom and school-wide management module and the home-school connection module and prepare the staff for a successful transition to the “balanced literacy framework” that was used in most of the district’s elementary schools [viz., *Primary Purposes: Reading* (District “A,” 1995b); *Primary Purposes: Writing* (District “A,” 1995c); *Expanding Expectations: Reading* (District “A,” 1996a); *Expanding Expectations: Writing* (District “A,” 1996b)]. According to Ms. Meisel:

There were a couple of really strong teacher leaders who were the [SFA] site-based coordinators for the program. They were very strong in putting into place the components of SFA, some of which were pretty good actually and some of which were not quite as good... They felt especially the discipline which was a huge issue then at [Commonwealth ES], they felt like putting those rules into place helped them. If you walked on the silver line, you didn’t talk in the hall, if you maintained, and they (sic) those kinds of things. I think that more so than the instruction was what they were most excited about because I think they saw that as getting some control over some of the discipline things that were happening (Interview, September 11, 2009).

Given the support for the continued use of the SFA reading program in the face of concerns from the specialist team, the team members asked the building administrators for the opportunity to meet with the grade-level teams to get their input about which students were meeting success with SFA, which were not, and why the teachers thought some students were experiencing lack of success. We also asked for the opportunity to observe in classrooms during the language arts block (Historical notes, August, 2000).

At this time, the principal outlined her expectation that the mentor teachers would work in classrooms with teachers and serve as coaches and models for the rest of the teaching staff which was made up of teachers returning to Commonwealth ES, teachers hired by the new principal and beginning their first year at the school, and the mentor teachers recruited by the

superintendent who were also beginning their first year at the school (Historical notes, August, 1999). Notably, between the 1999–2000 and the 2000–2001 school years, the teacher turnover at Commonwealth ES was 48.8%. This compared with a 19.78% turnover at the district level and a 26.7% turnover at the cluster level for the same time period (District “A” Turnover Data Reports, 1999–2000 and 2000–2001).

After meetings with the Commonwealth ES teachers, staff, and administrators, the specialist team members met with Dr. Scott, the district director of elementary instruction, to discuss their assessment of the situation at the school. Dr. Scott’s major objective in sending the team to Commonwealth ES had been for team members to support the teachers in making the transition away from SFA and toward “balanced literacy instruction.” She defined a balanced literacy program as it was described in *Primary Purposes* (District “A,” 1995b; 1995c) and *Expanding Expectations* (District “A,” 1996a; 1996b), two in-house publications created to support all elementary teachers in learning about balanced literacy and ways to implement it (Historical notes, August 2000).

At this meeting, team members explained the strong desire of the teachers and administrators to continue with SFA, as well as the lack of student cooperation evident during the team’s visit to the school. Further, members reasoned that until the “discipline situation” was addressed, no instructional program could be successful. Dr. Scott agreed that the specialist team’s immediate focus should be to shift away from addressing the instructional program to addressing classroom and building management techniques, thus postponing any transition away from SFA and toward balanced literacy (Historical notes, 2000).

Addressing management

The lack of student cooperation was evident to both staff and visitors during the 2000–2001 school year. During that time, it was common to hear, even at a considerable distance outside the school, the sounds of loud, and often angry, voices emanating from inside the school. On one occasion, I observed one classroom teacher leading her fifth grade class of students through a hallway. The teacher stopped the line of students and proceeded to walk up and down the line, screaming at what seemed to be the top of her voice. “How many times do I have to tell you to be quiet when we are walking in the hallways? I guess we’re just going to have to miss another recess until you get this through your heads, aren’t we?!”

In response, most of the students in the line largely ignored her demand for quiet, while others noticeably smirked as she spoke. Their responses appeared to frustrate the teacher even further. “Okay, let’s go,” she ordered. As the students followed her in line, the noise level further increased. It seemed as if what the teacher had just said had never been spoken. Even so, the teacher walked at the head of the line with her back to the students, apparently paying no further attention to the students’ behaviors (Historical notes, September, 2000).

On another occasion, I observed a classroom teacher in the library with her third grade students. The students ran wildly around the library, while showing no apparent signs of engagement in selecting books or reading. The librarian continuously hollered at the students to “Stop running in this library!” After three repetitions, the classroom teacher screamed, “Everyone FREEZE!” The students stopped running and froze in place.

The teacher then took the face of one of the female students standing nearest her into her hand, held her by the chin, and at a nose-to-nose distance, screamed at the girl, “Just WHO do YOU think you are??!!” The student attempted to look down at the floor, but the teacher held her chin and prevented her from doing so. “Look at me when I speak to you,” the teacher ordered through clenched teeth. “I asked you a question.” The student stepped back away from the teacher and the teacher let go of the student’s chin. Despite several repetitions of the same question, the teacher never received a verbal response from the student.

At this point, the teacher announced “Since you don’t know how to behave like third graders in the library, that’s it. If you have a book and you have already checked it out, you may take it with you. If you have a book and you have not checked it out, leave it on the table.” With that, the students followed directions to get in line, and they returned with the teacher to their classroom. Only three of the approximately 25 students left with books. Others left their books on one of the library tables. Most did not have a book in their hands at all, and so left nothing on the table (Historical notes, September, 2000).

During an interview, Ms. Katie Cornell, one of the four mentor teachers, described her response to student management at Commonwealth ES:

Well, I was shocked by the behavior of the students. It was kind of like a free-for-all. It was so different back in 2000, but the way the students acted toward each other, they didn’t respect themselves, they didn’t respect others, they definitely didn’t respect authority. It was, there wasn’t a lot of self-control or even control from outside and I

didn't sense that the students had a lot of motivation, were not being motivated from outside either (K. Cornell, Mentor Teacher, focus group interview, September 16, 2009).

In the fall of 2000, the building administrators advised the teachers to use exclusionary practices when faced with student management difficulties. That is, if they encountered a disruptive or otherwise uncooperative student, they were to either send the "offending student" to the time out room, the alternate instruction room (AIA), or the Rising Stars room; or to the main office for attention from the principal or assistant principal (Historical notes, September, 2000; J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

The time out room–initiation. As early as 1997, the Commonwealth ES staff was reporting significant numbers of disruptive students throughout the school. Dr. Mary Schumer, principal of Commonwealth ES at that time, approached Ms. Ortiz, one of the special education instructional assistants at Commonwealth ES, about creating a timeout room at Commonwealth ES as part of a county-wide initiative for time out rooms.

...so they announced that they were developing a new program, a time out room...a way for the disruption to be brought out and the class to be able to continue, to protect the integrity of the classroom (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

It would be staffed by an instructional assistant, and immediately I've always been interested in behavior management... You know I knew a lot of the Special Ed kids ended up in time out. And I was like how does this correlate and could I make a difference? (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

Ms. Ortiz was involved from the beginning with the research, design, and implementation of the time out room. She explained some of this preparation to me during a one-on-one interview in February of 2010:

So they brought us out there, there was maybe ten or twelve instructional assistants, some program managers, some principals. We all got together about what these rooms would look like. And you know we gave input and you know we were given some readings and some different programs and how they worked across the country. And the pros—a lot of people were very for the room, and a lot of people were against it, and why. ...they then brought a committee in the county together and took all of our input, and formulated something with guidelines for times, how long kids would be in there, and how they would be sent, and how many warnings. You know, pretty much strict guidelines (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

[The guidelines for the time out room from the beginning were] ... Kindergarten through third grade was thirty minutes, maximum... And then four through six was sixty minutes (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

The time out room—in action. Ms. Meisel, the assistant principal, stated that during the 2000–2001 school year, the time out room was “...filled all the time, overflowing.” According to school policy, students were only supposed to stay in the time out room for a “limited time span” and then were to be returned to the classroom.

Ms. Ortiz described how she interacted with students in the time out room:

...the guidelines when they were in there. There was no talking. We tried to have as little interaction with them as possible, not to give them the extra attention when they got in there...so they would come in, they would get [a referral form], there was no talking, they did the best they could [to fill out the referral form]. Then I would quietly conference with them over their form. Usually I tried to make a call to the parent after they left. Occasionally, when we decided that it was best to speak with the parent with the child there, we would make the call. But there were other kids in the room. I usually liked to wait because of privacy issues. If not, if they were in there alone, and then again, you got to know which parents who it was really a problem bothering at work, which parents it was better, honestly, it would be better to approach a different way (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

There were strong differences among the staff over how the students in the holding areas were to be treated. The differences centered on the issue of whether students in those rooms should receive instructional support and behavioral counseling, or receive a more punitive response from the personnel there.

...if the work is (sic) sent down, they would get one-on-one in that subject. But if nothing was sent down, I mean I had teachers say “No, they can just sit there as far as I’m concerned.” And I was like, “No, that’s not what this is about. This isn’t about them being punished... At first it was “There will be IAs in there who will supervise.” That was it. It was originally the thing. And then the IAs are like there’s no impact if it’s just supervision. You know there needs to be something like you need to say this is what happened, and again like you said the instruction, the missed instruction can be either way. It can be a time to refocus, and review it, and have them one-on-one, or NOT (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

Teachers and administrators consistently reported that the students in most need of instruction were constantly being sent and resent to the time out room (M. Meisel, interview, September 1, 2009; Historical notes, June 2000). Thus, this group of students missed a large amount of instruction.

The time out room alternatives. In addition to the time out room, Dr. Brown established two other programs for disruptive students—alternative instructional arrangement

(AIA) and Rising Stars. These alternatives were intended for students for whom the time out room was insufficient, as described by Ms. Ortiz:

There was a gentleman here who did one step up, he did AIA, you know or Alternative Placement. He would keep kids for the whole day, and he was in another little area. And then we had the Rising Star Program which was for even more severe behavior problems. So we had three individuals working with behavior and for three different reasons (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

The AIA was staffed based on the notion that disruptive students would benefit from association with a role model:

And the [AIA] gentleman, I don't know if that was a county thing, or if he was an hourly employee to just handle a different aspect. It was a gentleman, he was actually a fire fighter. It was some part time work and you know maybe a role model...if time out didn't work, there was this place (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

During that same February 2010 interview, Ms. Ortiz explained that the Rising Star Program was intended for children exhibiting the most severe behavior issues and operated as a parallel classroom.

...Rising Stars was also a county program. We had that for maybe five or six years...It started out as the kids, it would be a short-term program; it was a short-term, intensive behavior program. And it was usually three to five kids, and they would do everything in that classroom with the Rising Star teacher. It was an actual teacher (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

Teachers sometimes sent students judged to be exceptionally problematic (M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009) to the main office. However, this alternative created dissension at the school. The teachers reported that these students who were "guilty of the most egregious offenses" (historical field notes, June 2000) were "rewarded" by the principal with opportunities to play with remote control cars, to accompany the principal on trips to and from school, to serve as office helpers delivering messages and supplies to various classrooms, and even to attend luncheon meetings of local community groups such as the local Chamber of Commerce (Historical notes, June 2000; M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009). Notably, it was the principal's view that children sent to the office could not be rehabilitated through punitive action on her part. Ms. Ortiz explained her understanding of the principal's approach and the teachers' interpretation of it.

We had a boy at that time who was...in Kindergarten. It was right when Dr. Brown was here. And she had a little bit different approach to discipline. And she tried to refocus

his energy other ways. And he had little goals to meet. If he met a goal, he'd be able to race this little car. This is what I hear over and over when they [teachers] talk about her, they're all stuck on the car thing. So I'm assuming they really had an issue with that. Here's this kid who's causing all this disruption, and where is he? He's racing this car. Well, that's because that day he had earned that privilege, but they [teachers] didn't see it as that. They saw it as a really bad kid, that's throwing chairs, that's racing cars (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

Thus, a tension developed between the teachers and administrators due to differences in beliefs about appropriate management strategies. For their part, the teachers overwhelmingly believed in the use of punishment as a practice to discourage lack of cooperation among students, and often they advised that these students should be "...just thrown out of school." In contrast, the principal strongly believed that if these least cooperative students were shown kindness, rewarded for meeting behavior and academic goals, and given opportunities to see the wider world and its possibilities, they would become motivated to exhibit better behavior and strive toward greater academic achievement (Historical notes, September 2000).

While these perspectives differed sharply, they were not discussed openly within the school. According to the teachers I interviewed and observed, at no time did the principal communicate the underlying rationale for her actions. Many teachers expressed anger with what they saw as "The worst student offenders being rewarded for their bad behavior." Not only did they express their distress about this issue within the school, but they shared these views with parents out in the community (M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009; Field notes, June 2009).

These communications exacerbated the already negative view of Commonwealth ES among community members. The "word on the street" within the community was that the school was "out of control" (C. DuBois, interview, August 2009). One classroom teacher recounted a conversation that she had with a parent around 2000, when the parent discussed her feelings about her child matriculating at Commonwealth ES:

...a little boy was coming here and I saw the mother and I said "Oh, I didn't know he was coming here, coming to Commonwealth." And the mother said, "Yes, you know I just heard such terrible things." And she said, "I was really hesitant to put him in Commonwealth because everyone said how bad it was." (H. Damon, Focus Group, October 30, 2009).

Ms. Ortiz described her observations of how the flight of “model” families was changing the demographics related to a negative reputation of the school in the community beginning around 1998:

...it was kind of interesting, the community’s view on it. You know, we used to ...be a neighborhood school. There were model Commonwealth families here at the school. And then they slowly started pulling out...I don’t really know...I think it might have been when [the principal before Dr. Schumer] moved, and they were having their transition. Families started pulling [their children out of Commonwealth]. They didn’t like the changes... And I think that was the thing where they thought behavior had gotten out of control (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

Addressing community-school relations

In 2000, many parents expressed their dissatisfaction about the school and their belief that classroom and school behavior had deteriorated as “...the children from the other side of Highway 6” began attending Commonwealth ES. Indeed, the student demographics had changed dramatically since the school opened in 1968. Originally, the student population was drawn entirely from Caucasian families of middle to upper middle income categories. By 2000, the student population was overwhelmingly non-Caucasian. Many students and their families lived in poverty, and many of them spoke heritage languages other than English (Historical notes, 2000).

Both more and less affluent parents reported that Commonwealth ES was “an out of control school,” and that the administrators needed to do something about the “bad behavior.” Once in 2000 when the administrators tried to share achievement data with parents at a parent-teacher meeting, the parents stopped the administrators and told them: “We don’t care about test scores. We want to know how you are going to take care of these [behavior] problems in the school.” Parents frequently called the assistant superintendent for instruction for their part of the district, the director of elementary instruction for the district, and even school board members, to complain about the school being “out of control” (M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009; C. DuBois, interview August 2009a; Historical notes, Fall 2000; Historical notes, Spring 2001; C. DuBois, interview, August 2009b; Focus Group, October 30, 2009; Historical notes, June 2000).

Although the teachers and administrators had access to communication and behavior management modules as part of SFA, there was no reference to the use of these modules by

anyone with whom I worked. Little was done that year to address these community concerns, and they appeared to fester (Historical notes, 2000).

Addressing instruction

At Commonwealth ES in 2000, because of the organizational structure required by SFA, the school had the services of two SFA lead teachers instead of the services of the two reading specialists they would otherwise have, as determined by usual district staffing formulas. Rather than acting as instructional coaches for the implementation of SFA, the lead teachers took responsibility for administrative tasks such as organizing the staff development sessions that would be led by outside SFA consultants, monitoring data from each quarterly assessment to assist teachers in grouping students “homogeneously” for instruction, and ordering and maintaining an inventory of all SFA materials in the building (Historical notes, 2000).

Although SFA describes one of the lead teacher’s responsibilities as supporting and coaching other classroom teachers on the use of the materials, the Commonwealth ES SFA lead teachers had been directed by Dr. Brown, at the behest of the superintendent, to cede the coaching responsibilities to the mentor teachers. However, because the program was scripted so as to discourage teacher decision-making and deviation from the manual, the mentor teachers were unable to identify any meaningful coaching opportunities for themselves within the SFA program which served as the single source of reading instruction. Instead, they directed their coaching efforts toward school subject areas other than reading, leaving classroom teachers without any mentoring or coaching in reading instruction for the entire three year tenure of SFA at Commonwealth ES—a tenure that lasted from September 1998 until June 2001 (Historical notes, fall, 2001).

Moreover, the overall plan for the mentor teachers to coach the classroom teachers did not go smoothly. Many of the returning teachers resented the mentor teachers. They reported that there was nothing personal that they disliked about the four mentor teachers, but that they felt insulted that the superintendent had seen fit to recruit teachers from outside the school to come in and “fix” them (Field notes, 2009).

Of the four mentor teachers, none had previously experienced working in a high poverty, Title I school. Their teaching experiences had been in schools in which students came from homes where the parents were apparently supportive of school goals. In those schools, the typical students demonstrated high achievement and motivation (Historical notes, 2000). As the

mentor teachers worked in the Commonwealth ES classrooms, it became obvious to the specialist team that the mentor teachers did not possess the skills to successfully engage the students in learning activities. Rather than support the mentor teachers, several of the other classroom teachers decided, and one classroom teacher specifically remarked, that they would "...let them have at it. I'll just be a fly on the wall and see what happens" (Historical notes, 2000).

Due to these personnel difficulties, coupled with pressure to address behavior and motivation difficulties, little time was devoted to instruction during this academic year. According to the single mentor teacher who remained at Commonwealth ES for the duration of this study, working at Commonwealth ES in 2000 was an isolating and disturbing experience. She spoke candidly about her feelings and observations during her first years at Commonwealth ES:

"It was difficult coming into the situation because we were kind of put upon the staff as the National Board Teachers. It was definitely not a welcoming atmosphere. It was kind of like being alone in the woods...And I felt like I had already been judged before we got here and the teachers were very resentful about our coming in. But I also felt that when I was watching some of the interactions with the students I didn't feel like some of the teachers valued the students. And that was disturbing." (K. Cornell, focus group, September 16, 2009, lines 82 - 93)

Addressing the provision of instructional materials

In 2000, it was a district expectation that all elementary schools have well-stocked bookrooms and classroom libraries to support the reading program. Photographs taken of the bookroom in 2000 show that Commonwealth ES's bookroom consisted almost entirely of SFA materials and a hodge-podge of odds and ends, including a few books for student use (Anzalone, Towson, DuBois, Meisel, & Norton, 2003). Further, there were no classroom libraries in use as part of the instructional program (Historical notes, fall 2000). Had teachers wished to supplement the SFA program with an array of other texts, they would have been unable to secure such materials at Commonwealth ES during the early years of this study. Had they wished to use a variety of instructional and supplementary materials while teaching content subjects such as mathematics, science, and social studies, they would have been unable to locate such materials. This situation was described by the single remaining mentor teacher as she discussed the effects of the costly 2000–2001 SFA implementation on the school, especially with respect to teachers' access to a variety of instructional materials.

I was so shocked that the basic things like the science materials for 1st Grade they didn't have in 1st Grade. Coming from another [district] school, I just expected that we would have standard materials and we didn't. (K. Cornell, Focus Group Transcript, September 16, 2009).

Overview Comparison of the 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 School Years

We began the 2000–2001 school year faced with huge challenges. These challenges included declining student achievement performance as measured by end-of-year test scores; management and behavior problems; lack of effective communication; lack of instructional resources; lack of staff development for instruction; and teacher and parental dissatisfaction.

An analysis of test scores for students at Commonwealth ES at the end of the 2001 school year showed mixed results as compared with test scores at the end of 2000. Developmental reading assessment (DRA) scores were the district's tests to assess learning of Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 students. As shown in Table 4.1, DRA scores for Grade 1 showed a slight improvement over the DRA Grade 1 scores at the end of the 2000 school year.

Note in the same table that the second grade students who met or exceeded the Grade 2 benchmark of a DRA Level 28 (59%) were mostly the same students that had met or exceeded the Grade 1 benchmark of a DRA Level 16 (54%), keeping in mind that the school's student mobility rate at Commonwealth ES between 2000 and 2001 was 26.68% (District "A" Student Mobility Reports, 2000–2001). This was an increase in the numbers of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark (gain of 5%), but was much lower than the percent of Grade 1 students who made or exceeded the benchmark of a DRA Level 16 at the end of 2000 (54%) and the percent of Grade 1 students who made or exceeded the DRA Level 16 at the end of 2001 (62%) which constituted a gain of 8%. Of course, these were two entirely different groups of students.

Table 4.1

Developmental Reading Assessment Test Scores for Grades 1 and 2 1999–2001

| Grade | School Year | Below Mid Grade | At Mid Grade | End of Grade | Significantly Above Grade | Making/Exceeding Grade Benchmark (L16) |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 | 1999–2000 (N=63) | 33% | 13% | 33% | 21% | 54% |
| 1 | 2000–2001 (N=65) | 28% | 11% | 31% | 31% | 62% |
| 2 | 2000–2001 (N=68) | 19% | 22% | 25% | 34% | 59% |

State NCLB accountability tests for Grade 3 in reading at the end of 2001 showed a continued decrease in the percent of students earning pass proficient and pass advanced scores compared with scores for Grade 3 at the end of 2000. At the end of the 2001 school year, State NCLB accountability reading tests for Grade 5 showed (a) an increase in the percent of students scoring pass proficient and (b) no change in the percent of students scoring pass advanced compared with the percent of students scoring pass proficient or pass advanced at the end of the 2000 school year. Table 4.2 displays these Grade 3 and Grade 5 results.

Table 4.2

State NCLB Tests—Grades 3 and 5 Reading 1999 - 2001

| Grade | School Year | Number Tested | Percent | | | |
|-------|-------------|---------------|---------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | | Failed | Pass Proficient | Pass Advanced | Total Passing |
| 3 | 1999–2000 | 81 | 56% | 41% | 3% | 44% |
| 3 | 2000–2001 | 89 | 63% | 34% | 0% | 34% |
| 5 | 1999–2000 | 61 | 62% | 33% | 3% | 36% |
| 5 | 2000–2001 | 60 | 53% | 43% | 3% | 46% |

Management and behavior at both the classroom and school levels continued to be problematic. These problems included students' disrespectful behavior toward teachers and other students, as well as teachers' disrespectful behaviors towards students, other teachers and administrators, and administrators' disrespectful behaviors toward teachers. Consequences for unacceptable behaviors were confusing to students due to the conflicting objectives among teachers and between teachers and administrators. Among teachers, an emphasis on punitive behavior management strategies continued.

Lack of effective communication between the administrators and the teachers, the teachers and the students, the teachers and the mentors, and the school and the parents continued to be observed, reported, and documented. Lack of instructional resources also continued, including no classroom libraries; no texts for guided reading, shared reading, or independent reading; and no texts for professional development other than SFA materials.

Lack of staff development for instruction continued for multiple reasons. SFA staff development concentrated on how to follow the program script rather than what best instructional practices might be implemented. There were no district reading teachers at Commonwealth ES available to conduct staff development as there were in other district elementary schools. The mentor teachers were unable to coach during the language arts block because of the scripted SFA program.

Mentor teachers continued to be isolated. Classroom teachers were unwilling to collaborate with the mentor teachers for professional development. Classroom teachers expressed resentment that the mentor teachers had been sent to "fix" them. The mentor teachers reported feeling hostility from classroom teachers.

Student cooperation and motivation continued to be problems. This was evidenced by on-going discipline problems in classrooms and throughout the building, and a sustained use of the time out room, AIA, and the Rising Stars programs. This problem of student cooperation appeared to be exacerbated by conflicting theories of student management enacted by teachers and administrators.

Continued demographic shifts in the school's student population included an increase in the number of students living in poverty, an increase in the number of students who spoke

English as a second language, an increase in the number of non-Caucasian students, and a decrease in the number of middle class Caucasian students. Neither mentor teachers nor other staff members were able to engage these students productively within the school setting.

Teachers continued to report their dissatisfaction to parents outside of the school setting. Teachers recounted negative school experiences to parents and other community members. Parents recounted negative school experiences to other parents and community members. Parental dissatisfaction was evidenced by parents frequently complaining to school administrators and teachers; and parents frequently complaining to the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and the school board.

In response to these challenges, the school district, Commonwealth ES administrators, teachers, and the specialist team implemented or continued strategies, practices, and resources during the 2000–2001 school year that included:

- naming of a new principal and assistant principal that were hand-selected by the district superintendent based upon the new administrators' previous leadership experiences and track records of high student achievement and parent satisfaction;
- recruiting four National Board-Certified mentor teachers who were selected by the district superintendent to improve teachers' pedagogy and to support teachers to receive National Board Certification;
- naming a seven-member instructional specialist team identified by the district director of elementary instruction. This team included instructional specialists from each of the four core disciplines (two from language arts, one each from mathematics, science, and social studies) and one instructional specialist from English as a second language and special education;
- continuing the use of *Success for All*, a scripted program, as the sole instructional reading program at Commonwealth ES; and
- continuing and expanding the use of removal strategies to deal with students judged to be disruptive in the classroom. This included use of the time out room, AIA, and Rising Stars programs as ways to isolate uncooperative students.

In 2000–2001, the primary metric used by the district to determine whether Commonwealth ES was on a path to success was student achievement test scores. By the end of

the school year, student achievement scores had declined yet again in Grade 3 but showed a gain in Grade 5. In spring 2001, results on the state standards test showed that only 37% of Grade 3 students (down from 44%) passed, while 47% of Grade 5 students (up from 38%) passed (State Standards Test, 1999–2000, 2000–2001). The director of elementary instruction, the assistant superintendent, and the superintendent viewed these mixed results as inadequate school performance (Historical notes, 2001). At the end of the 2000–2001 school year, the school faced the same huge challenges that it had faced at the beginning of the year. Not much had changed.

At the end of the year, Dr. Brown left her position after a single year at Commonwealth ES. Prior to departing, Dr. Brown had an exit conversation with the district assistant superintendent for instruction, area assistant superintendent, and director. As part of this conversation, district administrators concluded that since the SFA reading program was not meeting the needs of many of the students at Commonwealth ES (as measured by end of school year reading achievement test scores), the school would move away from using SFA and toward the use of a balanced literacy program that the rest of the district was using (V. Crowne, interview, May 23, 2011). Two of the four mentor teachers also left. The assistant principal and two of the mentor teachers remained and waited for the appointment of a new principal (Anzalone et al., 2003; M. Meisel, interview, September 11, 2009; Historical notes, spring 2001).

The 2001–2002 School Year

In the summer of 2001, Ms. DuBois was named the new principal of Commonwealth ES. Ms. DuBois was promoted from her previous position as assistant principal at a nearby elementary school—a position she held from 1997 until 2001. As part of her prior experience, she had also been a Grade 3 and Grade 6 classroom teacher at Commonwealth ES from 1993–1995, and so was somewhat familiar with the student population, the school, and the community. As was done with Dr. Brown’s appointment, the district leaders did not follow standard selection procedures. Instead of a call for applications followed by a review of applications by a principal screening panel (the standard protocol), the principal for Commonwealth ES was hand-picked by the district assistant superintendent and subsequently approved by the district’s leadership team, the superintendent, and the school board (Historical notes, Spring 2001).

Challenges for the new principal

When asked during an interview about what challenges she identified upon becoming the principal at Commonwealth ES, Ms. DuBois named multiple challenges. I discuss them below

in the order in which she prioritized them: community relations, role of mentor teachers, discipline, instructional focus, and negative perceptions about the school (C. DuBois, interview, August, 2009a).

Community relations—Parental concerns about her “moving around”

Ms. DuBois said that she was taken aback when she held her first meeting with the parent community. One of the parents said to her “Looking at your resume, it looks like you’ve moved around a lot. Why should we think you’re going to stay here any longer than the last two principals did?” This question was surprising and disconcerting to her. She perceived the diverse experiences on her resume as strengths rather than potential problems. In response to the question, she assured the parents that she had moved around from school to school (1985–1993, taught Grades 4, 5, and 6 at Brooks ES; 1993–1995, taught Grades 3 and 6 at Commonwealth ES; 1995–1997, taught Grade 3 at Daley ES; 1997–2001, assistant principal at Mechanic ES) in order to get a wide range of school experiences so that she would be well-prepared to lead any kind of a school. She believed the more schools she worked in, the more qualified she became to lead a school in the district.

In order to allay parental concerns, she assured the parents that being a principal was her top priority, and that she planned to stay at Commonwealth ES for some time. She told me that at the time, she felt as if the parents greeted her expressed intention with some relief mixed with no small degree of skepticism (C. DuBois, interview, August 2009a).

The role of the mentor teachers

Principal DuBois explained that the plan for how the mentor teachers would operate had been largely unsuccessful. The mentor teachers had not had opportunities to coach reading instruction due to several factors, most notably the scripted nature of SFA and the administrative costs of SFA (requires staff resources in the form of two SFA leaders). Further, the insertion of mentor teachers into the staff at Commonwealth ES inadvertently implied the inadequacy of the other teachers there. In her view, the assignment of the four mentor teachers to Commonwealth ES was described in a way that demeaned the remainder of the teaching staff, creating a school climate unlikely to nurture staff collegiality and trust. This negative view of teachers was disseminated through a national publication:

As the number of board-certified teachers in the country increases, they are having increasing influence over the ways that teachers are trained and evaluated...Not only has

[Commonwealth ES] gained four teachers...[who] help...to sharpen the skills of other teachers in the building...but it also encouraged others there to seek national certification by offering them extensive training on the board's standards and procedures...Ultimately, the aim is to improve student learning. Based on student tests scores, [Commonwealth ES] is the second-lowest performing elementary school in [the District]. (*Education Week*, March, 2001).

As a means of addressing the role of the mentor teachers, Ms. DuBois made two major changes. First, she concurred with the district and area assistant superintendents and area director that since SFA was not meeting the needs of many of the students (as measured by end-of-school-year reading achievement test scores), the school would move away from SFA and toward the balanced literacy program that the rest of the district followed. One result of this change was that the two SFA leadership positions were converted back to the two reading specialist positions originally staffed at the school. Ms. DuBois also explained that she could not remove SFA without giving the teachers something to use in its place as they learned to use the balanced literacy program. She decided that teachers in Grades 1 through 5 would use the district's approved basal series (Harcourt Brace, 1987) as their main instructional material. Because the Commonwealth ES teachers needed time to become proficient in balanced literacy, and the administrators needed time to identify and purchase additional instructional resources, Ms. DuBois viewed the use of the basal as a stop gap measure that would be discontinued as soon as possible.

For the 2001–2002 school year, Ms. DuBois decided that only kindergarten and Grade 6 would continue with SFA. She based her decision on three factors. First, she knew from the kindergarten and Grade 6 teachers that they were exceedingly invested in the use of SFA. Second, she noted that the contract with SFA had been signed and paid for through the end of the 2001–2002 school year and so allowed the teachers in those two grade levels to continue its use for one more year without additional cost. Third, Ms. DuBois understood that neither kindergarten nor Grade 6 was an NCLB test year at that time.

Ms. DuBois' second decision was to hire a reading specialist for Commonwealth ES. She believed it was essential that the reading specialist possess an array of abilities and knowledge. She explained that such a person must be able to work collaboratively with the teachers and create an atmosphere of trust. The reading specialist for Commonwealth ES would need to establish credibility with the teachers who were at the time fairly disillusioned. The

person should also possess considerable knowledge about and skill in implementing balanced literacy instruction, analyzing data to inform instruction, and managing student behavior.

Needless to say, Ms. DuBois expected that such a candidate would take time to find. Candidates possessing strength in the areas of leadership, instruction, data analysis, and management were rare. Adding skill at working with adult learners made the search even more challenging. The position remained vacant until December 2001 (Historical notes, fall 2001). During that time, Ms. DuBois relied on the members of the specialist team to facilitate staff development in the school. The two mentor teachers who remained at Commonwealth ES took on resource roles, as well as assisting the specialist team with professional support for teachers during grade-level team meetings.

Selecting an instructional focus

At the time, the principal, Ms. DuBois, and the specialist team discussed their views that teacher morale and learning were suffering because teachers were being asked to simultaneously address a wide variety of problems. The extended field notes express our analysis of the situation:

General concerns: All of these teachers are working as hard as they possibly can and are trying to do what they are being asked. Our impression is that they are being pulled in many directions simultaneously. They are focusing on language arts, math, discipline, character education. Many are first year teachers or teachers new to [the district] and are unfamiliar with classroom management, establishing routines and procedures, guided reading, using a workshop format for reading and writing. We believe if one focus could be established and teachers weren't asked to do so many things simultaneously, the staff development would be more effective (Historical notes, 2001).

Shortly thereafter, Ms. DuBois met with the four language arts members of the specialist team and asked us to put together a staff development session on balanced literacy for the teachers. She and the assistant principal requested that we meet with all of the teachers for a whole day of staff development outside of the school building. They reserved space for us in the building that housed their assistant superintendent. It was located a few miles from the school. We suggested that we begin as a whole staff with an overview of the day, and then divide the teachers into two groups—primary grades (K–2) and upper grades (3–6) for the actual staff development. The administrators agreed. We held the staff development session on August 23, 2001 (Historical notes, 2001).

At the staff development session, we focused on the following topics: guided reading, an instructional technique in a balanced literacy program; using assessment to inform instruction and to group students; and getting started in the classroom, including establishing routines and procedures, designing the instructional environment, and setting realistic expectations (see Appendix G for the August 23rd session agenda).

After the session, the members of the specialist team met, and discussed the assessment of the session. We judged that some of the teachers were “open to learning about balanced literacy.” These were the teachers who had met with the specialist team prior to the staff development session to assist in setting the focus for the Commonwealth ES language arts staff development initiatives for the 2001–2002 school year. However, this small group of teachers did not represent the views of the total teaching staff at the school. Thus, we set a schedule that allowed us to meet regularly with each grade-level team.

The specialist team chose a focus for each grade-level team based upon our observations and knowledge of the teachers’ strengths and needs. I recorded the focus for each team in my extended notes where I recorded the issues and problems that arose as the teachers struggled to learn routines and strategies associated with the balanced literacy program.

Since August, we have met regularly (one, two, or three times per month) with each grade-level team. The focus for each team follows: Grade One We are working on establishing routines and procedures for reading workshop and literacy centers. We have met three times with the team [to date]. We began to work individually with one teacher, but she subsequently got support from an outside reading teacher. This support is no longer available for this teacher. We suggested teaming new and experienced teachers.

[Concerns: This team seems reluctant to express their concerns and questions. One teacher very overwhelmed and seems to turn to a seasoned teacher who may not be the best support. We offered help. Team did not respond to our suggestion to team new and experienced teachers. Teachers say that lack of emergent books is hindering instructional opportunities. We will be bringing them some more books next time we meet.]
(Historical notes, 2001)

Discipline

Besides community relations and the role of the mentor teachers, Ms. DuBois identified discipline as a top challenge she faced upon becoming principal at Commonwealth ES. She defined discipline as “the behavior or lack of behavior of the kids and how we respond to that” (C. DuBois, interview, September 2009a). Because discipline was such a problem, she felt it was negatively influencing the school’s overall climate. She defined climate as:

...how the staff and the kids feel about the school. Is it a happy place? Is it a nurturing place? How do the kids feel about learning? ... Climate is a bigger umbrella than discipline, but discipline is the driving force behind school climate (C. DuBois, interview, September 2009b).

When she first went to Commonwealth ES as the principal, she expected the climate to be a lot worse than it was:

...from the stuff you heard on the street. It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be, but it still was bad. I felt that there was a core group of teachers who really believed in the school and the kids and wanted them to do well, and there was a group of teachers who really wanted to hang and quarter kids, to tar and feather them (C. DuBois, interview, September 2009b).

With respect to the classroom discipline problem, on one occasion, I observed and recorded a reading workshop in a fifth grade classroom. The teacher was moving from one individual student to another, stopping to ask if each student understood what (s)he was supposed to be doing. Some of the students shrugged their shoulders. The teacher reminded them that they were supposed to have selected a book for independent reading and should be reading the books. As the teacher checked in with individual students, the other students abandoned reading in favor of activities such as stopping for a drink at the classroom drinking fountain; signing out with a buddy to go to the restroom; walking back and forth from the classroom library where they would select a book, bring it to their desk, flip through the book, and return it to the classroom library, where they would repeat the process.

As I watched, I noticed one male student who was larger than the others, walking around and constantly bumping into other students. I watched for a while and noticed that the classroom teacher did not appear to notice this behavior pattern. I asked the teacher to step aside with me and asked if he noticed what was occurring. He told me, "Oh, yes, that's our David. He's got emotional issues." When I asked what procedures he followed when David engaged in this behavior, the teacher told me, "Oh, the other students know he's got problems. We just all ignore him."

As David continued to walk and bump, I remarked to the teacher that this was unacceptable behavior. I asked if it was alright with him if I interceded. The teacher acquiesced, but appeared somewhat taken aback. I walked over to David. When I asked him why he was bumping into other students, he turned and bumped into me. I told him that was unacceptable and asked him to take a seat. The teacher looked shocked. David did not take a seat, but he

stopped bumping others as he continued to pace aimlessly around the room. I said to the teacher that this could not continue, and asked if he had spoken with the principal and the parents yet about the situation. He said he had not. He said he had called the mother to try to set up a conference, but that the mother had not returned multiple telephone calls. I told the teacher that I intended to speak with the principal about the situation, and the teacher thanked me (Historical notes, fall, 2001).

Addressing discipline—the time out room. Ms. DuBois was not an advocate of the time out room, and her initial plan upon becoming principal at Commonwealth ES was to disband it. However, she decided that it was serving a necessary purpose for the teachers in the fall 2001, and that it should continue temporarily.

She did, however, change the role of the Rising Stars teacher to that of an in-classroom support instead of as another time out option. This change was described by Ms. Ortiz:

Yeah, it [Rising Stars] continued when Cicely came but it slowly kind of phased out. She used the Rising Star teacher for more in the classroom. That was just my observation. She would go more in the classroom with the behavior thing so that the kids could stay in there (J. Ortiz, interview, February 22, 2010).

Ms. DuBois recounted to me that when she first arrived at Commonwealth ES, she saw no evidence of implementation of either the SFA Behavior Module or the SFA Parent Communication Module (C. DuBois interview, 9/09). So, in addition to changing the Rising Stars process, Ms. Dubois put a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program and a character education program into place. She explained:

PBS stands for Positive Behavior Support. [It] is ... an umbrella - the kinds of things you do in a school for good behavior... what I brought and put in place was the character education...[PBS] is not one particular thing. It's a framework for positive behaviors in a school (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

When I came aboard at [Commonwealth ES], there was a Behavior Committee in place. They were working on identifying routines and procedures to guide behavior in the classroom. In July of 2001, we went to a character education conference. The character traits we focused on that year were respect, responsibility, caring, cooperation, perseverance, and community. We added one more—resiliency—at the end of the 2005–2006 school year. These are the same seven traits we have continued to focus on each year since I've been here. One character trait was focused on each month. We did staff development with the teachers... At the end of each month, one grade level put on an assembly about that month's trait for the whole school. Each grade level in the school

did one assembly sometime during the year (C. DuBois, telephone interview, July 12, 2010).

Ms. DuBois made several efforts to communicate with parents about the new expectations for behavior at Commonwealth ES, and the consequences that would occur if those expectations were not met:

I suspended a lot of kids...Look, you broke the rules. When the kids realized that play day was over, then it just started getting better and better...Those parents, they hated you calling. Part of the problem [was that] kids would get in trouble, nobody would call them or follow up. And I've always felt that if you create problems for me, I'm going to be calling your parents (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

When a student was suspended from Commonwealth ES, Ms. DuBois required the parent to come to the school to pick up the child. This caused a major inconvenience for parents, and it got their attention immediately:

Sometimes it [was], "Well, I don't have a car," and I [would] say, "Well, you've got to find a way to get here and pick up your kid" (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

I personally witnessed an occasion when a father was leaving the school after picking up his suspended son from the office. Ms. DuBois took advantage of the parent's physical presence to have the student explain to the parent what he had done that resulted in the suspension. And Ms. DuBois explained to the parent, with the child listening, what behaviors the child needed to change when he returned to school. I also overheard the father's comments to the student as they left the school. He warned his son, in no uncertain terms, that this had better never happen again. He had to leave work in order to come to the school, and that meant his pay was going to be docked. As the 2001–2002 school year progressed, the numbers of suspensions greatly decreased (Historical notes, fall 2001).

Negative perceptions of the school and the students. Ms. DuBois explained that a fourth huge challenge at Commonwealth ES was overcoming "horrible beliefs about the school" held by the parents, teachers, and students. She noted that parents living within the Commonwealth ES boundary generally did not want their children to attend the school because of what they had heard and observed about student behavior. She said that teachers almost unanimously believed that the students at Commonwealth ES were not able to achieve the grade-level expectations of the district and the state. She observed that the students asked her directly if she would be coming back next school year, and that they expressed in many ways their

wonder whether or not the administrators and teachers believed in them as capable students (C. DuBois, interview, September 9, 2009a).

I heard the same beliefs expressed many times by teachers about the students' capacity to achieve. It was not a mean-spirited belief, but rather was often stated as, "You can't expect them to do (academic standard under discussion). You don't understand where they come from" (Historical notes, fall 2001). Often, the teachers held low expectations out of a sense of empathy for the socioeconomic situation of their students. They believed that it was unfair to expect students living in poverty to achieve grade-level expectations.

At the time, I had several conversations with teachers, sharing my own background of poverty explaining that I had been able to achieve quite well with the academic support of my teachers, not their sympathy or empathy. The teachers responded with surprise to this revelation. About this time, I noted a change in the focus of the teachers. They began to focus concomitantly on behavior and instruction.

I also noticed a change in the nature of my interactions with them. Before they knew of my background as a poor child, they treated me with deference and respect. After I disclosed this aspect of my past, they began to treat me more as an equal, though still with respect. One example of this change was that they began to confide in me. For example, they explained that they didn't understand why we were dropping SFA and changing to balanced literacy, and that they didn't know how to do balanced literacy, especially with students whose first language was not English. They also asked if I would help them learn how to do these things. In short, they began to develop a collaborative relationship with me (Historical notes, fall, 2001).

As the requests for help increased, I wondered how just four of us remaining on the specialist team, the two mentors, and the two school administrators would be able to address all of the teachers' requests. And then in December 2001, Mattie Norton was interviewed by the administrators and me for the reading specialist position at Commonwealth ES. We unanimously agreed that she was the best-qualified person for the position (Historical notes, December 2001). Ms DuBois offered Ms. Norton the position, and she accepted.

Ms. Norton began her work as reading resource teacher at Commonwealth ES in January 2002. Her previous experience included work as a reading teacher at a nonprofit GED program (According to the *History of the GED Tests* issued by the American Council on Education in

2011, GED has been referred to over the years and in different contexts as General Education Development, General Education Diploma, General Equivalency Diploma, and Graduate Equivalency Degree), a special education teacher, and a Title I reading teacher, for a total of three years and nine months of teaching experience, all in school districts located in the Midwestern United States. When hired by Commonwealth ES, she held a bachelor's and a master's degree in special education with a focus in literacy. As part of her hiring agreement, she earned a master's degree in literacy and full certification as a reading specialist between the fall of 2003 and the fall of 2005 (M. Norton, telephone interview, May 8, 2010).

Ms. Norton's focus between January and June of 2002 was to convince teachers to allow her to work in their classrooms. Mattie readily acknowledged that she did not have a coaching background, and that she "figured it out as I went along." Her two major foci that spring were:

- to focus on literacy instruction in Grades 3 and 5 (since these were the grades in which the state-mandated accountability tests required by NCLB were given); and
- to put together a well-stocked bookroom.

In January 2002, Ms. Norton's observation was that the teachers in Grades 3 and 5 were "in many different places" with respect to their literacy programs. During her first months at the school, Ms. Norton concentrated on working with the Grade 3 teachers on management and routines that would free teachers up to do small-group, differentiated reading instruction. During the course of some initial conversations about literacy centers as one management option, the teachers indicated a lack of interest in such centers. We made arrangements for them to visit classrooms in other district schools to observe ways other than centers to manage classrooms for guided reading, and to see how those classrooms were organized to support reading and writing workshops. One excerpt from my field notes reveals some of these efforts:

A visit to Charlotte Elementary for the entire team of Grade 3 teachers is planned for January 15, 2002. They will spend the day visiting classrooms during the language arts block followed by time for discussion. Plans for the following meeting are to discuss how books are leveled and choosing appropriate text. Two teachers are taking Guided Reading course (Historical notes, 2002).

The literacy team decided to focus its work with the Grade 5 teachers on understanding what guided reading looked like, and the importance of the other students being engaged in "authentic" literacy work while the teacher worked with small guided reading groups. We also took the Grade 5 team to visit classrooms in other schools to observe teachers with effective

guided reading routines and instruction. The purpose of all these visits was for the Commonwealth ES teachers to study those classroom environments in order to learn some specific routines and management routines that they could consider for implementation back in their own classrooms.

I worked with Ms. Norton to arrange the school visits, making certain that the schools and classrooms we visited were demographically similar to the classrooms at Commonwealth ES. In 2002, one of the common reasons that most teachers gave for not doing guided reading was that it wouldn't work for "kids like ours." At the same time, other teachers, unfamiliar with teaching techniques like guided reading, expressed interest in learning and implementing them in their classrooms.

Ms. Norton, Ms. DuBois, Carol Towson (one of the other three remaining members of the specialist team), and I decided it was important for the Commonwealth ES teachers to observe other teachers with students of the same demographic mix who were successfully implementing guided reading in their Grades 3 and 5 classrooms (Historical notes, 2002; M. Norton, telephone interview, May 8, 2010). In addition, we encouraged the classroom teachers to take the district's 15-hour course on guided reading. Ms. Norton, Ms. Towson, and I worked with the teachers who were taking the guided reading course inside of their classrooms, helping them with the implementation of what they learned during the course (Historical notes, 2002). These efforts apparently helped some of the teachers change their approach to teaching language arts. During one of the focus groups, a classroom teacher described that period of time:

You know I felt kind of like I was kind of clueless about what I was supposed to be doing in Language Arts. Then it wasn't until you and Carol started working with us and I took the guided reading class that we started putting some of that into place (G. Olson, Focus Group interview, October 16, 2009).

Addressing the need for instructional materials

One of the major obstacles during this early guided reading initiative was a lack of instructional materials for the teachers to use during reading instruction. This was the major factor that led Ms. Norton to focus on the creation of a well-stocked bookroom for the school. She and Ms. DuBois agreed that in order for guided reading instruction to be successful, teachers and students had to have access to a wide range of short texts that reflected the reading levels and interests of the students at Commonwealth ES.

Ms. Norton and I spent one whole day that spring visiting four exemplary bookrooms in other district schools. We talked about the characteristics of those bookrooms including the size and organization of the rooms, the nature of the book collection (included multiple genres, a wide range of readability levels, connections to other curriculum areas like social studies, and to general student interests), the professional book collection, and the check-out and inventory systems (Historical notes, 2002).

After the bookroom visits, Ms. Norton and I talked with Ms. DuBois to plan for the bookroom's creation. We decided together that we would incorporate embedded staff development processes (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Historical notes 2002) for classroom teachers as a central feature of the bookroom initiative. Ms. DuBois found money in her budget to pay teachers to be part of a school committee whose members would organize and sort the books by difficulty level using guidelines from Fountas and Pinell (2001) for the bookroom once the materials had been purchased. Ms. Norton spent the months after the bookroom visits ordering massive numbers of texts that she identified. These included big books for shared reading, short text for guided reading, and novels for literature circles.

During summer 2002, eight teachers from Grades 1, 2, 4, and 5 were paid to work with Ms. Norton to level and organize the new materials. The teachers who became part of the committee did so voluntarily. As part of the leveling work, it was necessary for the teachers to learn about the characteristics of text at various levels of difficulty, including how those characteristics could act as supports or challenges to students during guided reading instruction.

As a result of the Summer Bookroom Committee's work, the participating teachers learned about the importance of matching students with appropriate texts for instruction. They returned to their classrooms in the fall with a deeper understanding of the role that texts play in reading instruction, the important factors that teachers should consider as they match students with texts for instruction, and a working knowledge of the contents of Commonwealth ES's bookroom (Historical notes, 2002). Thus, these teachers were in a position to begin to further their understanding of effective instructional practice.

End of year state standards test results

Students in Grades 3 and 5 took the state standards tests in late spring 2002. Results were received by the administrators, teachers, and specialist team members with great satisfaction. Scores for Grade 3 students rose from a low of 38% passing in spring 2001, to a high of 59%

passing in spring 2002. Scores for Grade 5 students continued the upward trend first observed in spring 2001 when they moved from their former high of 48% passing to a new high of 51% passing in spring 2002. The Table 4.3 shows the changes in the percent of passing scores from spring 1999 until spring 2002.

Table 4.3

Standards of Learning Grades 3 and 5 Commonwealth ES English Standards Results - Spring 1999–Spring 2002

| | Spring 1999 | Spring 2000 | Spring 2001 | Spring 2002^a |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| English, Grade 3 | 49.1 % | 44.4% | 37.8% | 59.0% |
| English, Grade 5 | 43.1% | 37.7% | 47.9% | 50.7% |

^aAYP: Annual Measurable Objective for Reading and Language Arts in order to make AYP was 60.7 (VDOE, 2011, p. 4). This was the first year for official AMO ratings.

The specialist team began conversations about presenting the results of the work at Commonwealth ES at a professional conference. Ms. Towson, Ms. DuBois, Ms. Meisel, Ms. Norton, and I wrote and submitted a proposal to the International Reading Association for the 48th Annual IRA Conference to be held in May 2003 in Orlando, Florida. Our plan was to invite the Commonwealth ES teachers to be a part of the presentation team if the proposal were accepted. In fall 2002, we were notified that our proposal, *Toward a Balanced Literacy Program: Making a Difference through Job-Embedded Staff Development*, was accepted. As authors, we spent most of the 2002–2003 school year working as a team to develop the conference presentation. The program description for the conference catalogue read:

This symposium will describe a two-year job-embedded staff development initiative in a high poverty, ethnically diverse elementary school in a large metropolitan school district. Presenters will explain how collaboration and staff development moved the school’s instructional focus away from a commercially scripted program (Success for All) to a balanced literacy program employing best practice (International Reading Association, 2003, pp. 104-105).

End of year 2001–2002 teacher turnover data

Teacher turnover at Commonwealth ES at the end of 2002 fell to a rate of 22.7%, down from 48.8% the previous spring. The district’s turnover rate at the end of 2002 was 19.9% and

the cluster's rate was 23.4%. Although Ms. DuBois had not mentioned teacher turnover as a challenge, these data indicate that it was a major challenge. However, with respect to the issue of teacher turnover, one wants the change to favor teachers who interact effectively within a school environment.

The 2002–2003 School Year

Two new resources

Shortly before school began in fall 2002, Ms. DuBois hired the second reading specialist for Commonwealth ES. Veronica Smart was an experienced reading specialist who had been reassigned from another district elementary school. She brought a depth of experience and a low-key demeanor to the position that complemented Ms. Norton's youthful exuberance.

Ms. DuBois decided to expand the size of the Reading Recovery program (Reading Recovery Council of North America, July 2010) staff that had existed since fall 2002 in the person of one teacher as part of the early primary-grade instructional program. As part of accepting the reading position, Ms. Smart agreed to become trained in Reading Recovery over the course of the 2002-2003 school year. She also agreed to be part of the IRA conference presentation team.

Ms. DuBois knew that the goal of Reading Recovery is to reduce the number of first grade students in a school who experience extreme difficulty learning to read and write (Reading Recovery Council of North America, July 2010). She was also familiar with the research that showed that Reading Recovery is a highly effective short-term intervention of one-to-one tutoring for many low-achieving first graders. It is most effective when it is available to all students who need it and is used as a supplement to effective classroom teaching (Reading Recovery Council of North America, July 2010). Reading Recovery serves some of the lowest-achieving first graders in a school—the students who are not catching on to the complex set of concepts that make reading and writing possible.

This group of first grade students would be Ms. Smart's main responsibility at Commonwealth ES. She would provide individual students a half-hour lesson each school day for 12 to 20 weeks. As soon as those students were able to meet grade-level expectations and demonstrate that they could continue to work independently in the classroom, the students would "graduate," and new students would begin individual instruction. One Reading Recovery teacher would be able to serve eight students during the course of one school year. It should be noted

here that when a student was deemed as not making progress, (s)he could be recommended to be discontinued from the program.

Ms. DuBois was planning for two positive outcomes for the Commonwealth ES students. That is, she was expecting to see gains in Commonwealth ES students similar to those reported in the literature:

Since 1984 when Reading Recovery began in the United States, approximately 75% of students who complete the full 12- to 20-week intervention meet grade-level expectations in reading and writing. Follow-up studies indicate that most Reading Recovery students also do well on standardized tests and maintain their gains in later years (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2010).

Given the success of Reading Recovery as reported in the literature, Ms. DuBois expected that the numbers of students referred to special education services would be reduced substantially.

In fall 2002, the two Commonwealth ES reading specialists worked as a team, splitting the reading responsibilities for the school between them. Ms. Smart began the year working with the early primary grade teachers. The fall of 2002 was the beginning of the transition for kindergarten teachers away from SFA and toward a balanced literacy program. Together with Othella Clarette, the fourth returning member of the specialist team, Ms. Smart worked with the kindergarten teachers, helping them to implement guided reading as part of their all-day kindergarten program.

Commonwealth ES's kindergarten program had been changed from a half-day to a full-day program several years earlier, along with other high poverty, low-achieving elementary schools at the direction of the district superintendent and the school board. This change was made in an effort to increase access to instructional time for the diverse student population at the school (C. DuBois, telephone interview, July 12, 2010). The district leaders based this decision on a growing body of research that indicated that students in schools like Commonwealth ES responded positively when provided with increased instructional time (e.g., Allington, 2002; 2005; Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Fisher, 1998; Neuman, 2009; Newman, Celano, Greco, & Shue, 2001; Strickland & Alvermann, 2004).

Ms. Smart also worked with individual students from Grade 1 delivering Reading Recovery services. She joined one of the first grade classroom teachers at Commonwealth ES who had been doing Reading Recovery for several years. As planned by Ms. DuBois, this expanded the Reading Recovery services in the building by 100%. Ms. Smart and Ms. Clarette

supported the first grade teachers, helping them to implement routines and procedures, shared reading, and guided reading in their classrooms (M. Norton, interview, May 8, 2010; V. Smart, interview, May 11, 2008).

Ms. Norton, Ms. Towson, and I worked together that fall to support the Grade 3, 4, 5, and 6 classroom teachers. This was our second year of work with Grades 3 and 5, and our first year with Grades 4 and 6. This also marked the year when the sixth grade teachers ended SFA and began to implement balanced literacy in their classrooms (Historical notes, fall 2002).

In-service session

Our focus for all of the teachers was on the development of reflective practice with links to the research on job-embedded staff development (Joyce & Showers, 1995; 2002). We felt that the teachers now had enough background knowledge of pedagogy and content in order to engage in reflection on their own practice and to become agents of change for themselves. To support reflection during the 2002–2003 school year, we asked teachers to use a set of guiding questions as they reflected on their instruction. The specialist team members, the reading specialists, and the school administrators wrote the questions:

- What are your students' strengths?
- What are the areas where improvement is needed?
- What are you doing to improve those areas needing improvement?
- Is what you're doing working?
- What do we need to do most to help students improve?
- As you review the list of things we need to start doing, what are the things you think we need to prioritize for the rest of the school year?
- What do we need to work on next year? (Staff Development Reflections, collected document, 2002).

The administrators, reading specialists, and specialist team invited teachers' input to set language arts priorities and determine next steps for their own staff development. We focused the discussions around a set of questions developed by the specialist team, the reading specialists, and the administrators, that included:

- How do you currently organize your language arts time?
- What are the barriers to introducing reading/writing workshop in your classroom?

- What is already in place at Commonwealth ES that would support the implementation of reading/writing workshop in your classroom?
- What is something you will try in your classroom?
- What will you do differently?
- What additional information do you need?
- What insights do you have? (Organizational Discussions, collected document, summer 2002; *Commonwealth Elementary Professional Academic Center, Balanced Literacy & Guided Reading, Reflections and Evaluations*, collected document, summer 2002).

While identifying priorities for the 2002–2003 school year, teachers identified key concerns and needs that included classroom environment, the wide range of instructional needs in each classroom, scheduling long, uninterrupted instructional blocks of time, record-keeping, time to plan for instruction with their entire grade-level team, and co-planning and co-teaching with resource teachers (Historical notes, 2002–2003). For a comprehensive list of the teachers' concerns, refer to Appendix H.

Notably, when discussing their needs and concerns, the teachers used language that commonly appears in the pedagogical literature. Further, they were clearly articulating necessary next steps in their learning. This was an important shift for the teachers away from their former stance of “Just tell me what to do, and I’ll do it.”

Teachers also offered many comments that reflected a sense of optimism and an appreciation for the knowledge within the Commonwealth ES school community. Examples from their written feedback include:

This in-service was excellent. We need to have more sharing at our staff developments. In this building we have excellent teachers with awesome ideas! We can learn from each other.

We need to have more meetings like we did today.

We have a lot of talent here! More professional development within the building. Teachers get to hear about what’s going on “at home.”

It would be nice to observe experienced teachers in our own school rather than go to other schools to observe. Staying in our own school allows for better collaboration after the observation. (“Commonwealth Elementary Professional Academic Center, Balanced Literacy & Guided Reading, Reflections and Evaluation,” collected document, Summer 2002).

In summer 2002, in response to the teacher requests for more in-house staff development, the specialist team had serious conversations about what direction to take in the fall. We wanted to be responsive to the teachers' requests. We believed that this marked a critical time for the teachers. Instead of sitting passively when asked for input as they had done on previous occasions, teachers made it clear that they wished to learn from each other through verbal sharing, visitation, and the like. Despite some reservations by the specialist team that the teachers might not be ready to totally meet their professional needs in house, we worked to identify knowledgeable teachers at Commonwealth ES.

Gary Olsen, one of the fourth-grade teachers, and Alice Callahan, one of the fifth-grade teachers, had been very receptive to working with Ms. Norton inside their classrooms during spring 2002. We knew that they had visited classrooms in other schools and had redesigned their classroom environments to support the implementation of balanced literacy. So, we asked Mr. Olsen and Ms. Callahan to set up their classrooms the week prior to the return of the other teachers to school. Ms. DuBois paid Mr. Olsen and Ms. Callahan for the time they spent preparing their classrooms. They hosted an open house in their classrooms for all of the upper-grade teachers during the week before the students returned to school and prior to setting up their own classrooms. When the teachers attended the open house, Mr. Olsen and Ms. Callahan gave the teachers guided tours of their classrooms, explaining their thinking behind each part of the classroom environment, and how they had created the environment to support the implementation of balanced literacy. (Historical notes, fall 2002; M. Norton, interview, May 8, 2010)

Establishment of collaborative working relationships

Ms. DuBois, Ms. Meisel, Ms. Norton, Ms. Smart, Ms. Towson, Ms. Clarette, and I discussed the opportunity to move toward a more collaborative working relationship with the teachers in light of their expressions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) with respect to their ongoing professional growth. Our goal was to grow a school culture at Commonwealth ES based on interaction—one that rested on good communication across grade levels, among teachers, and between administrators and teachers. Toward these ends, Ms. Norton and Ms. Smart spent much of their time getting to know the teachers and developing close working relationships with them (Historical notes, fall 2002). Our increased efforts on collaboration were

a marked change for our staff development which heretofore had been planned and led by the support personnel with teachers preferring a more passive role.

In an interview, Ms. Norton described how she identified the teacher leaders in the building by watching to see whose voices were listened to the most, i.e., who had the most influence on other teachers (M. Norton, interview, May 8, 2010). She identified two experienced teachers on the staff in this way. She identified one additional teacher as a result of a “heads-up” given to her by Ms. Meisel, the assistant principal, when she was first hired to “watch out” for one certain teacher because she was a strong influence on the other teachers.

Ms. Norton invited the three identified leaders to join her for regular lunch conversations during which she asked them for their observations and recommendations for direction for the language arts staff development. She also invited them to become members of the newly formed Language Arts Committee, and all three accepted (M. Norton, interview, May 8, 2010).

Grade-level teams

The specialist team members, reading specialists, and administrators met with each grade-level team from one to three times per month, depending on the team’s willingness to meet more than once a month and the nature of their team’s identified professional development objective. The more challenging the objective, the more times we met in any given month (Little, 1993).

After initial organizational discussions, each grade-level team set a professional development objective for the 2002–2003 school year. The overarching objective for the whole school, which was determined by the school leadership and specialist teams, was the establishment of reading and writing workshops as part of a balanced literacy program. Grade-level team objectives focused on specific aspects of the balanced literacy program including establishing guidelines for reading workshop, assessing readers to determine specific instructional objectives, conducting reading conferences as sources of ongoing assessment information, creating and administering benchmark assessments to inform instruction, and implementing specific components of reading workshop (e.g., guided reading, shared reading) (Historical notes, fall 2002).

The teachers began their work with staff development focused on building a reading classroom (*Building a Reading Classroom*, collected document, fall 2002). The document,

created by the specialist team and the reading specialists and coaches, outlines the work that teachers focused on at the time. Teachers were encouraged to assume the following roles:

- architect (making the plan—studying the district program of studies and putting that information together with their identification of instructional objectives as determined by assessment);
- construction supervisor (building the readers - defining clear expectations, setting consequences, establishing consistent routines, knowing the students, providing scaffolds for learning, and explicitly instructing students informed by assessment at a reasonable pace); and
- building inspector (assessing progress via informal and formal assessments that were on-going) (Historical notes, Fall 2002).

The teachers' reactions were a mixture of uncertainty about what they were expected to do and expectations of more specific guidance from the literacy leaders.

As part of the grade-level team work, teachers were asked by the administrators, specialist team, reading specialists, and coaches to participate in Teachers as Readers (TAR) study groups. These were formal study groups that were teacher-led. Each group determined the protocol for participation that they would follow throughout the tenure of the group. Teachers read and discussed articles and books identified by the specialist team members and reading specialists. One such professional book that was used by the upper-grade teachers was *Guiding Readers and Writers in Grades 3–6* by Fountas and Pinell (2001). It was one of a number of resources intended to serve as comprehensive tools that provided explicit reading instruction based on assessment, establishing routines and procedures, creating literate classroom environments, monitoring student progress, and implementing specific instructional components, including guided reading and literature study (Historical notes, fall 2002).

As part of TAR, teacher groups agreed to the following:

- select the part of the book they would read for the next meeting;
- arrive prepared to each meeting having completed the agreed-upon assignment;
- try something in their classroom from their reading; and
- come prepared to share how it went; and to actively participate in each TAR discussion.

These conditions were determined by the specialist team and the reading specialists. The specialist team members and the reading specialists also identified all readings for the TAR meetings and facilitated each meeting. At least one of the school administrators attended each grade-level team TAR meeting.

The tenor of these meetings was generally positive. Most of the teachers came prepared with their reading completed. Some of the teachers readily discussed what they had tried and shared how it had gone. They limited themselves to sharing positive experiences only. Rarely did one of the participants discuss something they had tried that had not worked well. There were times when the discussions flagged, and the facilitators needed to use their skills as group leaders to regenerate discussion or redirect discussion to the reading for that meeting (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

During 2002–2003, Ms. DuBois built an infrastructure by initiating double-block planning periods for all of the teaching staff. Her intention was that every grade-level team would have a lengthy, uninterrupted block of time to plan together. Thus, she worked a schedule displayed in Table 4.4 to allow for this time.

Table 4.4
Commonwealth ES Grade Level Planning Blocks 2002–2003

| Grade | Meeting Day | Meeting Time |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2 | Friday | 11:30 am to 12:50 pm |
| 3 | Thursday | 10:10 am to 11:30 am |
| 4 | Monday | 9:25 am to 10:50 am |
| 5 | Tuesday | 9:25 am to 10:50 am |
| 6 | Thursday | 8:45 am to 10:00 am |

(Historical notes, 2002–2003)

One of the first uses the fourth- and fifth-grade level teams made of their double-planning periods was to work with Dr. Ursula Deville, cluster director, on the creation of curriculum maps (Hale & Dunlap, 2010) for their grade levels. Dr. Deville began by working with the teachers to

refine their understanding of how to use a curriculum map. Teachers in Grades 4 and 5 focused on both content and testwiseness objectives for inclusion in their maps. Part of their work included analyzing data reports on the State Standards Test of Student Performance by item. During the course of this analysis, the teachers asked for Commonwealth ES data on which items a majority of the students answered incorrectly. They also requested reports that identified the answers that students actually chose as incorrect responses. Ms. Towson, member of the specialist team, and I regularly joined each grade-level team during this analytical work (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

Teachers in Grade 3 used their double planning block to learn how to administer, score, and analyze results for the Developmental Reading Assessment. Teachers in Grades 1 and 2 had been using the DRA since 1999 and 2000 respectively. They used the data to inform their instructional objectives, group students for instruction, and match students with appropriate text. The objective of administrators, reading specialists, and coaches in 2002–2003 was to extend this common assessment and practice to Grade 3, with plans to eventually extend its use to Grades 4, 5, and 6. Ms. Towson and I worked with the Grade 3 team assisting teachers in establishing instruments, procedures, and instruction deemed necessary for students to successfully complete the DRA. For instance, student book logs were established in every classroom. In addition, we focused on procedures to follow for the use of the book logs, the purpose and use of the DRA Student Survey, and the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. We asked Grade 3 teachers to administer the DRA to all of their students who were reading below grade-level expectations, based upon teachers' analysis of available data as well as their own professional judgment. Typically, one of the administrators also attended the Grade 3 DRA training sessions (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

Teachers in Grade 6 worked with Ms. Towson, at least one administrator, and me during their grade-level team meetings, to analyze the released SOL test items from spring 2002. The objective was to identify skills and strategies that the students needed to master and to identify teaching resources for the teachers to use during this instruction.

At the end of 2002–2003, the teachers, as a staff, decided that their work plans for the next year (2003–2004) would also include the development of systems for collecting assessment data from their students. They concluded that teachers at Commonwealth ES needed an

organizational system for assessment data. Before this, they had all been either using their own organizational systems or not using any system at all (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

Summary of the 2002–2003 school year

During the 2002–2003 school year, the specialist team took its first steps toward a gradual release of responsibility (Fisher & Frey, 2008). By this I mean that, up until 2002–2003, all major decisions about staff development were made by the specialist team and the school administrators, based on their analysis and interpretation of data that included, but were not limited to, student achievement scores, teacher turnover, classroom observations, school-wide observations, and grade-level team observations. At the beginning of the 2002–2003 school year, the specialist team had focused on building collaboration into their work with the teachers by consciously soliciting teacher input for the staff development work that occurred at Commonwealth ES.

The breakthrough for this work came as a result of putting in place scaffolds for the teachers in the form of guiding questions. Instead of broadly soliciting teacher input as had been done previously, the specialist team asked teachers sets of questions related to next possible steps. This change appeared to enable the teachers to speak more substantively about what they needed from the staff development and how they would go about addressing those needs. The teachers appeared secure in their professional knowledge when asked to answer specific questions about a particular issue based on their personal experience (e.g., what are the barriers to implementing reading/writing workshop in your classroom?). The specialist team crafted subsequent questions to serve as guides for identifying specific next steps (e.g., what is something you will try? What is something you will do differently? What additional information do you need?). The result was that the teachers designed their own plans for next steps for themselves, basing those next steps on what they had learned as a result of their earlier school visits to other classrooms, their collaborative work in their classrooms with the reading specialists and the specialist team, their grade-level team meeting discussions, and the TAR group reading and discussions (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

This gradual release of responsibility was extended when, at the teachers' specific request, the specialist team honored the teachers' expressed wishes to learn from each other by, for example, inviting teachers to offer tours of their classrooms. This was the second of a growing number of occasions (the first was the bookroom leveling work) when teachers were

validated as professionals by the principal by being paid for their time and contributions. Teachers' growing sense of efficacy and positive feelings about the staff and the school were evident in their comments such as, "In this building we have excellent teachers with awesome ideas. We can learn from each other!" (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

For the teachers' part, 2002–2003 was still marked by passivity on the part of some teachers, although their numbers were decreasing. Some of the staff engaged in passive aggression (not reading TAR assignments, not implementing try-outs in classrooms, not participating in grade-level team discussions). Several continued to say, "just tell me what to do and I'll do it." A few expressed silent resentment. But a growing majority of the teachers engaged actively in making change (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

Despite the sharing of responsibility by an increasing number of teachers, 2002–2003 was still marked by some top-down decisions made by the specialist team and the administrators. These included decisions about who conducted the staff development, what was read by teachers, and who facilitated the grade-level teams. We were neither willing nor able to give up complete control. We began to understand the meaning of "gradual" in "gradual release of responsibility." In our view, the teachers were operating within a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning that occurs in the ZPD depends upon full social interaction and with the guidance of or collaboration with a knowledgeable other. During 2002–2003, the entire Commonwealth ES community engaged in the creation of an interactive environment, supportive scaffolds, and the side-by-side collaboration, gradually transferring responsibility for learning and growth from the specialist team and administrators to the teaching staff (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

As part of this move toward a more collaborative working relationship among the staff, Ms. DuBois, in concert with the Commonwealth ES literacy team, the Title I Office, and the entire Commonwealth ES instructional staff, began to explore a K–2 version of the Literacy Collaborative[®] model (Literacy Collaborative[®], Inc., 2011). Literacy Collaborative[®] (LC) is a comprehensive school improvement program designed to improve the reading and writing achievement of students in pre-K through eighth grade. It is the creation of collaboration between faculty at the Ohio State University and Lesley College in Boston, Massachusetts. Schools that implement LC are required to implement a specifically defined set of features. These include:

- The expectation that schools be student-centered and emphasize language development and student talk as the foundation for reading and writing. Instruction addresses the components of literacy deemed essential by the program's initiators. These include phonics and phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and student motivation.
- A well-trained school-based literacy coach who provides professional development and in-class coaching to other teachers in the school.
- A school leadership team that supports and facilitates the school improvement process. *Parent involvement* is a critical emphasis in all LC schools.
- Through professional LC development and coaching, teachers *differentiate instruction* to meet the needs of each student (Historical notes, 2003).

During an interview with Ms. DuBois, she talked about the reasons LC was implemented at Commonwealth ES:

Title I had done a workshop with principals [about Literacy Collaborative] and we went to that. And it really looked like our model. And then they provided us with a coach. And so then after their presentation for principals, there was a workshop where you could bring teachers. And so then I ended up taking some teachers so we did the exploration of it, you know. Learned about it and what it meant, and so then we basically came back and shared with the staff and talked about it. (C. DuBois, interview, September 25, 2009)

Ms. DuBois described the reaction of the Commonwealth ES teachers to the idea of implementing LC:

I think our teachers may have [first] gone and seen it at Cherry Tree ES [another district Title I school that had already implemented LC]...based on that [visit] ... and a presentation for the staff [by the Title I LC District Trainer]. ..[at which] teachers from the other [school] and they came along, so we had a chance to ask questions. The way we ... [presented] it was that we're already doing most of this, and this will give us an opportunity for the coach. And so that's how we started and then I really, I think because we were in Literacy Collaborative we had always wanted professional development for the administrators and there were things that were required. One of the things we ended up as principals going to Ohio State for 5 or 6 days. The first time was 2 days, the second time was 2 days and then the third time. We had to go three times to Ohio State...(C. DuBois, interview, September 25, 2009).

The LC comprehensive instructional framework for all students in Grades K–2 would include *guided reading*, *writing workshop*, and *language and word study*. The LC instructional model was deemed by the Title I office, the director of elementary instruction for the district, the

district's language arts coordinator, and the Commonwealth ES administrators and literacy team to be philosophically compatible with the district's expectation of schools that are student-centered and emphasize language development and student talk as the foundation for reading and writing. Instruction addresses the essential components of literacy, including phonics and phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, and student motivation. The rest of the teaching staff was informed of this decision at the end of the 2002–2003 school year, including the following specific information.

- Ms. DuBois chose Lee Green, one of Commonwealth ES's most experienced first grade classroom and Reading Recovery teachers, to become the Primary LC teacher coach. Mrs. Green would receive her coach training at the Ohio State University, and ongoing support and professional development from the district throughout the 2003–2004 training year.
- The school administrators, as learners themselves, would receive professional development at the Ohio State University for a total of six days per year.
- A school leadership team would support and facilitate the school improvement process. Also in keeping with district expectations, the team would analyze student achievement data, monitor program implementation, evaluate program results, and communicate with parents, the school district, and other stakeholders including parents whose involvement is a critical emphasis in all LC and Title I schools.
(Commonwealth ES was already a Title I school and would become an LC school.)
- Through professional LC development and coaching, teachers would learn to *differentiate instruction* to meet the needs of each student. This was another way in which the LC model and the district expectations were the same. Teachers would learn to deliver the core instructional framework (Tier 1) which is designed for all students in the class, as well as small group and individual interventions (Tiers 2 and 3) which are provided for students who are struggling with school based reading and writing. Like many LC schools, Commonwealth ES also provided Reading Recovery as an intensive intervention for identified first graders (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2010) (Historical notes, 2003).

The teacher turnover rate for the 2002–2003 school year at Commonwealth ES was 37.5%, up from 22.7% the spring before. The turnover rate for the district was 20.0%, up from

19.9%, and for the cluster it was 24.1%, up from 23.4%. Although the turnover rate was higher than the year before at all three levels (school, cluster, and district), it was highest at the school level for Commonwealth ES.

Our analysis of the student achievement scores for the 2002–2003 school year marked the beginning of our identification of patterns that would continue into 2009. After showing an increase over the previous two school years, the scores on the state standards tests for both Grades 3 and 5 students showed declines. At the end of 2003, 45.9% of Grade 3 students, passed the English state standards test (down from 59% the previous year). Forty-five percent of Grade 5 students passed the English test (down from 51% the previous year).

Table 4.5
Standards of Learning Results Commonwealth ES Grades 3 and 5 Students Percent Passing Spring, 1999–Spring, 2003

| | Spring 1999 | Spring 2000 | Spring 2001 | Spring 2002 | Spring,^a 2003 |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| English, Grade 3 | 49.1 % | 44.4% | 37.8% | 56.0% | 45.9% |
| English, Grade 5 | 43.1% | 37.7% | 47.9% | 47.8% | 45.4% |

^aAYP: Annual Measurable Objective for Reading and Language Arts in order to make AYP was rated at 61% (“State” Department of Education, 2010–2011, p. 4)

These results came as a blow to the teachers, administrators, and specialist team members. Many ended the 2002–2003 school year wondering what had happened. Two additional disappointments included the departures of Ms. Smart and Ms. Meisel from Commonwealth ES. For personal reasons, Ms. Smart’s family made the decision to leave the state and return to their original home in the Midwest. Ms. Meisel lobbied for and was rewarded with the principalship of a school. She left Commonwealth ES to become the principal at Northeast ES, a nearby school in the district (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

During the summer of 2003, the administrators, staff, and specialist team celebrated the hiring of Harriet Truth as the second reading specialist to replace the departing Ms. Smart, and Ms. Towson (a member of the specialist team) as the new assistant principal to replace Ms.

Meisel. Maura Sullivan replaced Ms. Towson as a member of the specialist team which by then included two members (Historical notes, 2002–2003).

The 2003–2006 School Years

In response to teachers' requests at the end of the 2002–2003 school year, and in keeping with the school plan to establish a systematic data collection and analysis system, the first staff development session in August 2003 was devoted to assessment. Priscilla Brooks, a Grade 3 classroom teacher, and Gary Olsen, a Grade 5 classroom teacher, shared their organizational systems for assessment data with the rest of the staff. Teachers asked questions and then shared their own organizational system ideas with one another. I shared additional organizational systems that I had observed being used by classroom teachers in other elementary schools with whom I worked (Historical notes, 2003–2004).

Ms. Norton and Ms. Truth, the school's reading specialists, presented information about the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. The professional resource they used with the teachers was *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

Ms. Green and Ms. DuBois reviewed with the staff the specific objectives of the LC that would begin during the 2003–2004 school year following Ms. Green's participation in a year-long professional development training for LC coaches (Historical notes, 2003–2004; Telephone conversation with Ms. DuBois, March 11, 2011).

Ms. Towson, Ms. Norton, Ms. Truth, Ms. Green, Ms. Sullivan, and I facilitated the teachers of Grades 1 through 3 as they analyzed students' DRA scores from Spring 2003 to determine instructional needs during fall 2003. We identified the following areas of need: monitoring for meaning, reading "just right books," wider reading across more genres, and higher level comprehension strategies, including inferring and retelling (Grades 1, 2, 3) or summarizing (Grade 3). In addition, teachers identified the need to increase student motivation to perform at their highest level when taking the DRA (Historical notes, 2003–2004).

Ms. Norton, Ms. Truth, Ms. Sullivan, and I began work with Grades 4, 5, and 6 and continued work with Grade 3 on DRA administration, scoring, and analysis. Teachers administered the DRA to all of their students who were not meeting grade-level expectation.

This DRA professional development continued throughout all of the 2003–2004 school year (Historical notes, 2003–2004).

By the end of the 2003–2004 school year, Ms. Green completed her training as the LC coach. During the 2004–2005 school year, she taught the first year-long reading course to Commonwealth ES classroom teachers in Grades K–2, reading specialists, and administrators after school hours. During this course, participants read about, discussed, and implemented LC teaching practices, and gathered assessment data throughout the school year in order to analyze changes in student achievement (Historical notes, 2004–2005).

During this same time period, Ms. DuBois used Title I funds to hire Jean Patterson, an independent educational consultant who had formerly worked for the district as a reading specialist. Ms. Patterson’s role was to focus on writing instruction with the classroom teachers. On the first of four designated professional development days, Ms. Patterson met for half the day with the K–2 teachers and half the day with the Grades 3–6 teachers to begin planning for the implementation of writing workshops in all classrooms. Ms. Patterson met with each group three more times for a half day each time to continue to develop the teachers’ knowledge about writing instruction and to assist them as they put the components of writing workshop in place in each of their classroom environments (Historical notes 2004–2005).

The classroom teachers were supported on a daily basis throughout the 2004–2005 school year by Ms. Green, Ms. Norton, Ms. Truth, Ms. Sullivan, and me as we continued to work with all of the grade-level teams. C. DuBois and Ms. Towson attended all CLT sessions and played key roles in planning, monitoring, and providing resources throughout the LC and CLT implementation year. This included guiding and monitoring the teachers as they once again began the year with lessons from the *First Twenty Days* (Fountas & Pinell, 2001) in a research-based effort to begin the school year with well-established management and procedures that should support effective teaching and learning throughout the school year (Historical notes, 2004–2005).

During the 2004–2005 school year, the administrators, the reading specialists, and the specialist team established specific DRA testing windows with input from the teachers. Team testing procedures were established so that testing could be completed as efficiently as possible. Testing teams included each classroom teacher, a reading specialist, an ESOL teacher, and a special education teacher who worked in each classroom over the course of two to three

language arts blocks to complete the DRA assessments on all students in each class. A schedule was created to allow resource teachers to move from classroom to classroom at each grade level to expedite the assessment process.

On February 23rd, March 2nd, and March 3rd, 2005, Commonwealth ES staff and staff from the Office of Elementary Instruction collaboratively conducted an instructional walkthrough (Protheroe, 2009) at the school. This walkthrough was precipitated by the drop in state standards test scores at the school the previous spring and was requested by the school and the district's leadership team (Historical notes, 2005).

During the walkthrough, Commonwealth ES teachers were paired by the Commonwealth ES administrators and the district's Standards of Learning (SOL) coordinator with language arts, ESOL, and special education specialists from the central office to form observation teams. Staff members, Ms. Gregorovich and Ms. Smith of the Instructional Services SOL Office, trained all Commonwealth ES staff members and administrators on the district criteria that would be used during the walkthrough. They focused on what to "look for" in the classrooms during each observation; the use of a coding instrument to record observations; and the procedures that would be followed during the three days of the walkthrough (see Appendix D). Common definitions for all criteria were shared with all of the observers, administrators, and school staff (Historical notes, 2004–2005).

Upon completion of the walkthrough, results were shared by Ms. Gregorovich with the area assistant superintendent, director, and the Commonwealth ES administrators in a private meeting on March 28th. Results were also shared with the Commonwealth ES support team on April 5th and then with all of the teachers at a staff meeting on April 15th.

During the walkthrough, 174 fifteen-minute observations were conducted at Commonwealth ES. All observations were conducted by two or more persons. All observations were done during language arts instruction—111 during reading instruction and 63 during writing instruction. Table 4.6 illustrates the number of observations by grade level and the content of the observation.

Table 4.6***Commonwealth ES 2005 Number of Walkthrough Observations by Grade***

| Grade | Reading | Writing |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Kindergarten | 12 | 6 |
| 1 st | 21 | 4 |
| 2 nd | 18 | 13 |
| 3 rd | 22 | 8 |
| 4 th | 16 | 12 |
| 5 th | 5 | 16 |
| 6 th | 17 | 4 |

Ms. Gregorivich began by sharing the results of the walkthrough identified as areas of strength. To be defined as an area of strength, a majority (50% or higher) of the observers had to report seeing the use of the technique or strategy (a “yes” or “high” rating) during the observation period.

The majority of the walkthrough observers saw evidence of strength in the following areas:

- Utilization of the Program of Studies (POS)
 - Lesson aligned with POS
 - Lesson focused on objective(s)
 - Instructional content accurate
 - Focus lesson on POS/SOL essential knowledge and skills
- Direct instruction with small group (reading only)
- Instructional time
 - Maintained an academic focus
 - Managed routines efficiently
 - High level of student engagement
 - High expectations of students
- Assessment strategies/techniques
 - Monitored students’ understanding of objective
- Differentiation of instruction

- Matched content to student need
- Instructional Techniques/Student Activities
 - Acted as coach/facilitator (writing)
 - Used writer’s workshop/writing conferences
 - Asked students to justify thinking (reading)
 - Used graphic organizers (writing)
- Strategies for implementation of Balanced Literacy
 - Chose text that invited reading, discussion, and extension of knowledge (reading)
 - Read/wrote for authentic purpose
 - Sustained reading/writing
 - Used guided reading

During the walkthrough, the observers found inconsistent evidence of the practices listed below. These were identified as areas in need of further exploration. While the practices were in place in some classrooms, the observers felt that focusing on the following practices would improve instruction and move it to a higher level of effectiveness:

- Assessment strategies/techniques
 - Include assessment items similar to SOL test items
 - Use a variety of assessment methods
- Instructional techniques/student activities
 - Use “thinking aloud” to demonstrate how to arrive at a solution
 - Encourage students to explore a variety of interpretations and analyze, generate, and/or test hypotheses
 - Identify similarities and differences
 - Use summarizing and/or note taking
- Questioning techniques
 - Provide higher-level feedback
 - Use higher-level questioning techniques
 - Challenge students to think deeply
 - Ask students to justify thinking

I attended the March 28th meeting along with Ms. DuBois, principal of Commonwealth ES, Ms. Towson, assistant principal, Ms. Sullivan, member of the specialist team, Dr. Veda Crowne, cluster assistant superintendent, Dr. Ursula Deville, cluster director, Gloria James,

district director of elementary education, and Ms. Gregorovich, district SOL coordinator. Ms. Gregorovich presented a brief overview of the summary document. The presentation was followed by a discussion of three questions:

- Why was 50% chosen as the cut-point for strength/area in need of further discussion?
- What does it mean when someone marked “inconsistently observed”?
- How much can be observed in 15 minutes versus 30 minutes versus the entire class period?

The group determined that next steps would include meeting with the Commonwealth ES support team to plan how to share the data with the entire staff and then meeting with the entire staff to share the data and gather their input. The overwhelming consensus of the group was that the instruction happening at Commonwealth ES was of high quality, and that there were no glaring instructional deficiencies that needed to be addressed. In addition, the group agreed that management and procedures at both the classroom and the school levels were well-implemented and that there was nothing going on in these two areas that would negatively affect student learning (Historical notes, spring 2005). In fact, the results were so positive that I began regularly recommending Commonwealth ES to principals, classroom teachers, and reading specialists who contacted me asking for the names of schools and teachers who had excellent reading and writing workshops in place that they and their teachers might visit (Historical notes, spring 2005).

On April 5th, the Commonwealth ES support team met. Those in attendance included: Ms. Dubois, Ms. Towson, Ms. Mead, Ms. Davis, Ms. Sullivan, Ms. Green, Ms. Norton, Ms. Truth, Ms. Jolie, Ms. James, and Ms. Gregorovich. The group began by looking at the data and focused on three questions:

- When you think about what Commonwealth ES believes about reading and writing instruction, what do you see in the data that supports these beliefs?
- What do you see that surprises you?
- What do you see that concerns you?

The group then focused on planning the presentation to the whole Commonwealth ES staff on April 15th. They developed the outline that they would follow at the presentation. Members of the group agreed that the presentation to the staff would begin with comments and

congratulations for all of the very positive practices that the walkthrough documented. They would then discuss moving from “good to great,” by working on more sophisticated aspects of pedagogy such as higher levels of differentiation, integrating content across subject areas, using assessments to ensure greater flexibility in student grouping, and folding testwiseness information into everyday instruction to enable improved SOL student performance based on knowledge of test format rather than test content (Historical notes, spring 2005).

Following a staff breakfast to which Ms. DuBois invited the instructional services and special services support staff, the presentation began with an overview of the documents and the positive pieces of the walkthrough summary followed by a group discussion during which Ms. Gregorovich guided the teachers in examining the data to answer focal questions. Discussion addressed the following questions:

- When you reflect on what the staff at Commonwealth ES believes about good reading and writing instruction, what do you see in the data that supports those beliefs?
- When you reflect on those beliefs, what do you see that surprises you?
- When you reflect on those beliefs, what do you see that concerns you?

Grade level groups discussed the questions and recorded their discussion on posters. After each discussion, a spokesperson for each group shared with the large group. Ms. DuBois then talked with the staff about next steps. Ms. Towson gathered all of the posters, summarized all the data, and shared it with the staff at a later meeting (Historical notes, 2005).

Identification of next steps

As a result of the discussion of the areas of concern, the administrators and staff set the following grade-level professional development objectives at the following CLT meeting.

- Returning teachers in Grades 4, 5, and 6 would read *Still Learning to Read*: (Stenhouse, 2003) and *Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science, and Math* (Scholastic, 2003) within the context of grade-level TAR study groups. Their objective would be to integrate language arts strategy instruction with content area reading. A professional development session for all teachers in Grades 4–6 would be planned and delivered by the reading specialists, the specialist team members, and classroom teachers.

- New teachers in Grades 4–6 would read *Expanding Expectations: Reading* (District “A,” 1996a) and *Expanding Expectations: Writing* (District “A,” 1996b) within the context of grade-level TAR study groups. Their objective would be to implement reading and writing workshops in their classrooms based upon the district expectations described in the two books from the *Expanding Expectations* series written for teachers in Grades 4–6. This would be in keeping with the workshops that had already been implemented in all of the returning teachers’ classrooms over the prior two years.
- All teachers would create assessment binders with a separate section for each student in their class where they would collect all assessment data for later analysis. Teachers were encouraged to refer to the District “A” documents, *Primary Purposes: Assessing* (1995a) and *Expanding Expectations: Assessing* (2002).
- Ms. DuBois, in concert with the cluster administrators and the Title I office, decided that Title I funds would be used during the 2005–2006 school year to hire Sherry Wood, a national consultant in the area of collaborative learning teams, to work with Commonwealth ES teachers to refine the operation of their monthly CLT meetings, as well as to focus on research in the area of increasing student motivation.
- Ms. DuBois promoted Meredith Jolie from classroom teacher to instructional coach for Commonwealth ES. Ms. Jolie would work with the CLT teams and individual teachers to support professional development and data analysis. She would receive weekly coach training as part of a district coaching initiative that had been instituted by the district’s leadership team with the approval of the school board.
- Ms. Norton announced with regret that she would be leaving Commonwealth ES at the end of the school year as one of the reading specialists due to a relocation of her family to another state.
- Ms. DuBois and the specialist team worked together to recruit applicants from within the district to replace Ms. Norton as the second reading specialist at the school.
- In response to continuous requests from parents for the establishment of a gifted and talented (GT) center somewhere in the vicinity, Dr. Elizabeth Rogers, district assistant superintendent for instruction, began discussions with the cluster assistant superintendent and the administrators of Commonwealth ES about a plan to place a GT Center at Commonwealth ES (Historical notes, 2005).

Data for 2003–2005

Table 4.7 displays the school-wide performance data in the language arts.

Table 4.7

Commonwealth ES School-Wide Performance Language Arts 2002–2009

| Year | % Students Passing | AMO | AMO met | Made AYP |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------|----------------|---|
| 2002 | Data not available | N/A | | |
| 2003 | Data not available | 60.7% | | |
| 2004 | 53.06% | 61% | No | No |
| 2005 | 68.8% | 61% | Yes | Yes |
| 2006 | 68.22% | 65% | Yes | Yes |
| 2007 | 80.84% | 69% | Yes | No |
| 2008 | 71.71% | 73% | No | No; Public School Choice Year 1 |
| 2009 | 84.3% | 77% | Yes | Yes; Public School Choice Year 1 Holding |
| 2010 | 92.73% | 81% | Yes | Yes |

AMO = Annual Measureable Objective; AYP = Adequate Yearly Progress

Data summarized from School/Division/State Adequate Yearly Progress Detail Reports for 2004–05; 2005–06; 2006–07; 2007–08; 2008–09; 2009 - 10

Note: Percent of students reported passing in a school year is based on the percent passing the year before. For example, the percent of students passing reported for the 2006–2007 school year is the percent of students actually passing for the 2005–2006 school year. The AMO benchmark for the 2007 school year used to determine if AMO was met is the AMO benchmark for the 2006 school year (69%). This is true for the entire data chart.

Making AYP is dependent on the school’s meeting AMO for BOTH English and Mathematics in a given year

Hiring the new reading teacher

During the summer of 2005, the Commonwealth ES administrators interviewed reading specialist candidates from within the district. They wanted to hire a reading specialist who was experienced with the district's balanced literacy program, had previous experience working in a Title I school, and was trained in Reading Recovery. One candidate, Nicole Long, met all of their criteria. She was hired as the second reading specialist and joined Ms. Truth, Ms. Jolie, and Ms. Green as the core leadership of the school's literacy team (Historical notes, Spring 2005).

Collaborative learning team professional development

Prior to the 2005–2006 school year, the Professional Learning Community (PLC) staff development was led by the Commonwealth ES administrators, the reading specialists, the LC coach, and the instructional coach with support from the specialist team. Prior to 2005–2006, this group took responsibility for creating team agendas, facilitating team meetings, and selecting and facilitating professional reading. I will refer to this group subsequently as the Commonwealth ES leadership group.

At a language arts planning meeting on August 8, 2005, participants examined and discussed the results of a staff survey taken at the end of the previous school year. They also considered how the K–6 CLTs were functioning. The Commonwealth ES's leadership group decided that it was time for a further gradual release of responsibility by encouraging teachers to create team agendas and facilitate grade-level team meetings, responsibilities previously handled by the leadership group (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

At the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year, Ms. DuBois and Ms. Towson attended two district sponsored sessions called “Transforming Traditional Teams into Powerful Learning Teams.” Table 4.8 displays the description of the offering as it was advertised in fall 2005.

Table 4.8

Transforming Traditional Teams into Powerful Learning Teams Sessions

| Workshop Description | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Number of Credit Hours | 6 hours- Who wouldn't like a staff filled with teams of teachers engaged in skillful collaboration focused on improving instruction and reaching higher levels of student learning? This seminar supports administrators and team leaders in examining a framework for transforming traditional grade-level teams into energized learning teams. Learn how teams develop shared goals for student learning, create powerful learning agendas, and transform team talk into improved classroom practice. Participants leave with field-tested tools to engage teams in conversations that build instructional capability, analyze student progress, and systematically address the needs of struggling learners. |
| Goal(s) | To provide participants with a variety of PLC structures and tools that they can instantly turn around and use with their staffs. The seminar focuses on the "how to's" of collaborative learning teams and provides step-by-step protocols for PLC implementation. For elementary principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and leadership teams Meets [district] Leadership Standard(s): 1 Vision and Goals |
| Consultant | Sherry Wood, Sherry is an educational consultant, author, and facilitator/trainer in areas of collaboration, inclusive education, and building professional learning communities. With over thirty years of experience in special education, university teaching, and staff development, Sherry is known for her ability to support school communities in working together to educate all children. She has co-authored two books: <i>Inclusive Early Childhood Education: A Model Classroom</i> and <i>Educators as Learners: Creating a Professional Learning Community in Your School</i> |

After attending the session, Ms. DuBois and Ms. Towson shared the step-by-step protocols for PLC implementation that they learned at the sessions with each of the CLT grade-level teams, the reading specialists, the instructional coach, and the LC coach. Ms. DuBois attended each of the initial CLT grade-level team meetings, and discussed the new expectations for the teams. These included formulating their own team agendas, developing a set of team

norms intended to guide each CLT toward productive and efficient meetings, and identifying a data-based Smart Goal related to reading for their team work during 2005–2006 (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

Based on the results of the spring 2005 instructional walkthrough, Ms. DuBois and the School Improvement Plan (SIP) Team decided the school-wide improvement focus, would be on differentiation. The school-wide SMART Goal addressed two academic years. By June 2007, 85% of Commonwealth ES students were intended to be reading on grade level or above.

The plan was for the Commonwealth ES CLT teams to use Dr. Wood’s definition of a SMART Goal during this part of their work together. Wood’s definition was based on the work of Conzemius and O’Neill (2002) who worked in the area of educational leadership and professional learning communities. Thus, a SMART Goal was intended to be strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, and time-bound (Wood, August, 2005).

The Commonwealth ES staff learned that the elements to consider when developing their SMART Goals included: on what subject area to focus; what type of assessment to use; what group of students were involved; the percent of students who will be proficient or at grade level; the percent of students who will be at an advanced level; the timeline; and the goal for those students not reaching proficiency.

Dr. Wood shared the SMART Goal grade-level-template with the Commonwealth ES staff which is displayed in Figure 4.1

The % of grade ____ students (meeting or exceeding the ____ benchmark or reading at or above grade level or passing at the proficient or advanced levels) on the ____ by (date) will increase from ____% to ____%.

All students reading below grade level will meet individual progress targets.

All students will score a minimum of _____. (Wood, 2005)

Figure 4.1. SMART Template for Grade Level Goal (Strategic and Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Results-based, and Time-bound)

During the second part of the four-hour workshop, Dr. Wood focused on the elements of productive team meetings. She explained that during this school year, the team members would assume team meeting roles that included: a facilitator (to keep the group on task); a timekeeper (to keep the group on time based on an agenda); a scribe (to record key ideas on a chart during the meeting); and a recorder (to keep an official record of the meeting that would capture decisions made). Dr. Wood explained how the teams would decide if the meeting roles would be rotated each meeting, kept for the whole year, or randomly selected for the next meeting at the end of each meeting.

During the last part of the session, Dr. Wood shared the components of a recommended meeting agenda and showed the staff a Sample Agenda (see Figure 4.2). She emphasized that each agenda should include the purpose of the meeting, the topics to be addressed, time estimates for each topic, the names of the people who would lead discussion for each item, the process for each agenda item, any decisions or follow-up specified during the meeting, a summary of the meeting, next meeting plans, and a reflection on how the meeting went (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

| Sample CLT Meeting Agenda | | | | |
|---|------|-------------|--|------------------------|
| Purpose: To Decide Our Team Norms | | | | |
| Facilitator: | | Timekeeper: | | Date: |
| Scribe: | | Recorder: | | |
| Topic | Time | Lead | Process | Decisions Follow-Up |
| Check in; Go over agenda | 5 | | | |
| Individual Reflection | 5 | | Handout | |
| Share and discuss why norm would be important | 10 | | Round Robin Share Chart Ideas | |
| Decide on most important norms Make group commitment | 10 | | Each person vote for 5 top choices Make final decision: Can we live with these? Recorder documents for official record. Group signs | |
| How can we keep each other accountable for norms? | 5 | | Pairs think of a way to keep each other accountable for sticking to norms | |
| Summary | 5 | | Recorder recap decisions for next meeting | |
| Next Meeting Ideas | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did we accomplish what we set out to do? | |
| Reflect on Our Work Together | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did we follow our norms? • How can we get even better? | |

Figure 4.2. Sample CLT Meeting Agenda

Continuing the gradual release of responsibility

Beginning with the very next set of CLT meetings, all of the teams made numerous decisions. For example, they decided what team meeting roles they would use, what format the agenda would follow, what supplies they would need for their meetings, and what arrangements would have to be made to allow for a meeting space. The tenor of the teachers during these meetings was more assured than it had been in the past when making these same kinds of decisions (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

Up until this time, each grade-level team had a double planning time once a week. They had been meeting with the specialist support team members during these meetings every other week to address language arts topics. Beginning in 2005–2006, the principal announced that one of the meetings would follow the previous format (these meetings would be instructional team meetings) and would continue to be facilitated by the specialist team members, the instructional coach, the reading specialists, and the LC coach. The second meeting would become an official CLT language arts meeting. Participants would use all of the new procedures, agendas, and SMART Goals. These CLT meetings would be facilitated by the teachers who would take turns assuming each of the team roles (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

The CLT meetings that followed during the 2005–2006 school year were marked by confusion and lack of follow through. Although the teachers understood the school-wide SMART Goal for that year, (85% of our students will be reading on grade level or above by June 2007), they were unable to identify grade-level SMART Goals related to the school-wide goal. Some examples of SMART Goals they identified included:

- “Our SMART Goal is inference” (Grade 6).
- “Our SMART Goal is to decide on one spelling approach for the school to use. Everyone is using something different” (Grade 3).
- “Our SMART Goal is to share research on think aloud” (Grade 4).

One team went the entire first half of the year without ever identifying a SMART Goal (though not for lack of trying). The CLT meetings were marked by teacher avoidance. For example, both the facilitator and recorder roles were the last to be filled while teachers competed to act as timekeeper and scribe. Frequently, agendas were not composed prior to the meeting, to

the point that Ms. DuBois required that the CLT agendas be submitted to her by email or in hard copy no later than a week prior to the CLT meetings (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

The instructional meetings continued to be characterized by research and professional reading by the teachers about self-identified aspects of pedagogy and other related issues. Topics for these meetings included question-answer-response (QAR) based on research by Raphael (1982), the integration of language arts and the content areas, fluency and expression while reading, main idea, sequencing, and summarizing. The teachers expressed more satisfaction with these meetings than the CLT meetings because they left the instructional meetings with ideas and materials that they could use right away with their students (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

Meanwhile, teachers expressed growing impatience with the CLT meetings. “These meetings are a waste of my time,” and “What is it we are supposed to be doing? I don’t get it!” Administrators also expressed frustration with the quality of CLT meetings. “I don’t know how else to explain the components of a SMART Goal. What is it that I’m missing here?”... “I’m getting to the point where I am going to have to set down some rules about the agendas, the minutes, and the meetings themselves.” (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

At the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year, the ESOL and special education teachers met as one group for their CLT meetings instead of meeting with the grade-level teams with whom they were assigned to support. In late January 2006, Ms. DuBois reported to their meeting on the scheduled date and time, only to discover that the meeting was not taking place. She exchanged e-mail notes, displayed in Figure 4.3, with members of this team in an effort to affect the behavior of team members.

From: DuBois, Cicely
Sent: Friday, January 27, 2006, 10:37 AM
To: Sullivan, Maura; Hansen, Inga; Anzalone, Barbara; McCarthy, April
CC: Towson, Carole; Ruth Marcus, Alice Rendel, Ravi Yapur, Pat Church, Ann Dean, Betty Howard, Cynthia Left, Nora Leavini
Subject: RE: Meeting

We need to schedule a meeting to discuss how the ESOL and Special Education teams are ensuring that their students are being taught all the components of the Balanced Literacy Framework. Do you still have our regular Monday date available?

=====

From: Hansen, Inga
Sent: Fri 1/27/2006 12:23 PM
To: DuBois, Cicely; Sullivan, Maura; Anzalone, Barbara; McCarthy April
CC: Towson, Carole; (all rest listed above)
Subject: Meeting

Cicely, I am confused. It seems you are not aware of what was decided at our last special ed/ESOL ISD meeting on January 9. We had discussed this topic and then debated on how best to organize future meetings so there would be a specific purpose to them. The decision was to meet only if we had a specific topic to cover that pertains to spec ed/ESOL. I am the point person to get questions from both teams and forward them 2 weeks prior to the meeting to leave research time. We would then meet only if we provided specific questions. Present at that meeting for discussion were Carole Towson, and all other team members. It was also discussed that since ESOL/Spec ED attends their grade level ISD meetings questions pertaining to specific cases were being addressed at those times.

Please let us know your thoughts. Thanks.

Inga

Figure 4.3. E-mail Communication Between Ms. DuBois and Team Members

Ms. DuBois responded two days later (see Figure 4.4).

| |
|--|
| <p>From: DuBois, Cicely Sent: Sunday, January 29, 2006 4:00 PM To: Hansen, Inga; Sullivan, Maura; Anzalone, Barbara; McCarthy, April CC: Towson, Carole (all others) Subject: Meeting</p> <p>Inga,</p> <p>I spoke with Carole about what occurred at the last meeting prior to my response to this email. Please see me on Monday to discuss this.</p> <p>Cicely DuBois, Principal Commonwealth Elementary</p> <p>=====</p> <p>From: DuBois, Cicely Sent: Wednesday, February 01, 2006 12:31 PM To: Anzalone, Barbara; Towson, Carole CC: Sullivan, Maura; Truth, Harriet; Long, Nicole Subject: SpEd ESOL Team Meeting</p> <p>Carole and I met with SPED and ESOL Teams on Monday to address the series of emails. We acknowledged that everyone was at a different place on the balanced literacy continuum and that the expectation is for all students to benefit from all the components of the framework. We would like to meet as a total group for the first five minutes and then break up into two different groups. We would like for one of you to go with the ESOL team and one of you to work with the SPED team. Carole and I will split up and go with one of the groups.</p> <p>The teachers feel that the meetings would be more effective in job alike groups. The focus of the discussion needs to be on the balanced literacy framework and how the different components should be present and can be provided in class and pull out situations. The discussions should center on what that looks like. Another issue is how to move teachers from a materials POV of balanced literacy to a strategic instructional focus...We talked about you and the reading teachers being available to model a variety of strategies and that we would provide them with time to reflect...</p> <p>Cecily DuBois, Principal Commonwealth ES</p> |
|--|

Figure 4.4. E-mail Communication from Ms. DuBois to Team Members

At a subsequent meeting with the ESOL and special education teachers, Ms. DuBois agreed with them that they would meet in job alike CLTs for the rest of the school year. Ms. DuBois reminded both teams that at least one administrator would be attending every CLT meeting for the rest of the school year, and asked that the administrators be included on the e-mail distribution list to receive the agendas a week before the meetings. Although the two teams agreed with those provisions and met regularly as required, they continued to express annoyance with the CLT meetings and a lack of understanding about what they were supposed to be doing during those meetings (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

Commonwealth ES gets a Gifted and Talented Center

For several years prior to the 2005–2006 school year, parents in the Commonwealth ES community, as well as the parents in several surrounding school communities had requested the placement of a Gifted and Talented (GT) Center someplace nearby. In response to those requests, Dr. Elizabeth Rogers, assistant superintendent for instruction K–12 made the decision to place a GT Center at Commonwealth ES. Having a GT Center in a school was perceived by the general public, including parents of students, as a mark of prestige. Beginning with the 2005–2006 school year, the GT Center was begun with a single Grade 3 classroom made up of students qualifying for the center via the district’s GT qualifying process. The students came from neighboring communities, as well as the Commonwealth ES community itself (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

Prior to the opening of the center, Dr. Rogers met with the parent community and assured them that there would be careful and continuous monitoring of the GT Center at Commonwealth ES throughout the school year. She also assured them that findings would be shared regularly with the parents and the larger community and that there would be opportunities for input from the parents and the community. Plans were to add an additional classroom each of the next three school years until the GT Center was totally established with a classroom and teachers for students in Grades 3, 4, 5, and 6. The parents and the community agreed with the proposal (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

The Commonwealth ES administrators saw this as an opportunity to connect with the wider Commonwealth ES community in ways that had not been possible previously. With their own children attending Commonwealth ES, the parents would be able to judge for themselves the quality of instruction and the kind of environment at Commonwealth ES, instead of relying

on dated, word-of-mouth evaluations by their neighbors. As for the Commonwealth ES teachers, they did not react much to the announcement, commenting that having a GT center in the building would neither affect them personally nor how they operated within the building.

Summary of the 2003–2006 school years

Between 2003 and 2006, there was a steady decline in teacher turnover at Commonwealth ES. By the end of the 2005–2006 school year, the percent of teacher turnover was 14.6%. This was lower than the teacher turnover that year for the other schools in the Commonwealth cluster (21.73%) and the district as a whole (18.25%).

Between 2003 and 2005, there were small declines in student mobility at Commonwealth ES (25.45 to 25.39) and a slight increase at the district level (17.38 to 17.64). Between 2005 and 2006, there was an increase in student mobility at Commonwealth ES (25.39 to 28.01), while student mobility at the district level decreased (17.64 to 16.13). Table 4.9 display these numbers which show that during this time period, the student mobility rate at Commonwealth ES was almost twice the student mobility rate for the district as a whole.

Table 4.9
2000–2009 Commonwealth ES Student Mobility Rates

| Year | Commonwealth ES Mobility | Change | District Mobility | Change |
|-------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1999–2000 | 27.24 | | 17.07 | |
| 2000–2001 | 26.68 | -0.56 | 16.23 | -0.84 |
| 2001–2002 | 27.65 | +0.97 | 17.18 | +0.95 |
| 2002–2003 | 28.32 | +0.67 | 16.54 | -0.64 |
| 2003–2004 | 25.45 | -2.87 | 17.38 | +0.84 |
| 2004–2005 | 25.39 | -0.06 | 17.64 | +0.26 |
| 2005–2006 | 28.01 | +2.62 | 16.13 | -1.51 |
| 2006–2007 | 26.12 | -1.89 | 15.20 | -0.93 |
| 2007–2008 | 32.21 | +6.09 | 14.76 | -0.44 |
| 2008–2009 | 25.82 | -6.39 | 14.59 | -0.17 |

Student Mobility Statistical Report, District “A,” Department of Information Technology, August 2006; February 2008; September 2009; October 2010

During an interview, Ms. DuBois talked about her vision for the school and the changes in her hiring practices during those years that she believes were at least partly responsible for the decline in teacher turnover:

[When I first came to Commonwealth] I was looking for good teachers. But [after the first two years, I realized that] I wanted people who understood the community. I knew there were a lot of discipline issues. I would paint a picture [for the candidates]: This is a Title I school. I would talk about the diversity in terms of economics as well as ethnicity...I also wanted them to know the kids had discipline issues because I didn't want people who were on Rosyville to come in and it would just totally be not a good match. I wanted a good match for what the school was then... Initially I wanted people who I felt could handle the issues with the kids and instructionally. Always I've been looking for good teachers, so as time went on and the behavior got better I didn't emphasize that so much but I was always looking for someone who really wanted to make a difference for kids (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

Ms. DuBois also elaborated on the professional knowledge and other characteristics she looked for as she hired teachers to join the Commonwealth ES staff:

I zoomed in on what they knew about literacy and math, more the literacy than the math. I wanted to know what they were going to do for kids who were struggling. I wanted to know - balanced literacy and guided reading were my buzz words I would listen for... I was looking for diversity too, African American teachers, male teachers when I would look. I was looking hard for them and I just couldn't find them. So I just stopped looking for them. I would just look for good teachers with a passion. Once I stopped looking for African American teachers or teachers of other diversity, they just started showing up. I got more people without looking for them than I did when I was looking, and I think some of that was because the county put pictures of principals on websites and I think some people would look at your picture and read about your school and think "Oh yeah, I'd be comfortable going there." But our staff now and then because we have a large Latino population so I thought okay we've got to get some Latino teachers in here and actually this summer our preschool has got some coming. So it's coming. We've got teachers who are Korean and from other Asian communities. If you look at our staff it's very diverse (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

Ms. DuBois also talked about her conscious recruitment of male teachers to the Commonwealth ES staff. At the time of the 2005 walkthrough, there were ten male teachers on the staff:

I was looking for male teachers and what I'd do...I'd give them the tour. And with the guys, I'd take them by the guys' rooms and I'd say these guys play basketball AND lead team meetings (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

Another practice that Ms. Dubois instituted was to take her newly hired teachers on a tour of the school's neighborhood. During an interview in 2009, she talked about why she began that practice during her first years at Commonwealth ES:

I think there are still a few people around here, they work hard, they do what they can for the kids, but they still have a little chip on their shoulder. That's what was more prevalent then, blaming the parents, and the circumstances and that whole thing... You know how some people feel about kids in poverty, they don't have that belief that they CAN. So there's still a few folks on this staff they're comparing their background and upbringing to the kids' background and upbringing and really I don't care what their background and upbringing are. We need to do everything we can. If the parents aren't able, then we need to do what we can to reach out to the parents, do as much as we can, and so one of the things we're going to do... We're going to take EVERYONE on the bus tour this year. We're going to get a couple busses, we're going to send info out, we're going to go into the community, we're going to get off the bus, we're going to get a space at the [local] Government Center, some of us are going to do home visits. ..This has been very well received by parents. [One teacher in particular] is not comfortable doing home visits... Because she would talk about you know it's not like going to your house, sometimes there would be a table was a little kid's playschool table and that's all they'd have, but they might have a big screen tv on the wall. But that's a judgmental thing and so we want to make sure people really understand those circumstances... Our job is to do the best for the kids here, and if we can, get parents in. They gave parents choices - do you want to come to school or do you want us to come there? And so the teachers went to the homes and then after that the parents came to the school (C. DuBois, interview, August 13, 2009).

The decrease in personnel turnover affected the working of the Specialist Support Team and CLT teams as well as the staff development needs. The school had a larger core of teachers who had been growing and learning about both balanced literacy and CLT processes for three continuous school years. Although every school year had been marked by some change in personnel, the numbers had decreased regularly and so the need for differentiation of staff development was also decreasing, with one major exception—the special education and ESOL teachers. This situation came to the forefront when these teachers requested to meet in job-alike CLTs and specialist support teams rather than meeting with the classroom grade levels they supported (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

Other factors also affected the staff and, by extension, the students at Commonwealth ES. The move to more formal CLT meetings that were teacher-planned and teacher-led, the splitting off of the special education and ESOL teachers into separate ISD and CLT teams, and the establishment of the GT Center collectively contributed to the need for the teachers and the

administrators to deal with issues that were very different from those they had been used to dealing with in the years prior to 2003. Even so, student achievement, as measured by the SOL tests, continued to improve between 2003 and 2006. The percent of students achieving passing or passing advanced scores continued to increase. Commonwealth ES began to consistently meet the AMO benchmarks for English/language arts set by the state. They also began to make AYP as determined by the NCLB federal requirements.

The 2005–2006 school year ended with each CLT grade-level team meeting for an hour on June 13, 2006, on a rotating schedule. Both administrators, both reading specialists, the instructional coach, the LC coach, and the specialist team members attended all meetings. Substitute coverage was provided for each classroom while the teachers met.

Each team was asked to bring their CLT binders, their SMART goals, and their SMART goal data. Each team met to reflect on the following questions:

- Where are your students in terms of meeting your SMART Goal(s) for reading?
- Which instructional strategies or practices did you use to address the goal(s)?
- Which instructional strategies were effective?
- What do you think you should continue doing next year?
- What changes do you need to make for next year?
- What do you need [in terms of staff development, materials, resources, etc.] next year to assist you with your SMART Goal(s)?

Teachers in Grades 3–6 were asked to review the District “A” BART Testing Windows for 2006–2007 and come to the meeting prepared to discuss the windows they wanted to assess students. By the end of the 2005–2006 school year, each grade-level CLT team had successfully identified its SMART Goal, a targeted learning area, and the measures they would use, which are displayed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

SMART GOALS by Grade for 2005 - 2006

| Grade | SMART Goal | Targeted Learning Areas | Measures |
|-------|---|---|--|
| 3 | 70% of 3 rd grade students will pass proficient or be reading at or above grade level; 80% of 3 rd grade GT students will pass proficient. | Vocabulary; Word Analysis; Main Idea; Summary Skills: Self-correction, chunking, context clues, phonetic clues, syllabication | DRA, BART, checklists, reading responses, graphic organizers, running records, anecdotal records |
| 4 | The % of 4 th grade students scoring proficient on strand 4.3 (context clues) on BART will increase from 38% to 60% by the end of the fourth testing window; The % of 4 th grade students scoring 3 or 4 on the inferring section of the DRA in spring 2006 will increase from 26% to 50%. | Context Clues; Inferences | BART, Constructed Tests, DRA |
| 5 | 67% of 5 th grade students will earn 75% or higher by the 3 rd BART window and 85% of students by the 4 th window; 75% of 5 th graders will score a 3 or higher on the Spring DRA inference questions; 80% of 5 th graders will score a 12 or higher on the 4 fluency criteria on the Spring DRA. | Context clues; Inference; Fluency | BART, Practice Tests, Reading response journals, Graphic organizers, DRA |
| 6 | On practice passages, 85% of 6 th graders will select the correct response for summary questions by the end of the 3 rd quarter; the % of students scoring a 3 or above on the DRA Summary section will increase from 50% to 85% by the end of the third quarter; 85% of 6 th graders will select the correct response for practice passages by the end of the third quarter; The % of students scoring a 3 or above on Interpretation on the DRA will increase from 55% to 85% by the end of the 3 rd quarter; when reading an unfamiliar passage of grade-level difficulty, the % of students scoring a 3 or above for Expression on the DRA will increase from 40% to 80% by the end of the 3 rd quarter; when participating in Reader's Theater, 80% of targeted students will rate themselves a 3 or better on a 4 point self-assessment by the end of 3 rd quarter. | Summary and retelling; Inference Oral reading expression | BART, Constructed Tests, Practice Tests, DRA, Self-assessment for oral reading |

The end of the 2005–2006 school year also marked the departure of Ms. Sullivan from the district language arts office staff. The director of elementary education decided not to assign Ms. Sullivan’s replacement on the language arts team to work with the specialist team at Commonwealth ES. She explained to Ms. DuBois that since Commonwealth ES now had two LC coaches, an instructional coach, a reading specialist, and several Reading Recovery teachers, the office of elementary instruction was going to decrease the support from the central office to a single position. From then on, I was the only member of the specialist team assigned to work at Commonwealth ES (Historical notes, 2005–2006).

The 2006–2009 School Years

Between the 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 school years, there was an increased teacher turnover at Commonwealth ES (from 14.6% to 17%) (see Table 4.11). During this same time period the cluster turnover decreased (from 21.73% to 16.72%), and the district turnover decreased (from 18.25% to 17.28%). Between the 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 school years, there was an increased turnover at Commonwealth ES (from 17% to 18.5%). During this same time period, there was also an increased turnover at the cluster level (from 16.72% to 18.81%) but a decreased turnover at the district level (from 17.28% to 15.57%). Between 2008 and 2009, there was a large decrease in teacher turnover at Commonwealth ES (from 18.5% to 6.67%). At the cluster level, between 2008 and 2009, there was also a decrease (18.81% to 12.65%), and a similar decrease at the district level (15.57% to 12.41%). Student mobility between 2005–2006 and 2006–2007 at Commonwealth ES decreased (from 28.01 to 26.12) (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.11
Teacher Turnover by School, Cluster, and District

| Year | Commonwealth ES | | Cluster | | District | |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| | Turnover | Change | Turnover | Change | Turnover | Change |
| 1999–2000 ^a | 29.0% | N/A | 22.4% | N/A | 20.4% | N/A |
| 2000–2001 ^b | 48.8% | +19.9 | 23.7% | +1.3 | 19.8% | -0.6 |
| 2001–2002 | 22.7% | -26.1 | 23.4% | -0.3 | 19.9% | +0.1 |
| 2002–2003 | 37.5% | +14.8 | 24.1% | +0.7 | 20.0% | +0.1 |
| 2003–2004 | 23.9% | -13.6 | 20.5% | -3.6 | 18.0% | -2.0 |
| 2004–2005 | 20.0% | -3.9 | 19.9% | -0.6 | 19.5% | +1.4 |
| 2005–2006 | 14.6% | -5.4 | 21.7% | +1.9 | 18.3% | -1.2 |
| 2006–2007 | 17.0% | +2.4 | 16.7% | -5.0 | 17.3% | -1.0 |
| 2007–2008 | 18.5% | +1.5 | 18.8% | +2.1 | 15.6% | -1.7 |
| 2008–2009 | 6.7% | -11.8 | 12.7% | - 6.2 | 12.4% | -3.2 |

^aThis is the year that Dr. Brown was named to succeed Principal Shumer. ^bThis is the year that Ms. DuBois was named to succeed Dr. Brown as principal and the year that SFA was discontinued at Commonwealth ES.

During this time frame, the student mobility at the district level continued to decrease (from 16.13 to 15.20). Between 2006–2007 and 2007–2008, student mobility at Commonwealth ES increased dramatically (from 26.12 to 32.21), while student mobility at the district continued to decrease (from 15.20 to 14.76). Between 2008 and 2009, student mobility decreased dramatically (from 32.21 to 25.82). During this same time, student mobility at the district level continued to decrease (14.76% to 14.59%). The mobility at Commonwealth ES continued to be about two times the rate of mobility at the district level.

The 2006–2007 school year marked the first year of my official research at Commonwealth ES. I moved from acting solely as a staff developer to a dual role as staff developer/participant observer. At the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year, Commonwealth ES added an upper- grade component of the LC Program that they had implemented in Grades K–2 during the 2003–2004 school year. The LC model was now school-wide, spanning Grades K–6. During summer 2006, Ms. Long, after just one year as reading specialist at Commonwealth ES, interviewed for, and was chosen to become, the upper grade LC coach (Field notes, 2006–2007).

During the 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 school years, there was a growing number of teachers who were not familiar with the Commonwealth ES literacy program (although Ms. DuBois made every effort to hire teachers who were experienced with balanced literacy prior to their hiring at Commonwealth ES). Most of the new hires, however, did not have prior experience with professional learning communities or collaborative learning teams (Field notes, 2006–2007; Field notes 2007–2008).

The Commonwealth leadership team met during the summer of 2006 to reflect on the 2005–2006 school year and make decisions about staff development initiatives. We especially focused on the CLT meetings and where on the gradual release of responsibility continuum we thought the teachers were.

We were unanimous in our judgment that most of the teachers did not feel any ownership of the CLT process. The previous school year had been marked by much confusion, irritation, and impatience on the part of everyone at Commonwealth ES. We discussed the fact that some teachers left the school at the end of the 2005–2006 school year, causing an uptick in the teacher turnover rate, which had been decreasing steadily prior to that year. The teachers who left included some classroom teachers, but ESOL teachers left in the largest number.

Ms. DuBois had made clear to the staff at the last meeting of the 2005–2006 school year that Commonwealth ES would continue with the CLT approach and that there would be no turning back on that decision. The two groups of teachers who disagreed most with this decision were the ESOL teachers and the special education teachers, so it was not a surprise to us when we analyzed the turnover data to identify who left and consider why. We also decided that for the teachers who remained at Commonwealth ES, there needed to be more support given to them around the CLT process and their ability and motivation to take the expected leadership roles during the coming school year.

The first response was that Ms. DuBois, Ms. Towson, Ms. Truth, and Ms. Jolie (the instructional coach) attended the Adaptive Schools seminar offered by the district (C. DuBois, e-mail correspondence, July 7, 2011). At this seminar, they studied research by Garmston and Wellman (1999) on the importance of adaptability and how that research related specifically to educational reform similar to the work being done at Commonwealth ES with respect to CLT and teacher leadership.

Garmston and Wellman (1999) draw the organizing metaphor for their work from the field of biology. They argue that human organizations and individuals can be adapted to a specific niche or can become adaptive, flexing to meet the challenges of a changing world. They propose that the work of the Center for Adaptive Schools is to develop the resources and capacities of the organization and of individuals to cohesively respond to the changing needs of students and the changing needs of society (<http://www.adaptiveschools.com/aboutas.htm>, retrieved 6/08/11).

During the seminar, Ms. DuBois, Ms. Towson, Ms. Truth, and Ms. Jolie learned the cornerstones of this reform effort: shared norms and values, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue. These were all of the aspects of reform on which they had been concentrating at Commonwealth ES. They felt validated that they were on the right path with the staff development they were doing at the school. They learned from the seminar how to work with the teachers to encourage ownership and leadership on their parts.

In an adaptive organization, leadership is shared... All participants have the knowledge and skills to manage themselves and manage and lead others. Leadership is distributed... (<http://www.adaptiveschools.com/aboutas.htm>, retrieved 6/08/11)

Ms. DuBois, Ms. Towson, Ms. Truth, and Ms. Jolie returned to Commonwealth ES with a deeper understanding of ways to facilitate, present, coach, and consult. As a result of their new insights, they began by sharing their learning with the Commonwealth leadership team. During the August back-to-school meeting with staff, Ms. Towson, Ms. Truth, and Ms. Jolie gave each grade-level team data about their incoming students' achievement as measured by their DRA and SOL scores. Ms. Jolie asked them to analyze the data and begin to identify instructional needs of their incoming class (Field notes, 2006–2007).

In September 2006, Ms. DuBois, Ms. Towson, Ms. Truth, and Ms. Jolie, Ms. Long, Ms. Sullivan, and I met with each of the CLT grade-level teams individually. Ms. DuBois began each meeting by reviewing the agenda (this first agenda was written by the leadership team) and presenting her views about the purpose of the CLT meetings for 2006–2007. She identified that purpose as improving student learning and achievement. She asked the teachers to consider five questions:

1. Where do we want students to get better?
2. How can we as teachers get better?
3. How can we provide targeted support in reading so students can get better?
4. How do we know if students have mastered what was taught?
5. If students don't "get it," what are we going to do differently to be sure that they do?

Ms. DuBois told teachers that these five questions would guide their work at every CLT meeting during the 2006–2007 school year (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Next, Ms. Towson talked about teaming and the high energy it takes to be a high-performing team. She shared the research that suggests that all groups have two major problems to overcome: 1) how to remain a team when individuals on that team are outside the team workplace; and 2) how to develop capacity to function as an effective team. She involved teachers in reading a document that outlined the energy sources available to teams and discussing which of these "Five Energy Sources for High-Performing Groups" (Garmston, 2006) were most evident in their particular team (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Next, Ms. DuBois briefly introduced a chapter entitled "Developing Collaborative Norms" from *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* (Garmston & Wellman, 1999) by asking the team to discuss, as a group, what came to mind when they heard the word "norms." She then asked teachers to read pages 33–37 of the chapter and check anything that affirmed what they already knew, mark with an exclamation point anything that surprised them, and a question mark for something about which they would like to know more. Ms. Towson then asked the team members to pair up with a partner. Each pair was asked to read one section from pages 37 through 47 and then to share out with the whole group the one most important point from the section they read. Following the discussion, Ms. DuBois reminded each team of Commonwealth ES's continuing SMART Goal—85% of Commonwealth ES students will be reading on grade level or above by June 2007. She reminded them that this meant that they had one school year left to meet this ambitious goal (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Ms. Towson ended the meeting by talking with each team about next steps for their October CLT meeting. They were asked to come to that meeting with an identified SMART Goal for their grade level and a draft of work plans to meet that goal. She reminded them that they could use some of their double planning time to complete this work. Ms. Towson explained that in October they should plan to establish their team's norms and discuss common

assessments that they would use to monitor their students' progress toward meeting the goal (Field notes, 2006–2007). Ms. DuBois told the teams that while the leadership team would plan and facilitate the October CLT meetings, the teachers would begin to take over the CLT team roles as well as responsibility for making the agenda, facilitating the meeting, and keeping minutes of each meeting.

On October 17th, the grade-level teams met to address the following agenda items sent to them by Ms. DuBois, Ms. Towson, Ms. Jolie, and me:

- Check in and review agenda;
- Look at language arts data from 2005–2006;
- Norms Inventory, rate perceptions of our group;
- Grade level team decisions about roles; and
- Summary, next steps for November meetings, evaluate if the meeting accomplished what they intended and how they could get even better (Field notes, 2006–2007).

The parts of the meetings focused on data were facilitated by Ms. Green for Grades K–2 and Ms. Jolie for Grades 3–6. They compiled BART window data, SOL scores, and DRA scores for each grade-level team. They asked the teams to reflect on the data, using the following questions to guide their thinking:

- How does the data compare to what you anticipated?
- What stands out for you?
- What surprised you?
- What patterns do you see?
- Of what are you most proud?

The tenor of the teachers at the October meetings was mixed, as reflected by their comments. Some of them reflected a kind of negative disagreement with what they saw in the data. “My kids read lower than what their DRA scores say.” Some reflected a continuing frustration with the CLT process. “We keep starting things and can’t finish them. We get told to do it in our double planning. There is not enough time.” Many were thoughtful and proactive. “What was the difference in the questions for different levels of performance by kids on the same skill?” “How can I help my ESOL students who speak no English?” “Has the school district done any studies to see if there is a correlation between reaching benchmark on the DRA in 1st,

2nd, and success on the reading SOL in 3–6th? I know they are very different assessments” (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Carole Towson facilitated the discussion around the team norms. She gave them a list of topics to consider as they finalized their drafted norms: communication, participation, preparation, decision-making, timelines, and conflict management. Each team discussed why they needed norms, how they wanted to function as a team, and what norms they could create to shape who they would be as a team. Each team then reflected on the draft of their norms that they brought to the meeting. Ms. Towson asked them to choose the most important five or six items on their list to become their official team norms that would guide their interactions for the rest of the school year (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Ms. DuBois ended each meeting by reviewing the team roles—facilitator, scribe, timekeeper, and recorder. She told the teachers that beginning with the November CLT meetings, the team would take responsibility for creating an agenda and sending that agenda to Ms. DuBois and Ms. Towson a week prior to the meeting, during which they would assume the roles for the meeting (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Prior to the CLT meetings on November 21st, most of the teams submitted their agendas to Ms. DuBois and Ms. Towson prior to the meeting. A few grade levels brought the agenda with them to the meeting itself. Every team had individuals identified for each of the roles, and the teams facilitated their own meetings. A few teams perseverated in complaining about the process or specific issues (e.g. “With as much experience as I have [as a teacher], I’m overwhelmed by how many of [the students in her classroom] need so much.”) All of the teams looked for feedback as to whether or not they were doing this correctly. With one exception, teams reviewed and agreed upon their team norms. Ms. DuBois asked the remaining team to let her know how the school leadership team could support them in identifying their final norms (Field notes, 2006–2007).

At the end of the day, the Commonwealth leadership team reflected on how the meetings had gone. We agreed that while there was some growth exhibited by some of the teams, all of the teams demonstrated varying levels of anxiety or uncertainty about what they were doing. Ms. DuBois and Ms. Towson agreed to work on getting all of the agendas turned in prior to the December meetings. We also planned to follow up with the team that had not completed their

team norms to be sure they would have them in December. [Note: It was not until March 2007 that this team finally wrote and agreed upon their team meeting norms.] Notably, as of November, we had not made any significant progress with the identification of a SMART Goal by each grade-level team (Field notes, 2006–2007).

In addition to developing the CLT meeting structure and responsibilities, the major undertakings during the 2006–2007 school year included: (1) the establishment of assessment walls, (2) DRA and SOL testwiseness, (3) analysis of data using spreadsheets and reports of student performance by question to identify patterns of instructional needs, and (4) implementation of “double-dipping” for the most struggling readers in the school. I discuss each of these initiatives in the following sections (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Assessment walls and data analysis

All of the teachers at Commonwealth ES had been involved in assessing their students, reporting the results of those assessments in summary form at their CLT Meetings, and making instructional decisions based upon their analysis of available data. During the 2006–2007 school year, Ms. Truth and Ms. Long initiated conversations with the administrators, the Commonwealth leadership team, and the teachers (as part of their CLT meetings) to share their observations that teachers were looking at the DRA assessment information in terms of levels, rather than looking beneath the levels to determine instructional implications. For example, two students in the same third grade classroom might both score at a DRA level 34. Up until this point, the teachers had been grouping all students at the same level into the same guided reading group. In this case, these two students would have been grouped together for guided reading instruction. But when the teachers looked closely beyond the levels of these two students, they found very different instructional needs. Student A might have scored a level 34 because she had some decoding issues, fluency issues, and literal comprehension needs. Student B might have scored a level 34 because of higher-level comprehension needs regarding skills of inferring, summarizing, and metacognitive awareness. Using this more in-depth approach to analyzing data, these two students would not be grouped together for guided reading because their instructional objectives would be quite different. The purpose of this more focused approach was to increase the level of differentiation of instruction within the reading workshops (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Ms. Truth and Ms. Long suggested that the teachers create assessment walls (Dorn & Soffos, 2001) for their students. A sample picture of an assessment wall is included in Appendix J. Assessment walls are displays of student data organized by DRA levels. The purpose of Commonwealth ES's assessment wall was to use the students' assessment data to learn about the level of students' achievement over time, and the effectiveness of the instruction that those students had received. Ms. Truth's and Ms. Long's intention was to use the assessment wall as a visual feedback system for professional dialogue during the CLT meetings in order to guide instructional improvements.

Ms. Truth and Ms. Long asked all of the teachers to add their students' assessment information to the wall by creating an individual card for each student. An identifying color was assigned to each grade level. For example, first grade students used pink cards; second grade used green cards, etc. CLT leaders provided directions for how to code the cards at their CLT meetings and gave teachers opportunities to suggest the addition of any other information they deemed important. Each card included the following information: student name, teacher name, and a colored dot denoting those students who were receiving ESOL, special education, reading recovery, or other student services.

A key for the colored dots was kept near the assessment wall. On the back of each card, more specific information was included that notated the student's specific instructional focus, such as decoding, fluency, literal comprehension, or inferential comprehension. The date(s) when that need was an instructional focus was also noted. Each card also included assessment data such as PALS, DRA, and BART scores. The cards were placed on the section of the wall that matched the DRA level of the student. The whole range of DRA levels (A through 80) along with the District's Literacy Level Scale, were posted around the top of the wall (see Appendix J).

During the creation of the assessment wall, the teachers identified two additional needs: a section of wall before Level A for those students unable to pass a Level A DRA, and a location in the building large enough to accommodate all of the cards that were posted. When they realized that there was no single location large enough, they split the wall into two walls. The K-2 assessment wall was placed in the school's book room and the Grades 3-6 assessment wall was placed in the small conference room that was used for the CLT Meetings. From that time forward, the CLT meetings for K-2 were held in the book room (Field notes, 2006-2007).

Every CLT agenda for all grade levels included a time when the teachers could move student cards based on their latest formative assessments, followed by a time to discuss the student progress that was made, students who were “stuck” or not making progress, and how to get those students “unstuck.” My notes taken during the January 16, 2007, first grade CLT included the following questions that were discussed:

- Where are our students?
- What changes have occurred since our last discussion?
- What are our areas of concern, particularly with our struggling readers?
- What do we need to do in order to move our emergent and novice readers?”

During the course of the year, the Commonwealth ES staff developed some unique practices to address student needs. One example of such a practice is related to getting students “unstuck.” Teachers would examine the level prior to the one at which the student was “stuck.” They would then reassess the student using the prior level text, looking for evidence of the child’s demonstration of each of the reading behaviors expected at that level. Invariably, the teacher would identify one or more behaviors that the student did not have under control. The teachers would instruct students on those missing behaviors, monitor student progress during the instruction, and then reassess the student again at the next higher level. The student almost always was able to pass and became unstuck. I had not seen this practice employed anywhere prior to observing it at Commonwealth ES (Field notes, 2006–2007).

As members of the CLT Teams during 2006 - 2007, teachers collaborated and became purposeful and focused on results. They continued to share a common belief that they were collectively responsible for supporting achievement for all students. The difference now was that they effectively used identified standards of reading achievement to analyze student achievement progress, which they then used to inform their instructional practice.

Testwiseness

Because the two assessments measured the same indicators but in very different ways (DRA was a performance assessment and BART was a multiple-choice assessment), teachers were able to cross-reference student performance on the same indicators across the two assessments. For example, a teacher’s DRA spreadsheet might indicate that all of the students in her classroom were able to make inferences successfully when reading. A teacher might then

analyze the same students' performance on the BART assessment items and discover that eight of her students answered all of the inference-based items incorrectly. They were able to conclude that since the students had demonstrated they were able to infer on the DRA, there must be other reasons why they missed all of the BART items on inferring. It may have had to do with testwiseness. That is, they were unable to understand how inference was assessed using multiple choice questions, or they did not understand the test language that indicated that answering the question required making an inference (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Ms. Jolie told the teachers that before they could safely conclude that this was a testwiseness issue, they needed to look at the question itself. It could be that the question was poorly constructed and that is why the students had difficulty answering it correctly. In order to explore this possibility, Ms. Jolie showed the teachers how to use their Student Performance by Question School Report to look at student performance by question at the school level and then at the district level. If a question was missed by many Commonwealth ES students but answered correctly by most of the district students, it was a Commonwealth ES issue. But if a question was missed by many Commonwealth ES students as well as many district students, it was a good possibility that the item was flawed. The teachers also used similar comparison strategies when looking at SOL test performance (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Double-dipping

A frequent comment made by the administrators and the teachers at Commonwealth ES over the years was that there was not enough time in the school day to address all of the instructional needs of the students. As the school's demographics shifted over the years to include more children living in poverty and more children whose first language was not English, the more the need for additional instructional time became apparent. But how does one create more time for teaching? The teachers and leadership team at Commonwealth ES came to employ a practice they called "double-dipping" (Field notes, 2006–2007).

Using their analyses of the students' reading data, the CLTs identified the students at each grade-level at the highest risk of not making benchmark or passing the SOL test at the end of the school year. These students were grouped by need and were given extra guided reading lessons. Some students got an extra lesson every day, while some students got an extra lesson two or three times a week (H. Truth, personal correspondence, June 13, 2011; S. Hoffman, e-mail correspondence, June 14, 2011). The students were grouped in the same way they were

grouped for their regular guided-reading lesson inside the classroom—by score and by specific need. Sometimes the second lesson was taught by the regular classroom teacher. Other times the second lesson was taught by a resource teacher, such as the reading specialists, the Reading Recovery teachers, the ESOL teachers, the LC coaches, and the special education teachers (Field notes, 2006–2007).

The most struggling students got their double dip from the most qualified teachers. These double dip lessons were taught before the beginning of the school day and during the school day (while an instructional aide or other staff member monitored the rest of the class working independently on something the teacher had introduced) when the teacher was free to meet with the double-dip group. Groups were also held after the end of the school day. The before and after school groups were children who were a part of the school's before and after school daycare program and whose parents gave permission for this extra instruction to occur during that time (Field notes, 2006–2007).

The result of the double-dipping was an increase in student reading achievement as measured by ongoing assessment, DRA, PALS, and BART assessments, as well as SOL test performance. The percent of students at each grade level achieving the end-of-year benchmark for their grade level increased markedly. In spring 2007, the percent of kindergarten students making the state benchmark rose from 86% to 92%. Grade 1 students who made state benchmark rose from 76% in 2005 to 84% in 2007. Grade 2 students who made the state benchmark rose from 70.9% in 2005 to 78.5 % in 2007. On the spring 2007 standards-based state tests, 80.84% of all Commonwealth ES students in Grades 3–6 met the higher AMO benchmark of 69% for reading, up from 68.22% the year before. The teachers, administrators, and school leadership team were ecstatic.

The administrators' joy soon turned to distress when they were notified by the school district that they did not make AYP for the 2006–2007 school year because one disaggregated subgroup, Black students, did not make the annual measurable objective (AMO) benchmark of 69%. Only 67.32% of the Black students met that benchmark. The school administrators decided not to give the teachers this news as they left in June for the summer break. Ms. DuBois and Ms. Towson were sensitive to the effect this could have on the teachers' emotions. The teachers ended the school year feeling proud of their work in the area of language arts student

achievement. Due to the way AYP is calculated, they would still be labeled a “failing” school at the district level because they had not made AYP for one group of students. The administrators decided they would share the AYP news in the fall when the teachers returned (Field notes, 2006–2007).

At the end of the 2006–2007 school year, Ms. Towson interviewed for and was hired as the new principal of Woodcrest ES, another district elementary school in a neighboring part of the district. We were happy for Ms. Towson, but sad to see her leave Commonwealth ES. Soon after she left, Jane McCormack was hired as the new assistant principal of Commonwealth ES (Field notes, 2006–2007).

The 2007–2008 school year

The 2007–2008 school year marked my second year as participant observer. In May 2007, the district school board “...launched a new strategic governance initiative which included new beliefs, vision, and mission statements and student achievement goals intended to provide a more concentrated focus on student achievement and to establish clearer accountability” (District “A”).

In keeping with this new district initiative, on July 5, 2007, the school improvement team (Ms. DuBois, Ms. McCormack, Ms. Truth, Ms. Long, Ms. Jolie, Ms. Green, Ms. Boxer, and I) met to address the agenda that included a review of the school board’s goals to determine if Commonwealth ES’s vision and mission were in alignment with the goals.

The group reviewed and revised the Commonwealth ES vision and mission statement and made a few changes. They analyzed the student data from 2006–2007 and identified the challenges facing them in the areas of academics and essential life skills. These included: academic challenges such as having adequate time to teach, plan instruction, collaborate with resource teachers, and process information learned in staff development; helping Black, ESOL, and students with disabilities access the curriculum; communicating with parents; and identifying caring adults, advocates, or mentors for students (Field notes, 2007–2008).

Teachers also identified challenges related to essential life skills. Examples of these included: teaching character education consistently throughout the school; building community; problem-solving in multiple ways; working together in cooperative groups across the curriculum in an interdependent way; and reaching those students who struggle with Commonwealth ES’s

character traits (Field notes, 2007–2008). Finally, the Commonwealth leadership team planned the meeting for August 28th when the teachers would return to work in the fall.

August 2007 staff inservice

The agenda for the August 28, 2007, meeting included a focus on data analysis, integration of language arts with the content areas, and creation of the master schedule. The 2007–2008 school year was marked by a focus on analyzing data to identify underachieving student groups and to try to determine some of the likely causes for that underachievement. Ms. DuBois informed the teachers at this first staff meeting that they had not made AYP because the Black students had not met the AMO. According to NCLB, the usual course of events for a school not making AYP is for the school to offer public school choice. This meant that parents would be notified by letter that they could transfer their students to one of two nearby public schools which had made AYP, and that Commonwealth ES would use some of its Title I funds to pay for those students' bus transportation (Field notes, 2007–2008) .

During 2007–2008, the State Department of Education agreed to a pilot program for schools in Year 1 of sanctions. It allowed those schools to opt instead to enact outside tutoring services. According to NCLB legislation, outside tutoring is supposed to be offered after public school choice. The state agreed to allow a certain number of schools to enact outside tutoring before school choice. Commonwealth ES became one of those pilot schools. Therefore, Commonwealth parents were notified that the school would be offering a Saturday school run by an outside company. Commonwealth was presented with a list of companies approved for use by the state government under NCLB from which to choose a company that would deliver the tutoring services. The list included a total of 44 companies – 5 that offered only math services, 10 that offered only English/Language Arts services, and 29 that offered both math and Language Arts services (SES Fall 2009 Tutor List-English, August, 2009). An amount per student of Commonwealth ES's Title I funds was allotted to pay for this outside service.

The administrators and teachers were further demoralized when they asked the state for permission to design and offer their own tutoring program, a request which was in their view, one of many summarily denied. They felt that the designated, outside-tutoring company was deficient, offering only a “work-sheet-based” program. As Ms. DuBois told me in 2009, “The Saturday school didn't hurt the kids, but it certainly didn't help them either” (C. DuBois,

interview, August 2009a). The students didn't get what they needed—there was no communication about assessment and instruction between the outside company and the school.

As a result of the teacher and administrator dissatisfaction with the quality of the Saturday school, they put into place their own after school program which they called “Brain Camp.” Students were nominated to attend Brain Camp based on an analysis of their previous year's test scores and teacher recommendations (Field notes, 2007–2008).

In 2007–2008, the CLT's began to engage in what they called “cause and effect analysis” and “cause and effect planning.” For the analysis part, they continued to use the assessment walls to post and analyze student data on a monthly basis. The teachers generally expressed frustration with the value of what they were getting from the use of the walls compared with the amount of time it took them to create, maintain, and analyze the walls. As a result, they raised several critical questions about the purpose and use of the assessment wall. In a comment that reflected further teacher frustration, one teacher explained, “Okay, more staff development...but on what? I can't keep trying new things all the time. The kids and me[sic] aren't getting to know anything just lots of little things (Field notes, 2007–2008).

In the face of their frustrations, teachers continued to identify actions that would address students' underachievement in reading. The factors they considered during their cause and effect analysis included time, resources (materials, people, equipment), strategies (for teaching, learning, and assessment), professional development, staff expectations, and student grouping for instruction, class placement, homework, and grade-level team planning time (Field notes, 2007–2008).

During their discussions related to resources, the number one issue they identified was not enough ESOL and special education support. They wanted the ESOL and special education teachers to be a more regular part of the double dipping reading instruction. Classroom libraries and take home reading books were the next most mentioned concern. The teachers said they needed more genres, a wider range of readability, more nonfiction, and more content-related books for their classroom libraries (Field notes, September 25, 2007).

The 2007–2008 school year was the first time Ms. DuBois paid for full-day substitute teachers for Grades 3–6 teachers to administer their DRA assessments. (The district always paid for substitutes for teachers in Grades K–2 for that purpose.) She had taken the district's DRA

course along with some of her teachers. She believed the DRA was a sound assessment that gave the teachers the detailed level of information they needed in order to inform their instruction. She also acknowledged that the DRA did take a substantial amount of time to administer, score, and analyze, and this was the basis for her decision to provide substitutes. Additionally, she personally helped the teachers by administering a number of DRA assessments to students during the DRA testing period (Field notes, 2007–2008).

In spite of such support, by October 2007, there was a noticeable tone of dissatisfaction and impatience underlying interactions among the teachers and administrators. During the October CLT meetings, the teachers decided which students would be given the primary-level DRA, which the upper-level DRA, and which would be assessed via the state grade level alternative (SGLA) performance assessment. The SGLA student portfolios were another source of stress and contention. Although all of the teachers agreed that the portfolios were a more reasonable way for ESOL and special education students to demonstrate their achievement than the state standards multiple choice test, they all also agreed that portfolios required a lot of work and the teachers complained about how much time they took (Field notes, 2007–2008).

At the beginning of the 2007–2008 school year, the expectation at the district level was that the student portfolios would be created collaboratively by all of the teachers working with the student for whom the portfolio was created. Many teachers judged that there was uneven shouldering of responsibility for the portfolios and that some teachers were doing all of the SGLA work, while others did little to none. The greatest level of resentment was expressed by the ESOL and special education teachers who felt that the classroom and other resource teachers should be contributing more (Field notes, 2007–2008).

During the November CLT meetings, teachers made a decision to begin all future CLT meetings beginning in December by discussing some of their successes. This took the form of agenda items such as:

- What is good in reading and writing workshop?
- What are some successes? and
- What good things are happening?

Beginning meetings with a discussion of successes was done in response to mounting complaints that the CLT meetings were filled with negativity and that teachers left those meetings feeling as

if the only thing that was accomplished was to focus on what was not going well and what was not being done. The positive agenda items were proposed as a palliative for these feelings (Field notes, 2007–2008).

Beginning in January 2008, the upper grades (3–6), began to focus on the integration of language arts with the content areas, specifically social studies. This was one way the teachers felt they could increase time for instruction—by integrating the teaching of language arts and social studies. This initiative included the use of nonfiction trade books as texts for guided reading lessons as well as reading historical fiction related to the social studies curriculum at each level. For example, the Grade 4 teachers addressed social studies objectives (e.g., the student will demonstrate knowledge of the causes and results of the American Revolution) simultaneously with language arts objectives (e.g., the student will read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction). Their students read about the American revolution in *Kids Discover Magazine* while reading historical fiction that included *Phoebe and the General* (Griffin, 1997), *Redcoats and Petticoats* (Kirkpatrick, 1999), and *George vs. George* (Schanzer, 2007). The teachers expanded the texts by including poems about American history (Katz, 1998) (Field notes, 2007–2008).

Beginning in February 2008, Ms. DuBois expressed concern during some of the CLT meetings that she was not seeing the components of balanced literacy when she observed in classrooms. She explained to the Grade 6 CLT that she was using the Classroom Walkthrough Form to guide her classroom observations (see Appendix I). Her remarks were a part of a discussion of BART scores, during which the sixth grade language arts and math scores were both deemed disappointing. One of the sixth grade teachers asked about how these same students performed prior to Grade 5 when they achieved high state standard test scores. The instructional coach, Ms. Jolie, shared with the team that these students made high test scores in Grades 3, 4, and 5. This particular meeting brought to everyone’s attention the disconnect between the administrator’s expectations and what the teachers were delivering as far as their instructional model was concerned (Field notes, 2007–2008).

CLT discussion in the early primary grades (K–2) centered on the students’ lack of independence as readers. This led to an exchange between one of the first grade teachers and the principal. According to the teacher, “CLT has turned into Show and Tell for what we’re doing well. We want specialists [to come to CLT] and give US ideas.” The principal replied by saying

that the CLT was driving the agenda all along. If the team wanted something specific on the agenda, they had the ability to do that (Field Notes, 2007–2008; First grade CLT Agenda; February 19, 2008).

The 2007–2008 school year marked the end of the use of PALS (Invernizzi, Juel, Swank, & Meier, 2003) in kindergarten and the beginning of the use of the DRA2 Word Analysis (Beaver, 2006) by the district. Fifth grade was involved with comprehension strategy instruction, using the Comprehension Toolkit (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005). Instead of a shared focus at the primary and upper grades, the CLT initiatives differed by grade-level team (Field notes, 2007–2008).

By the March 2008 meetings, the staff's focus returned to updating the assessment walls, and reflecting on the data that was collected during the DRA2 spring administration. In the spring of 2008, the teachers expressed that they felt more comfortable administering the DRA and the students were more comfortable taking it. Teachers remarked that the spring administration had gone much quicker than in the past (Field notes, 2007–2008).

During the spring of 2008, Ms. Jolie worked with the Grades 3–6 teachers to analyze and discuss their students' performance on the spring BART assessments. As a result of these discussions, the teachers identified the following instructional goals—to see their students engaged in reading behaviors that included the ability to:

- discuss what they read,
- choose just right books and read them,
- know what reading is,
- set goals for themselves as readers, and
- know how to use strategies to help themselves as readers (Field notes, 2007–2008).

The teachers analyzed their students' DRA responses and identified patterns of need in the data. Teachers noted students' ability to respond verbally to the assessment questions, but their inability to respond to those same questions in writing. The ESOL teachers planned to teach idioms because the ESOL students were interpreting idioms literally rather than figuratively (e.g., “raining cats and dogs”). Finally, Ms. Truth shared some lessons from the

Comprehension Toolkit (Harvey & Goudvis, 2005) that teachers could use as they taught the use of comprehension strategies (Field notes, 2007–2008).

In the spring of 2008, the teachers talked about the needs of students who had not made gains in reading. Some of these needs included:

- the ability to choose books appropriate for individual student needs;
- using Reader's Notebook (Buckner, 2005) to respond to reading in different ways;
- observing teachers modeling how to answer a question;
- discussing daily how a particular strategy helped them as readers; and
- asking higher level questions during interactive read aloud (Field notes, 2007–2008).

Teachers continued to look for trends and patterns in their DRA spring data, and cross referenced the DRA data with the BART data. Still, in March 2008, some teachers were complaining about not getting the agenda early enough prior to their CLT meetings. Ms. DuBois commented to the first grade CLT that she felt that the CLT meetings had become more focused. She asked if anyone else felt that way. The first grade teachers responded that they actually liked the way the meetings had been going (Field notes, 2007–2008).

In March 2008, the teachers analyzed the assessment wall and observed that the students were reading at much higher levels than the students read at the same time the year before. In April 2008, the Grades 3–6 teachers focused their attention on effective ways to prepare the students for the state reading standards test. They identified some important skills to address as part of instruction including:

- inferring information,
- synthesizing information,
- asking how this strategy helps the student as a reader,
- integrating the use of comprehension strategies throughout the balanced literacy framework,
- decoding words,
- summarizing the main idea, and
- engaging in sustained reading.

This work on testwiseness focused on teaching the students noteworthy test language based on the study of released state standards tests at each grade level (Field notes, 2007–2008). By April 2008, the kindergarten CLT analyzed students’ writing and identified strengths and needs with respect to writing instruction.

At the end of May 2008, the staff was surveyed about their language arts CLTs. The teacher responses represented 42.3% of K–3 teachers, 19.2% of 4–6 teachers, and 46.2% of resource/specialist teachers. Staff responses are displayed in Table 4.12. Some of the comments they shared to an open-ended question about CLT revealed positive feelings about those meetings, while others suggested ongoing frustration (see Appendix K).

Table 4.12
Staff Survey Responses

| Survey Items | Highest Reported Category (%) | Agree or Strongly Agree | Disagree or Strongly Disagree |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Instructional strategies presented or discussed during the CLT had been applied with their own class | Agreed (54.8%) | 74.2% | 12.9% |
| The way they taught reading had changed based on the topics discussed during CLT | Disagreed (38.7%) | 42.0% | 45.2% |
| The members of the grade-level teams should continue to rotate the responsibilities for facilitating the CLT | Agreed (48.4%) | 58.1% | 25.8% |
| The reading teacher or literacy coach should facilitate the CLT | Strongly Agreed (35.5%) | 64.5% | 32.2% |
| The CLT agenda should be developed by the grade-level team in collaboration with the reading teacher, literacy coach, and resource specialists | Agreed (51.6%) | 87.1% | 9.7% |
| The CLT meetings should be scheduled during their double planning times instead of pulling teachers out of class for another meeting | Strongly Disagreed (41.9%) | 25.8% | 70.9% |
| Refer to Appendix K for open-ended responses. | | | |

Note: Totals are less than 100% due to N/A (Not Applicable) responses.

In the spring of 2008, the percent of students meeting the AMO standard of 73% was 71.71% (down from 80.84% the year before). This meant that Commonwealth ES did not make AYP for a second year in a row. Along with Black students, the other disaggregated subgroups not meeting the AMO included Hispanic students and Limited English Proficient students. Sanctions would continue into the next school year (Field notes, 2007–2008).

The high level of teacher and administrator stress, anxiety, impatience, and demoralization I observed at Commonwealth ES during the 2007–2008 school year appeared directly related to the school's designation as a school in sanction, often called a "failing" school by the media. The staff approached the 2008–2009 school year with less enthusiasm and more anxiety than any prior year. They knew how important it was for the school to make AYP. It was the only way out of sanctions.

At the end of the 2007–2008 school year, Ms. Truth, who interviewed to become a member of the district's Elementary Language Arts Office, was hired. This was another big loss for the rest of the Commonwealth ES staff (Field notes, 2007–2008).

Ms. DuBois and Ms. McCormack interviewed a number of well-qualified candidates and hired Ms. Lebenska as the new reading specialist. Ms. Lebenska was an experienced reading specialist in a neighboring school district. This was the first reading specialist Ms. DuBois hired from outside the district since Ms. Norton (Field notes, 2007–2008).

The 2008–2009 school year

The 2008–2009 school year was the third and final year of my role as participant observer at Commonwealth ES. The 2008–2009 school year began with some good news. The teacher turnover rate at Commonwealth ES experienced a huge decrease (from 18.5% to 6.67%). This was the smallest teacher turnover experienced at Commonwealth ES in all the years covered in this study, despite the school's difficult prior year. At the same time, the student mobility rate also decreased (from 32.21% to 25.82%), recouping the 6% increase from the previous year (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The school leadership team decided that they would create a document outlining non-negotiables to share with the staff upon their return to school in August 2008. The document addressed language arts, mathematics, and common planning time (see Appendix L). I discuss here the non-negotiables regarding language arts and common planning time only (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The leadership team planned to meet with the staff as a whole in August and begin by reminding them of the instructional practices to which they had already agreed—a reminder of the shared educational philosophy and pedagogy that had been implemented at Commonwealth ES over the last six years. The word “non-negotiables” was chosen intentionally by the school leadership team to communicate to teachers that this is what they had already agreed upon, i.e., this is the Commonwealth ES model and the list was not going to be revisited or changed. Anything not on the list was open for negotiation (Field notes, 2008–2009).

Surprisingly to me, the school year began with the staff in good spirits. Even though Commonwealth ES had not made AYP again and was in its second year of sanctions, there was a more positive feeling among the staff. Perhaps this was because they were already aware of the AYP status when they left in the summer and chose to return nonetheless. They appeared to return with the intention of turning things around.

For the 2008–2009 CLT meetings, Ms. DuBois acquiesced to the repeated requests of the classroom teachers that the CLT meetings be facilitated by the reading specialists and coaches. The classroom teachers were still expected to contribute to the creation of the agendas. But they were no longer expected to create the agendas on their own nor were they asked to facilitate the CLT meetings. They did take on the responsibility for the other CLT roles (timekeeper, scribe, and reporter), while the role of facilitator was always taken by one of the reading specialists or instructional coaches (Field notes, 2008–2009).

At the first set of CLT meetings in September 2008, each of the teams was asked to discuss the following four questions:

- What do we want students to learn?
- How will we know if they have learned it?
- What does the data reveal? and
- What are we going to do if students already know it or do not learn it? (Field notes, 2008–2009; Dufour et al., 2006).

An examination of the responses to these questions by each of the teams reveals more similarities than differences. That is, most teams cited the following:

- the program of studies and the essential knowledge identified by the state standards as resources to know what to teach;

- use of the curriculum map and pacing guides to plan meaningful instructional sequence;
- use of the previous year's data to identify patterns of strengths and needs;
- use of data to identify students in need of intervention; and
- plans to share how resources were being used.

The expressed differences included the need for integration of language arts with the content subjects (Grades 3–6 felt a strong need), the need to analyze student writing (K–2 were much more involved with writing instruction), the use of the data to give students feedback (just a few teams mentioned feedback); and a plan to work closely with the coaches to improve their instruction. See Appendix M for a more comprehensive list of responses.

As members of the school leadership team looked over what the teachers had said, we remarked on the high degree of similarity that existed across the grade-level responses to the four questions. We were also impressed with the quality of the suggestions as they related to best practice and the reflective stance exhibited by the teachers during this exercise.

The other important agenda item was a discussion with each of the teams to refine their understanding of what CLT meetings were. This was accomplished by asking them to answer the question: What is CLT not? Teachers highlighted various points, e.g., CLT is not a social time, a gripe session, or a time to plan field trips (Field notes, 2008–2009).

For the Commonwealth ES staff, it seemed like a synthesis of commonly held beliefs had occurred over the summer, and elements of best practice and reflective practice came together in September 2008. There were, however, ongoing frustrations with some issues, including not enough time for teaching, lack of content reading materials at levels low enough to be appropriate for some students, lack of understanding about ways a grade-level team could identify a single SMART goal that would address the needs of all of the students at a grade level, and an uptick in behavior issues that hadn't been a problem for some time.

In November 2008, during a conversation with Ms. McCormack, the assistant principal, she commented that "...the kids are off the wall this week." She had noticed the same pattern the previous year just before Thanksgiving and continuing on through Christmas. There had been an increase in the number of student fights and she had to suspend five students in two separate incidents for hitting. She noted that on the bus for Saturday school, a second grader said to a

female kindergartner, “Shut up, you bitch.” Ms. McCormack speculated that there was increased stress in the students’ homes because of the holidays. She remarked that “This year it’s even worse because of the economy” (Field notes, 2008–2009).

During the 2008–2009 school year, each CLT identified a specific focus based on their analyses of assessments. They were guided in their data analyses by looking at the data in three ways: Here’s What... So What?... Now What? The focus for each grade level is listed in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Summary of “Here’s What...So What?... Now What?”

| Grade Level | Focus |
|--------------------|--|
| Kindergarten | Using the new DRA2 Word Analysis to Inform Instruction and EIRI |
| Grade One | Launching Managed Independent Learning Centers and Take Home Books |
| Kindergarten | Parent Support Project |
| Grade One | Parent Support Project |
| Grade Two | Reading Fluency |
| Grade Three | Integrating Language Arts and Social Studies Using Backward Design |
| Grade Four | Integrating Language Arts and Social Studies |
| Grade Five | Self-assessment and Goal-setting |
| Grade Six | Developing Vocabulary and Using Context Clues |

By the December CLT meetings, the members of the school leadership team observed that all grade-level teams demonstrated the following consistent behaviors:

- they were co-creating agendas for their meetings using the timed agenda template from the Sherry Wood training;
- they were maintaining their focus on their identified objectives (listed above) from one meeting to the next (there was one exception to this by one team for one month);
- they followed through on commitments made at the meetings;
- they continuously analyzed their formative assessments throughout the year, in between major assessments such as the DRA and eCART;

- they identified and read research and professional books and articles related to their identified focus;
- they brought resources to their CLT meetings and shared them with their teammates; and
- they expressed a need for interrater reliability on the DRA assessments, both within grade-level teams and across grade-level teams (Field notes, 2008–2009).

At the January CLT meeting for one of the primary grade-level teams, there was some negativity that surfaced related to the CLT goal of fluency. It came as a set of criticisms of the DRA2 assessment. The criticism was led by the LC coach for the primary grades:

The important thing to look for with fluency is done with ‘fluent, easy text.’ We can’t expect fluency with a brand new text the first time [a student] reads it. That’s what is expected on the DRA and the students are also expected to have total comprehension.”

One of the Reading Recovery teachers joined in. “Retelling is not a real measure of the story.” It should be noted that retelling is the primary comprehension measure for the DRA2. The rest of the team nodded in agreement with all of the criticisms. There were no solutions offered at the time of the meeting. I made a notation in my field notes during that meeting noting these negative comments (Field notes, 2008–2009).

During this same meeting, one of the team members who had been reticent to talk during all of the previous CLT meetings passed when she was asked for her ideas and said she was getting a cold and if she talked she would lose her voice, so she wasn’t going to talk. I made a note in my field notes during this meeting and my extended notes following the meeting that what had once been passive resistance on this team member’s part was now moving to more active resistance (Field notes, 2008–2009).

In contrast, one of the upper grade CLTs was a model of collaboration. Their focus was student self-assessment and goal setting. They set this goal as a result of their analysis of the DRA2 scores for their students. All of the teachers at this grade level identified self-assessment and goal setting as a student need. As a grade-level team, they developed lesson plans for students to learn to write New Year’s Resolutions based upon self-assessment and goal setting for their lives. They taught the students to write two- to three-step plans as part of their resolutions. One student’s resolution was:

I resolve not to be impatient with fools. I will accomplish my resolution by 1) not rolling my eyes when someone says something stupid; 2) count to ten before I react to an insult; 3) ask myself why that person said the stupid thing—maybe they didn't mean it to be stupid.” (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The teachers reported that not only did the students learn how to self-assess and set personal goals, they also wound up improving their classroom behavior and general community interaction as a result of keeping their resolutions. Once the teachers confirmed that the students understood the concepts, they taught the students how to transfer their understandings to self-assessment and goal setting for themselves as readers. They also had the students write two- to three-step plans for how they intended to meet their reading goals (Field notes, 2008–2009).

In early February 2009, in response to the teachers' request for more interrater reliability with the DRA2, I facilitated a recalibration training for all of the teachers in Grades 3–6. This began with a discussion of the “drift” phenomenon as it relates to performance assessments, reviewing the specific DRA2 criteria, one at a time, followed by studying anchor papers and annotations for each criterion. This was followed by the teachers working in pairs to score leveled practice papers followed by feedback as a way to pull the group together around their definition of each criterion and what to look for in student responses to document the level of control students demonstrated for each criterion (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The kindergarten and Grade 1 CLTs had joined together on a joint project to encourage parental support at home for reading and writing. They began the project in response to their observation of low parent involvement with the school. The teachers identified two recurring themes when they talked with parents about support at home. Some parents would say that the school district is the best system in the world, so school can take care of it [literacy]. Other parents gave testimony about how giving their children support at home resulted in great success and achievement for the children (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The project began with two parent meetings at the school. Both meetings were held at the school—one during the day and one in the early evening. Parents were invited to come to one of the meetings to talk about ways they could support their child's success. The teachers had food for the parents and child care for younger children who accompanied the parents. The turnout was approximately 85%, which was very high for the school (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The teachers began each meeting by defining success in terms the parents would identify with—graduating from school, going to college, getting and keeping a job that would support a family. All of these were hopes and dreams the parents had for their children. The teachers described a take-home reading program they would begin with their students. They asked for the parents' support. At home, the parents would be responsible for making sure the child had a quiet place to read, someone to read to, and someone to sign off on a sheet to document that the reading had been done. The teachers also showed parents how to play some games with their children that would support learning the alphabet, letter names and their associated sounds, and high frequency sight words. The teachers made it clear to the parents that this support could be given by ANYONE in their home—a parent, a grandparent, a sibling, a care giver, a friend (Field notes, 2008–2009).

The teachers then made home visits to the parents who had not attended either of the meetings and they were able to get even more parents to agree to be a part of the project. They were never able to get 100% participation, but they did have the support of 90 to 95% of the families of the students in their classrooms (Field notes, 2008–2009).

At all of the subsequent CLT meetings, the kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers discussed how the project was going. They were delighted that most of the parents who had joined the project followed through with support at home. Of course, there were some parents who signed the forms but did not actually give the support at home. The teachers said it was very obvious when they talked with the students and when they monitored students' reading which students were being supported at home and which were not (Field notes, 2008–2009).

In spring 2009 when the kindergartners were assessed on the DRA2 Word Analysis, almost 100% of the students met the kindergarten spring benchmark. When the first graders were assessed on the DRA2 reading assessment, 100% of them met the first grade spring benchmark. We all believed that the parental support made a valuable difference in this increase in the number of students meeting the spring benchmarks.

At the May CLT meetings, Ms. DuBois asked the teachers to reflect on the meetings. Their comments were overwhelmingly positive. Some examples include, "The most beneficial meetings were the ones when we identified a specific topic to address and brought materials to the meeting." "I like looking at the statistics, students' eCART tests, looking at their strengths and needs, not just for the SOL test, but for lifetime skills as well. "In the past I've felt I walked

away from CLT with MORE work to do so it stressed me out. But this year, that's changed. I've felt I've walked away with resources." "Curriculum maps have kept us focused" (Field notes, 2008–2009).

Ms. DuBois shared her thoughts with the teams:

Coming to your CLT is helpful to me, letting me know what your needs have been so that I can be responsive to you. Your team is fully engaged, very organized, very professional. These have been wonderful conversations. It makes a difference for the kids. You will reap the benefits when you see your kids' SOL performance."(I notated in my notes that everyone laughed at this last comment.) (Field notes, 2008–2009).

Ms. DuBois asked each team about how they wanted to proceed with CLTs the following year. "If we have a choice, we would prefer to keep it as it is." This view was expressed unanimously by some teams and by the vast majority of the rest of the teams. The only exception was the one primary grade-level team who continued to be dissatisfied. They explained that they did not see the value of using their double planning time for the CLT meetings. They would prefer to meet as a team on an "as needed" basis. Ms. DuBois explained to them once again that the CLT meetings would continue as regularly scheduled monthly team meetings, following all of the same procedures used during 2008–2009. She further explained that this decision was based on an almost unanimous agreement by the grade-level teams, and that the primary grade-level team was the lone dissenting voice (Field notes, 2008–2009).

In spring 2009, the Commonwealth ES students took their state mandated assessments. In July 2009, Ms. DuBois met with the school improvement team and shared the following announcement: "Commonwealth ES made AYP this year! To make AYP, schools needed to have pass rates of 81% in reading and 79% in math. Commonwealth ES's pass rates were 92.44% in reading and 86.43% in math. All of the disaggregated subgroups met the benchmark targets." Ms. DuBois emailed this news to the entire staff.

Epilogue

It is important to note that the paramount objective for all of the administrators and staff at Commonwealth ES was not simply to make AYP, but rather to instruct students in a way that was appropriate to their needs while still empowering them to navigate the state standards reading tests successfully. In this case, success is defined by the state as making AYP. The teachers and administrators were proud that they had been able to make AYP while maintaining best instructional practices for all students at Commonwealth ES. They believed they were

providing their students with the literacy skills and strategies they would need to ensure successful lives. The teachers believed they were helping the students to become lifelong readers and thinkers. The teachers believed that this was a key to the students' future success. The teachers also realized that the Commonwealth ES students needed to be able to demonstrate their competence on any of the gate-keeping measures that they would face throughout their lives. The state standards reading test was one of those measures.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to discuss what I learned as a result of the research described in this document. I organized my discussion of the assertions and implications for future research around my three research questions:

1. What were the challenges faced on the path to improved student academic achievement?
2. What practices were implemented during the process of improving student academic achievement?
3. What resources were used during the process?

Although I based all of my assertions on my research findings at Commonwealth ES, I am not the first researcher to take some of these same positions. My reading of the literature in the area of educational research revealed existing discussion of some of the same assertions that I identify. Therefore, I will not discuss in detail those assertions already documented in the research, but will reference the related researchers. That is, my focus in Chapter 5 is to discuss in detail assertions that I identified for which I have seen little or nothing reported in the literature, and offer relevant recommendations related to each assertion.

Assertions and Relevant Recommendations Related to Challenges

Challenge

The paramount challenge faced by the administrators and staff at Commonwealth ES between the summers of 2000 and 2009 was the structure of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In the section that follows, I report the NCLB challenge as multiple related challenges, all of which are subsumed under the larger NCLB challenge.

Related challenges

The NCLB model design sets a single benchmark for all schools to meet on an identical time table.

The NCLB model design labels a school as “failing” when it does not meet the AMO for reading.

The NCLB model design punishes schools that do not meet the annual yearly benchmarks by imposing school choice and outside tutoring.

For discussion of these challenges, refer to Allington, 2005; Allington & Cunningham, 2002; Compton-Lilly, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; DeGarmo et al., 1999; Haycock, Jerald, & Huang, 2001; Karp, 2004; Kohn, 2004; Mathis, 2003; Meier & Wood, 2004; Neill, 2004; Ravitch, 2010; Ravitch & Meier, 2011; and Robinson, 2011.

Related challenge

The NCLB model design does not provide resources to high poverty, high diversity schools to support them as they work to meet universal, designated benchmarks.

For discussion of this challenge, refer to Grunwald, 2006; Economic Policy Institute, 2002; Ferguson, 1991; Mathis, 2003; and Wood, 2004.

Related challenge

The NCLB model design assumes that if a school is labeled “failing” for not making AYP, the quality of teaching in that school is poor or ineffective.

In 2007, Commonwealth ES did not make AYP because one disaggregated subgroup, African American students, did not meet the Annual Measureable Objective. In 2004, the last year that Commonwealth failed to make AYP, the AMO was 61% and the total percentage of students meeting the AMO was 53.06% . By 2007, the AMO rose to 69% and 80.84% of the students at Commonwealth met that AYP. This was an increase of 27.78% of students meeting a higher AMO. But because the African American students did not meet the AMO (67.32 % met the AMO of 69%) in 2007, Commonwealth was labeled a “failing school” according to NCLB.

Two years earlier, in 2005, Commonwealth ES participated in a formal instructional school walkthrough (Protheroe, 2009). The specific results of that walkthrough are discussed in Chapter 4. The external walkthrough team members, who were all experienced classroom teachers and district leaders for professional development, rated the quality of the teaching that they observed in the classrooms at Commonwealth ES as high. Although they did make some recommendations for improvement, the results of the walkthrough indicated that the basic language arts instruction at Commonwealth was of high caliber.

As a district staff developer, I began to recommend that teachers from other schools who wanted to observe best practice reading and writing workshop instruction should observe

teachers at Commonwealth. Those visitors, who included reading specialists and classroom teachers, unanimously commented on the high level of best practice that they observed during their visits. Not only were the teachers at Commonwealth able to model their teaching for these visitors, they also met with all visitors after their observations to answer questions and go into more depth with the visitors about what they had observed.

Yet, under the NCLB conditions, Commonwealth ES was expected to offer school choice to their students, allowing them to transfer to one of two nearby district schools that had made AYP that year (Personal communication, J. Tucker, Coordinator, Title I, July 2011). My own observations of the teaching in these “choice” schools revealed that the teaching there was, in no way, superior to the teaching at Commonwealth ES. In fact, in some respects the quality was not as high as the teaching at Commonwealth ES. Moreover, one of these choice schools also did not make AYP in 2010 (Personal communication, J. Tucker, Coordinator, Title I, July 7, 2011).

Related challenge

The NCLB model design is associated with some negative influences on the morale and self-efficacy of Commonwealth ES’s administrators, teachers, and students.

Between 2000 and 2009, the percent of Commonwealth ES students at each grade level that achieved the end-of-year benchmark for their grade level increased markedly. By the spring of 2007, the percent of kindergarten students at the school making the state benchmark was 92%. The percent of Grade One students who made state benchmark was 84.31%, and the percent of Grade Two students was 78.46%. In spring 2007, 80.84% of all Commonwealth students in Grades 3–6 met the higher AMO benchmark of 69% for reading on the state standards tests. The teachers, administrators, and school leadership team were initially ecstatic when they received these early, non-disaggregated numbers from the district’s Department of Accountability. They were proud that the students in all disaggregated subgroups had improved their reading performance from the previous year.

Their joy soon turned to distress when they were notified by the school district that they did not make AYP for the 2006–2007 school year because one disaggregated subgroup, Black students, did not make the AMO benchmark of 69%; 67.32% of Black students met that benchmark. They missed meeting the benchmark by 1.68%. The school administrators’ decision not to share this news with the teachers as they left that June for the summer break was the first evidence of the effect this pronouncement would have on the entire staff. Ms. DuBois

and Ms. Towson talked about the negative effect they believed this would have on the teachers' emotions and school morale. The teachers ended the 2006–2007 school year feeling proud of their work in the area of language arts student achievement. Due to the way AYP is calculated, they were, in fact, labeled a “failing” school at the district level because one group of students had not made AYP. The difference between the teachers' perceptions of themselves as educators and the public labeling of Commonwealth ES as a failing school provided a stark contrast. It is not surprising that the teachers and the administrators reacted very emotionally to the news once they received it.

When Ms. DuBois informed the teachers at the first staff meeting of the 2007–2008 school year that they had not made AYP because the Black students had not met the AMO, the emotional reaction in the room was palpable. Under NCLB, the usual course of events for a school not making AYP is for the school to offer public school choice. The teachers realized this meant that parents would be notified by letter that they could transfer their students to one of two nearby public schools which had made AYP, and that Commonwealth ES would use some of its Title I funds to pay for those students' bus transportation. After all of the hard work that had gone into building respect within the school parent and citizen communities, the school's reputation suffered a major blow with the public announcement that Commonwealth ES was on the district's list of failing schools. Throughout the 2007–2008 school year, there was a noticeable tone of dissatisfaction and impatience underlying the teacher and administrator interactions. Student achievement scores fell for the first time in a long time in the spring of 2008 from a total of 80.84% passing the year before to a total of 71.71% passing—a drop of almost 10%. There is no doubt in my mind that student achievement was at least partly influenced by the teachers working in an atmosphere of perceived failure, public humiliation, and shaken confidence in themselves as educators.

Relevant Recommendations

It is incumbent upon the current administration including the executive and legislative branches of the federal government, as well as state and local governments, to reconsider, revise, and reauthorize the current No Child Left Behind legislation. This reauthorization is already several years overdue and public education will continue to face unreasonable and unattainable goals unless these changes are made. The NCLB model design must be based upon a new paradigm by which schools can demonstrate that they are improving in the areas of instruction,

teacher quality, and school safety. As suggested by Robinson and Aronica (2009), the current business model that casts students in the role of “products” and teachers in the role of “manufacturers” must be changed in order to be consistent with what we know from research about effective teaching and learning.

Another recommendation is that administrators, parents, and teachers must work together to assess and improve the lines of communication and the factors that affect those lines.

Assertions and Relevant Recommendations Related to Practices

Practices represented another major category that administrators and staff dealt with as they worked to support students’ learning and reading achievement. These practices included those related to instruction, behavior and management, and feedback.

Practice

While there are instructional practices that support all students’ reading achievement, some instructional practices were particularly effective for students who came to this school from homes in poverty.

The value of using formative assessment to identify the background knowledge students bring to school with them is well-documented in the research (Allington, 2001, 2005; Battistich et al., 1995; Hrabowsky et al., 2002; Karp, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Marzano, 2004; Marzano et al., 2001). When teachers know the extent of students’ vocabulary knowledge, prior experience, and personal connections to concepts that are being taught, learning is heightened and all students benefit. Identifying the background knowledge of students from homes in poverty is one of the most important practices their teachers can employ. At Commonwealth ES, the teachers became experts at looking at student data both pre- and post-instruction. When they analyzed pre-instruction data, the teachers were able to scaffold the instruction for students. This scaffolding was a recognized best practice that became the expected way of teaching at Commonwealth ES between 2000 and 2009.

A second key practice that characterized Commonwealth ES’s instruction was differentiation of instruction based on assessment (Marzano et al., 2001; Tomlinson, 1999). There was a wide range of strengths and needs in the classrooms during the time of these observations. In an average fifth grade classroom, reading ability often ranged from students who could not read at all to students reading two or three levels above grade level. The teachers

became adept at using their assessment information to group students for instruction, set instructional objectives, and match students with appropriate texts.

As Commonwealth ES student achievement scores rose over the years, interest grew at the district level in analyzing the instruction at the school to identify how it had changed over the years. In 2006 and again in 2009, the district was approached by two companies that produce videos of best instructional practice and markets them to the public. The companies asked district leaders if there were teachers in the district that would be good candidates for filming during their classroom instruction and team planning times. The district submitted a number of names to both companies. Company consultants visited the classrooms of the nominated teachers, and chose district teachers for filming. One of the teachers chosen by Teachscape was Gary Olson, a fifth grade teacher at Commonwealth ES. The Center on Innovation and Improvement chose the school's third grade team.

The video filmed in Mr. Olson's classroom demonstrated a lesson organized around the analysis of student achievement data. Students begin as a whole class for scaffolding related to a lesson about tone in writing. Viewers see how the teacher ties the difficult concept to be taught (tone) with students' prior knowledge. At the beginning of the lesson, he asks his students if their parents have ever said, "Don't you use that tone with me!" He has the students play a version of charades where they convey a tone given to them on a slip of paper to the rest of the class with their voice, body language, and facial expressions. He follows that with a whole class interactive lesson identifying the tone of a Langston Hughes poem, *April Rain Song*. After the whole class lesson, students are grouped according to the degree of teacher support and differentiation they require to engage in guided practice as they identify the tone of a piece. Finally, the students take what they learn about tone and apply that knowledge to their own writing.

The video of Mr. Olson was highlighted by district leaders and staff developers in the district at multiple staff development sessions for different groups including elementary principals and assistant principals, reading specialists, central office staff developers, district instructional coaches, and classroom teachers. It also is a part of an online professional staff development course offered at the district level.

The video of the Grade 3 team included shots of their grade-level team planning meetings as well as each teacher teaching her class. This video became a part of a web-based tutorial for professional development in language arts instruction for inservice and preservice teachers.

Practice

Some instructional practices proved to be particularly effective for students who came to this school from homes in which the students' first language was not the same as the language used in school. In this case, that language was English.

As part of the larger school district, the teachers at Commonwealth ES used the LEARN lesson design template (District "A" Best Practices online site) when they wrote their language arts lessons. LEARN stands for the following:

- **Link**, when the teacher links the new learning that is included in the lesson with something the students have learned before or something from their background knowledge;
- **Engage and Educate**, when the teacher explicitly teaches the concept, skill, or strategy that she has identified based on student assessment data;
- **Active Learning**, when the students engage in differentiated guided practice of the new skill, strategy, or concept, under the guidance of the teacher in small groups;
- **Reflect**, when the students and the teacher reflect on what they have learned; and
- **Now and Then**, when the teacher connects the learning from the current lesson with what the students will learn next.

Although LEARN lesson design is intended for use with all district students, the Commonwealth ES teachers and administrators found that the design was especially effective for their students whose first language was not English. The design provides a clear context and an opportunity for differentiation that are both essential if ESOL students are to succeed in learning lessons taught in English.

In addition to the LEARN lesson design, the staff at Commonwealth ES also implemented a co-teaching model during which ESOL teachers pushed into classrooms to work with the ESOL students side-by-side with the classroom teacher rather than pulling the ESOL students out of the classroom for instruction. This co-teaching model allowed the ESOL students to build and maintain full membership in the classroom community, reinforced common best

practice delivery by all of the teachers working with the ESOL students, ensured that teachers focused on the same objectives during the same time period with the same students, and reduced fragmentation of the school day for the ESOL students, as well as the classroom teacher and the other class members. Rather than the ESOL teacher meeting only with the ESOL students and the classroom teacher having less interaction with the ESOL students, the co-teaching model enabled both teachers to integrate all of the students into instructional small groups, regardless of their ESOL status. Both teachers worked with all students—ESOL and non-ESOL—to instruct students on identified objectives with levels of differentiation based upon the students’ needs. In this way, all students were given access to their grade level standards, benchmarks, and indicators, using materials and scaffolds appropriate to their needs.

Finally, the CLT teams were made up of all of the teachers working with students at a grade level. In addition to the classroom teachers, this included the ESOL teachers and the other resource teachers. The common CLT planning times gave all of the teachers at a grade level the time to discuss whole class, small group, and individual student needs. The team was able to co-plan instruction, co-identify instructional resources, co-develop resources, and debrief on the effectiveness of instruction that had been delivered. Instruction was based on student assessment data, and therefore, was evidence-based.

Practice

Leaders of this high poverty, high diversity school, led by Ms. DuBois, stayed with an initiative long enough to know if it was working (using data to determine its effectiveness), but were flexible enough to revise or even abandon an initiative when, after a reasonable amount of time, the data indicated that it was not working.

As described in greater detail in Chapter 4, the staff at Commonwealth ES undertook multiple initiatives between 2000 and 2009. A review of those initiatives reveals that it was not always a straight shot from the initiation of an initiative to its successful achievement. What was common across all of the initiatives was the problem-solving model used by the staff as they sought to improve instruction, behavior, communication, and public relations. They used the CLT forum to monitor the progress of each initiative using data, to celebrate successes, to discuss obstacles, to brainstorm possible solutions, and to revise plans for an initiative as they worked toward its accomplishment. In this way, all of the involved parties had opportunities for input into every initiative. This ensured there would not be exclusive top-down decision-

making, and that all teachers owned all initiatives whether they wanted to or not. Needless to say, this model did not always run smoothly. Because all parties were heard, there were times when team members disagreed about particular revisions or rejected them entirely. Therefore, as part of their team norms, each team developed guidelines for how a final decision would be taken by the team in the event of disagreement among its members. The model took a great deal of energy and a commitment on the part of the staff to maintain it with fidelity.

In particular, I observed the key role played by three principals. Between 2000 and 2009, there were three different principals at Commonwealth ES. The first two were unsuccessful in addressing the district leadership's major issue at the time—students meeting NCLB benchmarks to make AYP. The third leader of this high poverty, high diversity school articulated a clear vision of where she believed the school needed to move in order to be successful. Her vision was founded on research in the area of best practice. She was knowledgeable about best practice in multiple areas that affected the school – instruction, professional development, behavior, management, motivation, poverty, professional learning communities, assessment, data analysis, parent-school communication, and character education. When confronted by push-back from staff, she would first respond by specifically questioning the individuals in order to determine what the real issue was. She would attempt to persuade the involved parties to stick with the initial plan if she felt that they had not given it enough time. However, at a certain point in time (that differed with each initiative), she was willing to acknowledge when the plan was not working, and would agree to proposed revisions or even abandoning the original plan and go in a new direction. Her requirements, however, were always that the plan was based in research, that it had an articulated, measureable goal, and that it was consistent with the school's philosophy as expressed in Commonwealth ES's Mission Statement. In fact, she began each school year by revisiting and revising the Mission Statement with all of the staff as part of the first-of-the-year organizational meetings. In this way, all of the teachers and administrators began the year in agreement about their overall school mission. She paired this work with first-of-the-year teacher visits into the community so the teachers would be aware of who the students were, where and how they lived, and the dynamics of the community that students navigated when they were not in school.

There were several times when, after agreeing to revise or abandon an initiative at the behest of teachers, the principal would revisit and reinstate an abandoned initiative. One

instance involved the teachers in the Gifted and Talented Center who insisted that they not be required to administer the Developmental Reading Assessment to the students in the center. They made their case by sharing data with the principal that showed that all of the center students were reading above grade level. The principal agreed and for that school year, the center teachers did not use the DRA to inform their instruction. At the end of the school year, the principal analyzed student performance on the state standards reading test and discovered that all of the students in the regular education classroom made benchmark, but there were some students in the center who did not. When she asked the teachers for an explanation, they did not have one. The principal told them that she had tried it their way, and that had not worked for the students. Based upon the positive evidence she had from other classrooms that had used the DRA, she instructed all of the center teachers to use the DRA from that year forward. There was no push-back from the teachers.

Practice

Leaders of this high poverty, high diversity school were committed to a gradual release of responsibility model for both the students and the teachers. When a sufficient number of scaffolds were used, responsibility was gradually released to the students and the teachers and both were able to function independently. The leaders learned that when insufficient scaffolds were provided or insufficient time to practice was given, the students and/or the teachers were unable to function independently. This resulted in frustration, confusion, and/or negativity on the part of the students and/or teachers.

Leaders of Commonwealth ES understood the importance of taking sufficient time to make the necessary changes in order to maintain status as a successful school with respect to the accountability requirements of NCLB. They believed in the effectiveness of a model of gradual release of responsibility for both the teachers and the students. This gradual release began with the leaders and the specialist team modeling best practice for the teachers and taking the major responsibility for all decision-making. It transitioned to one in which the leaders, specialist team, and teachers worked collaboratively to make decisions and change. The final phase (which occurred one initiative at a time) consisted of the teachers taking primary responsibility for decision-making and change in collaboration with the school administrators, while the specialist team stepped back and became observers of the process and offered assistance only

when explicitly requested by the school staff. The same gradual release of responsibility was practiced by teachers with the students.

The pressures of being labeled a “failing school” under NCLB include public demands on the school by district, state, and federal officials to make changes expeditiously, which often result in change without much thought. Once a school goes into sanctions, officials enforcing the NCLB conditions put great demands on the school to do whatever it takes to make AYP. The overwhelming message to the school is that the ends justify any means necessary, even when those means are in direct conflict with what the administrators and teachers know to be best practice. One example is when “failing” schools are told to do whatever it takes to ensure that all ESOL children make AYP benchmarks, regardless of their facility with the English language.

The leaders at Commonwealth ES walked a very fine line, managing to protect the teachers and students from as much anxiety as possible while still being responsive to the expectations and demands for accountability of district, state, and federal leaders. The school’s administrators often found themselves in the role of compromiser, trying to strike a balance between the NCLB demands on one hand and their own professional knowledge and experience on the other. At Commonwealth ES, I observed administrators and staff whose measuring stick was always this question: Is (whatever was being proposed) beneficial for the students for whom it was intended? The staff at Commonwealth kept to a minimum those things that they believed would not be beneficial to students. They maximized the number of things that supported students’ academic achievement as measured by academic performance and achievement scores, within an environment that encouraged motivation and self-efficacy for both teachers and students. On the many occasions when they were successful, they felt as if they were true professionals who could make a difference for their students. On those occasions when they were not successful, they felt demoralized and controlled by people who they believed did not have anywhere near the educational background that they possessed. This resulted in their feelings of powerlessness, anger, and discouragement toward themselves and their students.

Practice

Leaders and teachers at this high poverty, high diversity school navigated through the school year from a problem-solving stance.

The work of the leaders and teachers at Commonwealth ES evolved into a common use of a collaborative problem-solving approach. They began by identifying a specific problem and using data to support the identification. They formulated a solution to the problem based on their own knowledge and experience. If the solution did not successfully solve the problem, they researched other possible solutions while always keeping the criteria of best practice uppermost in their minds. They identified an alternate solution as a result of their research and applied it to the problem at hand. They repeated this process until the problem was solved. They used data to confirm that the problem was solved.

Practice

The creation of a culture of reflective practice at this school was a major factor that contributed to the administrators' and teachers' ability to make successful, long-lasting change.

I believe that the greatest transformation that occurred at Commonwealth ES between 2000 and 2009 was the creation of a culture of reflective practice. The administrators moved away from an earlier culture of exclusively top-down decisions that reflected little trust in the professional abilities of the teachers and toward the championing of collaborative decision-making. The staff moved from being a group of teachers whose mantra had been “just tell me what you want me to do, and I’ll do it,” to teachers who are powerful student advocates. They grew to possess belief in their professional knowledge and practice, strong self-efficacy, and certainty that they make a positive difference in the lives of their students. The school moved from one with a reputation for being troubled, to one respected at the cluster, district, state, and federal levels for its instruction and accomplishments. The staff’s accomplishments have been recognized professionally and publicly. Instances of this recognition include their selection by outside experts in the field of literacy and staff development as exemplars of the use of best practice in public education, and their being highlighted in professional development films featuring their instructional skills.

Relevant recommendations

In this section, I include a set of assertions that I offer as recommendations for policy makers and educators. I have come to these higher level assertions based on my belief that Commonwealth ES is representative of a much larger group of schools in the United States.

1. Educational reformers must make use of the most current research related to instructional best practice. In particular, with the growing diversity of the population in American public schools, policy makers must acknowledge the important relationship between ongoing assessment and teacher use of the data from those assessments to differentiate instruction for an ever increasing diversity among the public school student population.
2. Educational reformers must make use of the most current research related to effective pedagogy. In particular, policy makers must acknowledge the important role that motivation, self-efficacy, and school morale exert on student achievement, and recognize how they are affected by pedagogical practices of teachers in schools. Public schools must become proficient in their understanding and implementation of professional learning communities as a way to increase collaboration among teachers as they work to support student achievement.
3. Educational reformers must acknowledge that time in the school day and school year is finite. Schools cannot continue to absorb the ever increasing responsibility they bear for aspects of student learning and development without an increase in time for teaching and learning. In addition, policy makers must acknowledge the need for sufficient time for teaching and learning, considering the range of needs that students bring to public school classrooms. In particular, a reasonable amount of time **MUST** be maintained for teaching and a reasonable amount of time should be set aside for assessment and evaluation.
4. Research must be focused on the identification of the characteristics of effective leaders, especially in schools where students come from homes steeped in poverty, illiteracy, and who come from cultures that differ greatly from the expectations of the American public school system.
5. There needs to be attention given to identifying and incorporating the strengths and knowledge that students from diverse backgrounds bring to school with them instead of continuing the pervasive assumption that they bring “no background knowledge” to school at all.

6. Research on teachers' ability to use assessment information to identify what students bring to school and what scaffolding teachers need to provide in order for students to be successful as they navigate the public school curriculum needs to be supported.
7. The art of collaborative problem-solving as it relates to public education needs more investigation and incorporation into teacher preparation programs and inservice staff development at the local, state, and federal levels.
8. I cannot emphasize enough the need for more research to be done related to the role that reflective practice plays in overall student achievement, student and teacher motivation, student and teacher self-efficacy, student and teacher self-sufficiency, and general morale in the school community.

Assertions and Relevant Recommendations Related to Resources

Resources

Administrators and teachers in this high poverty, high diversity school had access to specific data to inform their reading instruction. That data included assessment information about students' phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, summarizing, synthesizing, and metacognitive awareness.

The administrators, coaches, and reading specialists at Commonwealth ES guided the teachers on the use of multiple assessments to inform their instruction. Between 2000 and 2009, teachers received extensive training on the following measures:

- PALS (kindergarten),
- DRA2WA (replaced PALS) (kindergarten),
- DRA2 (kindergarten through Grade 6),
- running records (kindergarten through Grade 2) or records of oral reading (Grades 3–6),
- BART,
- eCART (replaced BART), and
- classroom observations recorded as anecdotal notes.

The training included information on the content of the assessment, correct administration, scoring the assessment, analyzing results, and use of the results for instructional purposes.

Teachers analyzed student performance on the state standards tests (Grades 3 -6) and correlated student performance on those tests with student performance on BART, eCART, and DRA2. Administrators, coaches, reading specialists, and teachers also analyzed student performance by item on the state standards tests, correlated those performances with the same students' performance on like items on BART, and eCART and on related items on DRA2. They used what they learned from these analyses to identify instructional needs and strengths, and to scaffold their students' instruction. These experiences guided teachers as they identified specific instructional objectives and planned lessons. For example, teachers in Grades 3–6 looked at student performance on items that assessed knowledge of a particular strategy (e.g., inferring) and compared performances on multiple choice format tests (such as BART, eCART, and state standards tests) with performances on performance-based assessments (e.g., DRA2 and teacher made assessments). In these ways, teachers were able to drill down to the level of student need and design appropriate instruction. When teachers in Grades 3–6 looked at items that assessed students' use of inferring on the various assessments, they were able to identify three groups of students:

1. those who could infer (based on their DRA2 performance) but could not demonstrate mastery of inference on multiple choice format tests;
2. those who could infer and demonstrate mastery of inference on both performance assessment and multiple choice format tests; and
3. those who could not demonstrate mastery of inference on either performance assessment or multiple choice format tests.

Instructional objectives for Group 1 were aimed at testwiseness for multiple choice formats. Objectives for Group 2 were aimed at students' metacognitive awareness of themselves as readers, specifically with respect to what it means to infer when reading. Objectives for Group 3 were aimed at re-teaching inferencing as well as testwiseness . In this way, teachers were able to use instructional time effectively to meet the specific needs of the students in their classrooms.

Resources

Administrators and teachers at this high poverty, high diversity school were provided continuous access to staff developers who used reflective practice themselves as they supported

the teachers. The staff developers were also learning throughout the nine years how to better support the teachers toward goals such as reflective practice and data-driven instruction.

Between 2000 and 2009, the Commonwealth ES's teacher turnover rate dropped continuously. In 2000–2001, the rate of teacher turnover at the school was at a high of 48.8%. This far surpassed the cluster turnover rate of 23.6% and the district turnover rate of 19.78%. By 2008–2009, the rate of teacher turnover at Commonwealth ES fell to 6.67%. The cluster rate also fell to 12.65% as did the district rate to 12.41%. In eight years, Commonwealth ES went from a school where almost half of the teachers left to a school where fewer than 7% of the teachers left. Even though turnover also fell at the cluster and district levels, the fact that the Commonwealth ES rate of 6.67% was lower than the cluster or district levels, leads to the conclusion that something was happening at Commonwealth ES that was keeping teachers at the school.

Staff development initiatives at Commonwealth ES between 2000 and 2009 included: the establishment of routines and procedures to support student learning; positive classroom management techniques; working collaboratively as grade level teams; selecting and administering assessments to inform instruction; analyzing data to monitor student progress and to document student learning; use of available district resources to support teaching and learning, including feedback from the district instructional walkthrough conducted at the school in 2005; analyzing data to identify additional staff development needs; creating curriculum maps to guide instruction; integrating reading and writing with content area subjects; planning and analysis within the structures of collaborative learning teams and professional learning communities; creation of grade level norms for operating within the PLC structure; setting annual, measurable SMART goals at both the school and grade levels to guide their teaching and staff development initiatives; annual cross-checking of the school's mission statement with the practice and beliefs of the staff, and revising the mission statement when indicated; working from a problem-solving stance; vertical articulation across grade level teams; working as advocates for the students in their school; and adoption of professional habits of mind and practice that reflected their self-efficacy as teachers.

I believe that all of the professional development that was offered to the teachers to improve their instruction contributed to improved student achievement, greater self-efficacy on

the part of both teachers and students, higher morale in the building (with the exception of 2006–2007), and a greater belief in students’ ability to learn. The administrators and staff implemented specific initiatives to increase additional instructional time through the use of double dipping and parent involvement programs that also contributed to improved student achievement, greater self-efficacy, higher morale, and a greater belief in students’ abilities.

The description of the 2005 instructional walkthrough in which the Commonwealth teachers and administrators participated described in Chapter 4 underscores its value for school improvement and student achievement. It underscores how such a process validates for teachers the importance of their own professional knowledge and decision-making; the value of teaming with district instructional leaders to cross-check expectations for effective instruction and what that effective instruction looks like in the classroom, and the important message it sends to teachers and administrators about the role that reflection plays in professional growth and improvement.

Relevant recommendations

1. Assessment tools that reliably provide all of the information necessary for teachers to design differentiated instruction should be identified and developed. In addition, policy makers must engage in debate about the definition for terms such as “assessment,” and “evaluation” as a way of decreasing the conflicting positions such a lack of standard accepted definitions encourages.
2. Teachers need opportunities for models of staff development that allow teachers to try out resources in their classrooms and assess the effects those resources have over time. These models would encourage teachers to use what they learn to modify their instruction in conjunction with what their assessments reveal.
3. Researchers should conduct and disseminate studies that examine the relationship between effective implementation of PLCs, CLTs, and SMART goals and improved student achievement and increased teacher and administrators’ professional growth.

Last Word

The research I have conducted for this dissertation can serve as a springboard for future research in the areas of best instructional practices, staff development, professional learning communities, closing the achievement gap, and the roles that motivation and self-efficacy play for student achievement. The most urgent area for research, however, is a new design model for

No Child Left Behind. Since the NCLB legislation is overdue for reauthorization, now is the time for policy makers, educators, and legislators to develop a reasonable accountability plan to document student achievement. Such a plan must hold schools accountable in ways that reward administrators and teachers for growth made. It must not base success on unattainable benchmarks that, when not met, result in the school being labeled failing and undergoing sanctions such as school choice and outside tutoring. The current NCLB model is flawed in many ways. We must address this problem before the entire American public school system is labeled a failure. This is a critical need. We owe it to our children and our society to correct this situation, and to do it now.

REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, J.W. (2002, September). Why does it take a village? The mediation of neighborhood effects on educational achievement. *Social Forces* 81(1), 117-152.
- Allington, R. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Allington, R. (2003, September). The impact of summer setback on the reading achievement Gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 68-75.
- Allington, R. (2005). *The missing pillars of scientific reading instruction*. Keynote address presented at the meeting of the Virginia State Reading Association, Arlington, VA.
- Allington, R. & Cunningham, P.M. (2002). *Schools that work: Where all children read and write* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Longman.
- Anderson, L., Evertson, C., & Brophy, J. (1979). An experimental study of effective teaching in first-grade reading groups. *Elementary School Journal*, 79, 193-223.
- Angen, M.J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 378-395.
- Anzalone, B., Towson, C., DuBois, C., Meisel, M., & Norton, M. (2003, May). Toward a balanced literacy program: Making a difference through job-embedded staff development. Paper session presented at the Annual International Reading Association Conference, Orlando, FL.
- Apple, M. (1979). *Ideology and Curriculum*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and Participant Observation. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248-261). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Ball, D.L. & Cohen, D.K. (1999). Developing practice, developing practitioners: Toward a practice-based theory of professional education. In G. Sykes & L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 3-32). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Barkley, S. (2005). *Quality teaching in a culture of coaching*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

- Battistich, V., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (Fall 1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and students' attitudes, motives, and performance: A multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 627-658.
- Beaver, J. (2006). *Developmental reading assessment, K through grade 3*. (2nd ed.) Parsippany, NJ: Celebration Press.
- Beaver, J. & Carter, M. (2003). *Developmental reading assessment teacher guide*. Parsippany, NJ: Celebration Press.
- Beck, I.L., McKeown, M.G., Sandora, C., & Worthy, J. (1996). Questioning the author: A year long classroom implementation to engage students with text. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96, 385-414.
- Belli, G.B. (1999). Focus group techniques to facilitate group interaction: Finding a core curriculum for indoor air science. In N. Boschi (Ed.), *Education and training in indoor air sciences* (pp 229- 233). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Bembry, K.L., Weerasinghe, E., & Mendro, R.L. (1997, March). *Classroom effectiveness indices: Statistical methodology, post-hoc analysis, and practical applications*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Bigelow, B., Christensen, L., Karp, S., Miner, B., & Peterson, B. (1994). Creating classrooms for equity and social justice. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice*, (pp. 4-5). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.
- Biklen, S.K., & Casella, R. (2007). *A practical guide to the qualitative dissertation*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Block, C.C., & Pressley, M. (2001). *Comprehension instruction: Research-based best practices*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Bobbitt, J. (1915). *What the schools teach and might teach*. Philadelphia, PA: William F. Feel Company.
- Borko, H. & Putnam, R. (1996). Learning to teach. In D. Berliner & R. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 673-708). New York, NY: Macmillan Library Reference USA.
- Boston Public Schools. (1998, March). *High school restructuring*. Boston, MA: Author.

- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Brophy, J. (1973). Stability of teacher effectiveness. *American Educational Research Journal*, 10, 245-252.
- Brophy, J., & Good, T. (1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 328-375). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Brown, A.L., & Palinscar, A.S. (1985). *Reciprocal teaching of comprehension strategies: A natural history of one programme for enhancing learning*. (Tech. Rep. No. 334). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, Center for the Study of Reading.
- Brown, J.S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher* 18 (1), 32-41.
- Buckner, A. (2005). *Notebook know-how: Strategies for the writer's notebook*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Burnett, J.H. (1974). On the analog between culture acquisition and ethnographic method. *Anthropology and Education*, 5(1), 25-29.
- Caldas, S.J., & Bankston, C. (1997). Effect of school population socioeconomic status on individual academic achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 90, 269-277.
- Carnoy, M. (1974). *Education as cultural imperialism*. New York, NY: David McKay Company.
- Chenoweth, K. (November 9, 2003). Terrible teachers: Why our kids aren't getting the education they deserve. *The Washington Post*, W19.
- Chiseri-Strater, E., and Sunstein, B.S. (1997). *Field working: Reading and writing research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Blair Press.
- Chokski, S. & Fernandez, C. (2004). Challenges to importing Japanese lesson study: Concerns, misconceptions and nuances. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(6), 520-525.
- Christie, F. (1987). Genres as Choice. In I. Reid (Ed.), *The place of genres in learning: Current debates* (pp.22-34). Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Centre for Studies in Literary Education.
- Christie, K. (2002). States address achievement gaps. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84, 102- 103.
- Clay, M. (1985). *The early detection of reading difficulties*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Coleman, J.S. (1972). The evaluation of equality of educational opportunity. In F. Mosteller & D.P. Moynihan (Eds.), *On equality of educational opportunity: Papers deriving from the Harvard University Faculty Seminar on the Coleman Report* (pp. 146-167). New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Coleman, J.S., Campbell, E., Hobson, C., McPartland, J., Mood, A., Weinfeld, F. & York, R. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Compton-Lilly, C. (2004). *Confronting racism, poverty, and power: Classroom strategies to change the world*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Conzemius, A., & O'Neill, J. (2002). *The handbook for SMART school teams*. Bloomington, Indiana: National Education Service.
- Dahl, R. (1961). *James and the giant peach*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). From "separate but equal" to "No Child Left Behind": The collision of new standards and old inequalities." In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 8(1), 1-50..
- Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M.W. (1995). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(8), 597-604.
- Defilippo, C. (2007). *Ethnography* (Unpublished preliminary examination paper presented in partial fulfillment of the doctor of education degree). Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, VA.
- Defilippo, C. (2009). *Sparks, celebrations, and kids: An ethnographic study of writers' club* (Unpublished preliminary examination paper presented in partial fulfillment of the doctor of education degree). Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, VA.
- DeGarmo, D.S., Forgatch, M.S., & Martinez, C.R. (1999, September). Parenting of divorced mothers as a link between social status and boys' academic outcomes: Unpacking the effects of socioeconomic status. *Child Development*, 70, 1231-1245.
- Delamont, S. (1992). *Fieldwork in educational settings: Methods, pitfalls, and perspectives*. London, England: Falmer Press.

- Denzin, N.K. (1989). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Dewey, J. (1900). The school in society. In Dworkin, M.S. (Ed.), *Dewey on education: Selections with an introduction and notes*, (pp.33-90). New York, NY: Teachers College Bureau of Publications, 1959.
- Dewey, J. (1902). *The child and the curriculum*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- District "A." Best Practices website, http://fcps.blackboard.com/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=community&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=594832_1
- District "A." (1995a), *Primary Purposes: Assessing*.
- District "A." (1995b). *Primary Purposes: Reading*.
- District "A." (1995c). *Primary Purposes: Writing*.
- District "A." (1996a). *Expanding Expectations: Reading*.
- District "A." (1996b). *Expanding Expectations: Writing*.
- District "A." (2002). *Expanding Expectations: Assessing*.
- District "A." (2007). *School Profiles*.
- Dobbs, M. (2003, November 23). Education "miracle" has a math problem, *The Washington Post*, p. A01.
- Donahue, P.L., Finnegan, F.J., Lutkus, A.D., Allen, N.L., & Campbell, J.R. (2001). *NAEP Reading 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics
- Dorn, L., & Soffos, C. (2001). *Shaping literate minds*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Dufour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Duke, N.K., & Pearson, P.D. (2002). Effective practices for developing reading comprehension. In A. E. Farstrup & S.J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed.), pp. 205-242. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

- Durkin, D. (April, 1984). Is there a match between what elementary teachers do and what basal reader manuals recommend? *The Reading Teacher* 37, 734–744.
- Economic Policy Institute (2002). The other gap, poor students receive fewer dollars. *Education Trust Data Bulletin*, 6 March 2001. Retrieved from [The%20Other%20Gap%20-%20Poor%20Students%20Receive%20Fewer%20Dollars%202001%20Report.pdf](http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/)
- Education Week. (2004, August 3). Achievement gap. *Education Week*. Retrieved October 18, 2006 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/issues/achievement-gap/>
- Egerton, J. (1966, November). Profile of a school system. *Southern Education Report*, 2(4), 1-4.
- Emerson, F., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic field notes*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Entwisle, D., Alexander, K., and Olson, L. (1997). *Children, schools, and inequality*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock, *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed.) (pp 119-161). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (1983). Learning to teach. In L.S. Shulman & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Handbook of teaching and policy*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman.
- Ferguson, R. (1998). Can schools narrow the Black-White score gap? In C. Jencks & M. Phillips (Eds.), *The Black-White test score gap* (pp. 318-374). Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.
- Feuer, L. (Ed.) (1959). *Marx & Engels basic writings on politics & philosophy*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Finch, J. (1986). *Research and policy*. London, England: The Falmer Press.
- Fisher, B. (1998). *Joyful learning in kindergarten*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fisher, C., Berliner, D., Filby, N., Marliave, R., Cahen, L., & Dishaw, M. (1980). Teaching behaviors, academic learning time, and student achievement: An overview. In C. Denham and A. Lieberman (Eds.), *Time to learn*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2008). *Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Ford, D.Y. (1996). *Reversing underachievement among gifted black students: Promising Practices and programs*. New York, NY: Columbia Teachers College Press.
- Fountas, I., & Pinell, G.S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers in Grades 3-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.
- Garmston, R.J. (2006). What groups talk about matters—And *how* they talk about it matters too. *National Staff Development Council* 27(1), 73-74, 77.
- Garmston, R.J., & Wellman, B.M. (1999). *The adaptive school: A sourcebook for developing collaborative groups*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Gluck, S.B., & Patai, D. (Eds.). (1991). *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Griffin, G. (1999). Perspectives on teacher education. In G. Griffin & M. Early (Eds.), *The education of teachers: 98th yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (pp.1-28). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Griffin, J. (1960). *Black like me*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Griffin, J. (1977). *Phoebe and the general*. New York, NY: Coward, McCann, & Geoghegan.
- Grossman, P. (1992). Teaching to learn. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *The changing contexts of teaching: 91st yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I*. Chicago, IL: University Press.
- Grunwald, M. (2006, October 1). Billions on inside game on reading, *Washington Post*, p. B1.
- Guba, E.S. (1978). *Toward a methodology of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Evaluation.
- Guba, E.S., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Beverley Hills: SAGE.
- Guskey, T.R. (1995). Professional development in education: In search of the optimal mix. In T.R. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Hale, J.A. & Dunlap, R.F. (2010). *An educational leader's guide to curriculum mapping*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Hamilton, D. (1990). *Curriculum history*. Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.

- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Harcourt Brace. (1987). *Signatures*. Boston, MA: Author.
- Harrington, M. (1962). *The other America: Poverty in the United States*. New York, NY: Macmillan Co.
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. York, ME: Stenhouse.
- Harvey, S., & Goudvis, A. (2005). *The comprehension toolkit: Language and lessons for active literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hawley, W.D., & Valli, L. (1999). The essentials of effective professional development. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 127-150). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the education gap. *Educational Leadership*, 58(6), 6-11.
- Haycock, K., Jerald, C., and Huang, S. (Spring 2001). *Closing the gap: Done in a decade*. Washington, DC: Education Trust.
- Hayes, D., & Grether, J. (1983). The school year and vacations: When do students learn?" *Cornell Journal of Social Relations*, 17, 66.
- Henderson, H. (1978). *Creating alternative futures: The end of economics*. New York, NY: Berkley Windhover Books.
- Hoffman, J. V. (1991). Teacher and school effects in learning to read. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research, II* (pp. 911-950). New York, NY: Longman.
- Hogan, T.M., Rabinowitz, M., & Craven, J. (2003). Problem representation in teaching: Inferences from research of expert and novice teachers. *Educational Psychologist*, 38, 235-247.
- Holdaway, Don. (1979). *The foundations of literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Hrabowsky, F.A., Maton, K.I., & Greif, G.L. (1998). *Beating the odds: Raising academically successful African American males*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hrabowsky, F.A., Maton, K.I., Greene, M.L., & Greif, G.L. (2002). *Overcoming the odds: Raising academically successful African American young women*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Invernizzi, M., Juel, C., Swank, L., & Meier, J. (2003). *Phonological awareness literacy screening (PALS)*. Virginia State Department of Education.
- Jencks, C, Smith, M., Acland, H., Bane, M.J., Cohen, D., Gintis, H., Heyns, B., & Michelson, S. (1974). Inequality: A reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America. *Journal of Social Policy*, 3, 378–380.
- Johnson, S., & Kardos, S. (2002). Keeping new teachers in mind. *Educational Leadership*, 59(6), 12.
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1995). *Student achievement through staff development: Fundamentals of school renewal* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Kahn, R., & Cannell, C. (1957). *The dynamics of interviewing*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Karp, S. (2004). NCLB's selective vision of equality: some gaps count more than others. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Katz, B. (1998). *American history poems*. Jefferson City, MO: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Keene, E.O., & Zimmermann, S. (1997). *Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader's workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kirkpatrick, K. (1999). *Redcoats and petticoats*. Jacksonville, Illinois: Holiday House.
- Kluger, R. (1977). *Simple justice: A history of Brown v. Board of Education*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Knapp, M. S. (Ed.). (1995). *Teaching for meaning in high-poverty classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Kohn, A. (2004). NCLB and the effort to privatize public education. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Kozol, J. (1967). *Death at an early age: The destruction of the hearts and minds of Negro children in the Boston Public Schools*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, and the National Staff Development Council. schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 757-798.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- LeCompte, M.D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Lewis, A.C. (2005, April). Highly qualified teachers: We know 'em when we see 'Em. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86(8), 563-564.
- Lichtman, M. (2006). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Lincoln, Y. (1997). What constitutes quality in interpretive research? In C.K. Kinzer, K.A. Hinchman, & D.J. Leu (Eds.), *Inquiries in literacy theory and practice: Forty-sixth yearbook of the national reading conference* (pp. 54-68). Oak Creek, WI: The National Reading Conference.
- Lincoln, Y. (1996). *Emerging criteria for quality in interpretive research*. Charleston, SC: National Reading Conference.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Literacy Collaborative. (2011). Retrieved from www.lcosu.org/
- Little, J. (1993). Teachers' professional development in a climate of education reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15(2), 129-151.
- Little, J., & McLaughlin, M. (Eds.). (1993). *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues and contexts*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Louis, K., Marks, H., & Kruse, S. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 757-798.
- Lyons, C., & Pinell, G.S. (2001). *Systems for change in literacy education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in feminist research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 835-850). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Marshall, C. (1985). Appropriate criteria of trustworthiness and goodness for qualitative research on education organizations. *Quality and Quantity*, 19, 353-373.
- Marshall, C. (1987, March 24). *Report to the Vanderbilt Policy Education Committee*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Martin, J.R., Christie, F., & Rothery, J. (1987). Social processes in education: A reply to Sawyer and Watson (and others). In I. Reid (Ed.), *The place of genre in learning: Current debates* (pp 58-82). Geelong, Australia: Deakin University, Centre for Studies in Literacy Education.
- Marzano, R.J. (1998). *A theory-based meta-analysis of research on instruction*. Aurora, CO: Midcontinent Research for Education and Learning. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED427087)
- Marzano, R.J. (2004). *Building background knowledge for academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., & Pollock, J.E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Mathis, W. (2003, May). No Child Left Behind: Costs and Benefits. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(9), pp. 679-686.
- McLaren, P. (1989). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. White Plains, NY: Longman, Inc.
- McLaughlin, M.W. (1974). *Evaluation and reform: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Title I*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED096363)
- McLaughline, D., & Tierney, W.G. (1993). *Naming silenced lives: Personal narratives and the process of educational change*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McNeil, L., & Valenzuela. (2001). The harmful impact of the TAAS system of testing in Texas: Beneath the accountability rhetoric. In M. Kornhaber & G. Orfield (Eds.), *Raising standards or raising barriers? Inequality and high stakes testing in public education* (pp.127-150). New York, NY: Century Foundation.
- Meier, D., & Wood, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Many children behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

- Minnesota Department of Education. (January 2007). Implementation of No Child Left Behind Act, Report to the Minnesota Legislature. Roseville, MN: Author. Retrieved from <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/NCLB/documents/Report/030540.pdf>
- Morse, J.M. (1994). *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Morse, J. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 220-235). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Munby, H., Russell, T., & Martin, A. (2001). Teachers' knowledge and how it develops. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed.), (pp. 877-904). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- National Board for Professional Teaching, *Standards by certificate*. Retrieved October 2010 from http://www.nbpts.org/the_standards/standards_by_cert
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *The nation's report card: Reading highlights 2002*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- National Education Association (NEA) Legislative Action Center. Retrieved June 1, 2007 from www.nea.org
- National Research Council. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School*. (2000). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Neill, A.S. (1960). *Summerhill: A radical approach to child rearing*. New York, NY: Hart Publishing.
- Neill, M. (2004). Leaving no child behind: Overhauling NCLB. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*, (pp. 01-120). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Neuman, S. (2009). *Changing the odds for children at risk*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Newman, S., Celano, D.C., Greco, A.N., & Shue, P. (2001). *Access for all: Closing the book gap for children in early education*. Newark, DE: IRA.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. (2002). Public Law No. 107-110, §115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Novak, J. & Fuller, B. (2003, December). Penalizing diverse schools? PACE Policy Brief 03-4. University of California at Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://gse.berkeley.edu/research/pace/reports/PB.03-4.pdf>
- O'Dea, J. (1994). Pursuing truth in narrative research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 28, 168-171.
- Ornstein, A.C., Lasley, T.J., & Lasley II, T.J. (2003). *Strategies for effective teaching (4th ed.)*. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill.
- Palincsar, A.S. (1982). *Improving the reading comprehension of junior high students through the reciprocal teaching of comprehension-monitoring strategies*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Illinois. Urbana-Champaign.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Pearson, P.D., & Gallagher, M.C. (1983). The instruction of reading comprehension. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8, 317-344.
- Pearson, P.D., Roehler, L., Dole, J., & Duffy, G. (1992). Developing expertise in reading comprehension. In S.J. Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction (2nd ed.)* (pp. 145-199). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Pinar, W.F., Reynolds, W.M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P.M. (2000). *Understanding curriculum*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Poglinco, S., & Bach, S. (2004). The heart of the matter: Coaching as a vehicle for professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(5), 398-402.
- Prendergast, C. (2003). *Literacy and racial justice*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Pressley, M., & Afflerbach, P. (1995). *Verbal protocols of reading: The nature of constructively responsive reading*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pressley, M., Almasi, J., Schuder, T., Bergman, J., Hite, S., El-Dinary, P.B., et al. (1994). Transactional instruction of comprehension strategies: The Montgomery County, Maryland, SAIL program. *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 10(1) 5-19.

- Protheroe, N. (March/April 2009). Using Classroom Walkthroughs to Improve Instruction. *Principal*, 30-34.
- Public Education Network. (2004). *Voice of the new teacher*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Puma, M. J., Karweit, N., Price, C., Ricciutti, A., Thompson, W., & Vaden-Kiernan, M. (1997). *Prospects: Final report on student outcomes*. Washington, DC: Planning and Evaluation Service, U.S. Department of Education.
- Purcell-Gates, V., Duke, N.K., & Martineau, J.A. (2007). Learning to read and write genre-w
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books.
- Ravitch, D. & Meier, D. (May 2011). "Diane Ravitch and Deborah Meier in Conversation." Panel discussion at Innovation in InSight Leadership Forum (sponsored by *Education Week*), Radisson Martinique on Broadway, New York, NY.
- Reading Recovery Council of North America. (2010). Reading Recovery: Basic facts. Retrieved from http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading_recovery/facts/index.asp
- Reid, E.R. (1986). *Practicing effective instruction: The exemplary center for reading instruction approach*. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (EJ334349)
- Richardson, J. (2009). *The next step in guided reading: Focused assessments and targeted lessons for helping every student become a better reader*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Richardson, V. & Placier, P. (2001). Teacher change. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (4th ed.), (pp. 905-947). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Rippa, S. (1988). *Education in a free society: An American history* (6th ed.), White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Robb, L. (2003). *Teaching reading in social studies, science, and math*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Robinson, K. (August, 2011). Keynote address presented at the Annual Leadership Conference, District "A." George Mason University, Fairfax, VA.
- Robinson, K. & Aronica, L. (2009). *The element: How finding your passion changes everything*. New York: NY, Penguin Group.

- Rodriguez, M.C. (Sept. 2003). Reading growth in high poverty classrooms: The influence of teacher practices that encourage cognitive engagement in literacy learning. *Elementary School Journal*, 104(1) 3-28.
- Rosenshine, B., & Furst, N. (1973). The use of direct observation to study teaching. In R.M.W. Travers (Ed.), *Second handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 122-183). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Rousseau, J. (1972). *Emile*. B. Foxley (Trans.) London: Dent and Sons.
- Russell-Porte, E.D. (July 19, 2000). *A history of education for black students in District "A" prior to 1954*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation).
- Samway, K.D., & McKeon, D. (1996). *Myths and realities: Best practices for language minority students*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sandelowski, M. (1993). Rigor or rigor mortis: The problem of rigor in qualitative research revisited. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 16(2), 1-8.
- Sanders, W.L., & Horn, S.P. (1994). The Tennessee value-added assessment system (TVAAS): Mixed-model methodology in educational assessment. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 8, 299-311.
- Sanders, W.L., & Rivers, J.C. (1996). *Research progress report: Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value Added Research and Assessment Center.
- Sanjek, R. (1990). On Ethnographic Validity. In *Field notes: The making of anthropology* (pp. 385-418). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sarup, M. (1978). *Marxism and education*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Schanzer, R. (2007). *George vs. George*. Carmel, CA: National Geographic.
- Schlechy, P. (2002). *Working on the work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schoenfeld, A.H. (2002). Research methods in (mathematics) education. In L. English (Ed.), *Handbook of international research in mathematics education* (pp. 435-487). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Serafini, F. (2001). *The reading workshop: Creating space for readers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

- Sergiovanni, T. J., & Starratt, R. J. (2002). *Supervision a redefinition* (7th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Shavelson, R.J., & Berliner, D.C. (1988). Evasion of the education research infrastructure: A reply to Finn. *Educational Researcher*, 17, 9-11.
- Showers, B., Joyce, B., & Bennett, B. (1987). Synthesis of research on staff development: A framework for future study and state-of-the-art analysis. *Educational Leadership*, 45(3) 77-87.
- Sibberson, F., & Szymusiak, K. (2003). *Still learning to reading*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishing.
- Singham, M. (2003, April). The achievement gap: Myths and reality. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 586-591.
- Sizer, T. (2004). Preamble: A reminder for Americans. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Skinner, B.F. (1948). *Walden two*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Slavin, R.E. (1996). *Every child, every school: Success for all*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Smylie, M. (1995). Teacher learning in the workplace: Implications for school reform. In T.R. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Snow, C., Burns, M.S., & Griffin, P. (Eds.). (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Spache, G. (1953). A new readability formula for primary-grade reading materials. *The Elementary School Journal*, 53, 410-413.
- Spencer, H. (1884, May 8). What knowledge is of most worth? In *Elvezir Library* (pp. 5-82). New York, NY: J.B. Adler.
- Spradley, J.S. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- SRA/McGraw-Hill. (2003). *SRA reading laboratory kit*. Desoto, Texas: SRA/McGraw-Hill.
- Stacey, J. (1988). Can there be a feminist ethnography? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11, 21-27.

- Stahl, S.A., & Miller, P.D. (1989). Whole language experience approaches for beginning reading: A quantitative research synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 59(1) 87–116.
- Stallings, J., & Kaskowitz, D. (1974). *Follow through classroom observation evaluation 1972-1973* (Report No. URU-7370). Stanford, CA: Stanford Research Institute.
- “State .” Department of Education. “*State*” school report card. *Washington Post* (November 9, 2003).
- Strickland, D.S. & Alvermann, D.E (Eds.). (2004). *Bridging the literacy achievement gap Grades 4-12*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Stringfield, S., Millsap, M. A., & Herman, R. (1997). *Urban and suburban/rural special strategies for educating disadvantaged children: Findings and policy implications of a longitudinal study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Taylor, B.M., Pearson, P.D., Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (1999). *Beating the odds in teaching all children to read*. Retrieved from <http://www.ciera.org/library/reports/inquiry-2/2-006/2-006.html>
- Taylor, B.M., Pearson, P.D., Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (2000). Effective schools and accomplished teachers: Lessons about primary grade reading instruction in low income schools.” *Elementary School Journal*, 101(2), 121-165.
- Taylor, B.M., Pearson, P.D., Clark, K. & Walpole, S. (2002). Effective schools and accomplished teachers: Lessons about primary-grade reading instruction in low-income schools. In B.M. Taylor & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *Teaching reading: Effective schools, accomplished teachers* (pp. 3-72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Taylor, F.W. (1911). *The principles of scientific management*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Tedlock, B. (2000). Ethnography and ethnographic representation. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 455-486). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Thomas, W.I. (1949). *Social structure and social theory*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Thorndike, E. (1904). *An introduction to the theory of mental and social measurements*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Thorndike, E. (1913). *Educational psychology 2: The psychology of learning*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Thorndike, E. (1922). Measurement in education. In G.M. Whipple (Ed.), *Twenty-first yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*.. Bloomington, IL: Public School Publishing.
- Tomlinson, C. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Turkheimer, E., Haley, A., Waldron, M., D'Onofrio, B., & Gottesman, I.I. (2003). Socioeconomic status modifies heritability of IQ in young children. *Psychological Science*, 14(6), 623-628.
- Tyack, D. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- United States Department of Education. *Facts and terms every parent should know about NCLB*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/parents/parentfacts.pdf>
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weber, G. (1971). *Inner city children can be taught to read: Four successful schools* (Occasional Paper No. 18). Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED057125).
- Weiler, K., & Mitchell, C. (Eds.) (1992). *What schools can do: Critical pedagogy and practice*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Wharton-MacDonald, R., Pressley, M., & Hampston, J. M. (1998). Literacy instruction in nine first-grade classrooms: Teacher characteristics and student achievement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 99, 101–128.
- Wilder, G. (1977) Five exemplary reading programs. In J. T. Guthrie (Ed.), *Cognition, curriculum, and comprehension* (pp. 57–68). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Williams, B. (Ed.) (2003). *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Wilson, S.M., & Peterson, P.L. (2006). Theories of Learning & Teaching: What Do They Mean for Educators? Research Paper. Atlanta, GA: NEA Professional Library.
- Wilson, S.M., & Berne, J. (1999). Teacher learning and the acquisition of professional knowledge: An examination of research on contemporary professional development. In

- A. Iran-Nejad & P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *Review of Research in Education* (Vol. 24, pp. 173-209). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Wolcott, H.F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Wood, G. (2004). A view from the field: NCLB's effects on classrooms and schools. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Wood, S. (August 29, 2005). "Powering Up Our Teamwork." Document created for Commonwealth Elementary School, Professional Development Session, Commonwealth ES.
- Wright, S.P., Horn, S.P. & Sanders, W.L. (1997). Teacher and classroom context effects on student achievement: Implications for teacher evaluation. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 11, 57-67.

APPENDICES

| | |
|------------|---|
| Appendix A | Characteristics of Schools that are Beating the Odds |
| Appendix B | Gradual Release of Responsibility |
| Appendix C | Four Staff Development Models |
| Appendix D | Institutional Review Board Approval Letters |
| Appendix E | Research Participant Informed Consent |
| Appendix F | District “A” Requested Reports |
| Appendix G | Planning the Way Forward Agenda, August 23, 2001 |
| Appendix H | Staff Development Reflections 2002–2003 |
| Appendix I | Classroom Walkthrough Form—Reading/Language Arts |
| Appendix J | Assessment Wall |
| Appendix K | Staff Survey May 2008 |
| Appendix L | Commonwealth ES—Non-Negotiables for Language Arts and Mathematics |
| Appendix M | CLT September 2008 Answers to Four Questions |

Appendix A. Characteristics of Schools that are Beating the Odds¹

| School Characteristic* | Research Studies | | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | Weber, 1971 | Wilder, 1977 | Hoffmann, 1991 | Stringfield et al., 1997 | Puma et al., 1997 | Taylor et al., 1999 |
| Clear school mission | | | x | | | |
| Effective leadership | x | | x | | x | |
| Effective/balanced instructional practice | | | x | | | x |
| High expectations | x | | x | | x | |
| Safe environment | | | x | | x | |
| Ongoing curricular improvement | | | | x | | |
| High % of time spent on academics/reading | | x | x | | x | x |
| Continuous monitoring of student progress | x | | x | | | x |
| Positive home-school relationship | | | x | | x | x |
| Positive school communication/climate | x | x | | | x | x |
| Small % of students with serious reading difficulties | x | | | | | |
| Basic skills instruction | | x | | | | |
| Breadth of instructional materials | | x | | | | |
| Systematic self-improvement | | | | x | | |
| Research based programs | | | | x | | |
| Low student mobility | | | | | x | |
| Tracking | | | | | x | |
| | | | | | | |

*Not all studies represented on this chart looked at all characteristics listed. The purpose of the chart is simply to compile in one place the results of six research studies discussed in the paper.

Appendix B. Gradual Release of Responsibility for Reading Workshop

Gradual Release of Responsibility for Reading Workshop

| Teacher Directed Reading to | Teacher Directed Reading with | Student Directed Reading by |
|--|---|--|
| Read Aloud Think Aloud Interactive Read Aloud Shared Reading | Guided Reading Reading Conference Literature Discussion | Independent Reading w/ Response Pair or Buddy Reading Independent Reading |
| I Do You Watch | I Do You Help You Do I Help | You Do I Watch |
| Teacher Share Bring Teacher Selected Information to Share Pair-Share Student-As-Teacher | | |

Revised by District "A" from P. David Pearson and Gallagher.

Appendix C. Four Staff Development Models

| Characteristics of Effective staff Development | Model Design | | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Direct Transmission | Individual Investigation | Simulations | Job-Embedded |
| Embedded | N | S | N | Y |
| Ongoing | N | S | S | Y |
| Analytic | N | S | S | Y |
| Learner centered | N | Y | S | Y |
| Scaffolded | N | N | S | Y |
| Reflective | N | N | Y | Y |
| Observation of modeling | N | S | Y | Y |
| Experimentation | N | S | N | Y |
| Feedback | N | N | S | Y |
| Collaborative | N | N | Y | Y |
| Collegial | N | N | Y | Y |
| Coaching/mentoring | N | N | N | Y |
| Knowledge source | External | External | External | Internal |

KEY: N = NO
 S = SOMETIMES
 Y = YES

Appendix D. Institutional Review Board Approval Letters



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959
 e-mail moored@vt.edu
 www.irb.vt.edu

FWA00000572(expires 1/20/2010)
 IRB # is IRB00000667

DATE: November 6, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rosary V. Lalik
 Barbara Howard-Anzalone

FROM: David M. Moore 

Approval date: 11/6/2007
 Continuing Review Due Date:10/22/2008
 Expiration Date: 11/5/2008

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Approval:** "An Ethnographic Study of a Literacy Program in a High-Poverty, Ethnically Diverse Elementary School within the Context of No Child Left Behind", IRB # 07-537

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a period of 12 months, effective November 6, 2007.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Important:

If you are conducting **federally funded non-exempt research**, this approval letter must state that the IRB has compared the OSP grant application and IRB application and found the documents to be consistent. Otherwise, this approval letter is invalid for OSP to release funds. Visit our website at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/newstudy.htm#OSP> for further information.

cc: File

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY

An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

June 5, 2007

Ms. Barbara Anzalone
4903 Cove Road
Fairfax, VA 22032

Dear Ms. Anzalone:

The Research Screening Committee has reviewed and approved your application to conduct a study, which is titled *An Ethnographic Study of a Literacy Program in a High-Poverty, Ethnically Diverse Elementary School within the Context of No Child Left Behind*. _____ coordinator, Language Arts (K-12), has agreed to be your sponsor. Please contact her at 703-846-8681.

You may begin the study as soon as you complete and return the enclosed approval form. We look forward to receiving the study results, which are expected to inform educators and policymakers in the area of literacy program design and implementation in high poverty, highly diverse elementary schools in the era of No Child Left Behind.

Sincerely,

Assistant Superintendent

PM/kh
Enclosure

cc:

t

Appendix E. Research Participant Informed Consent

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: An Ethnographic Study of a Literacy Program in a High Poverty, Ethnically Diverse Elementary School.

Investigator: Barbara L. Howard-Anzalone

Purpose of this Research: This project will focus on the characteristics of a language arts program as it is delivered in a high poverty elementary school in a large urban school district in the southeastern part of the United States. There is unprecedented pressure on schools to ensure that 100% of their students will meet reading benchmarks as defined by the No Child Left Behind legislation by the year 2014. It is integral to my dissertation that the research be set within the context of an actual high poverty school in order to understand its literacy program. Observations and data will be collected from teachers, administrators, and other school personnel. The objective of the research will be to document in as much detail as possible the challenges faced, resources used, and practices pursued by teachers and administrators in high poverty, high diversity schools in meeting the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

Procedures: As Elementary Language Arts Specialist for a school district, I engage in regular observation in the schools as part of my job responsibility. My role in the schools is completely supportive in nature. I have no evaluative responsibilities for teachers. I serve as a coach facilitator. My observations and interactions with the teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are ongoing. Those responsibilities include the conventional practice of observation and participant observer engagement in the following settings within the schools: 1) classroom, 2) literacy team meetings, 3) grade level team meetings, 4) meetings with school administrators, 5) meetings with resource teachers, and 6) meetings with allied professionals. In addition, I also review school documents and state records on a regular basis. As part of my work, I keep notebooks in which I make a record of who participates in each context, and I highlight the content of the proceedings and the contributions of participants.

For this project, I will pursue the following. This will be a year-long, student conducted dissertation research project in an elementary school in the school district in which I am employed. The dissertation will be a mixed method study using both ethnographic and quantitative analysis of official school data, of a school that moved from a classification of “failing” to one of “Gold Medal,” as defined by the Virginia state criteria of the No Child Left Behind Act. It is essential for me to document what is happening within the six contexts listed above with respect to the literacy program in order to identify the interplay among the contexts, as well as to document the school’s literacy culture. As the researcher, the primary source of my data will be field notes and will include staff development and procedural topics addressed by the staff, agendas of meetings as determined by the teachers, points of view expressed, questions, concerns, requests that need follow up, and actual quotes (paraphrases of salient points to guide my listening of audiotapes). The notes will be kept in field journals and used during later analysis. I will analyze the data using a method of constant comparison to examine the sources of data to identify categories that account for obstacles and successes associated with student reading achievement. I will elaborate my records by producing an audio recording of my activities immediately following each school visit, and I will make audio recordings of selected meetings and interviews, and transcribe those recordings. Data for my study will include: 1) field notes taken at each meeting, 2) transcriptions of elaborated field notes, 3) audio recordings of selected meetings between the date of approval of this study

and the end of the 2007–2008 school year, 4) transcriptions of selected meetings, and 5) official school documents, including reading performance data of students. The focus of the research will not be on the students, although they will be a part of the environment during classroom observations and other observations within the school building. I will be open with the school personnel about my purpose for the study—to document how they work within various school settings to improve their students’ reading achievement.

Risks: The risks of this project will be minimal. Identity of the school and personnel within the school will be protected by assigning a coding number to any notes or transcripts of taped meetings. The list of names and code numbers will be stored separately from the field notes, tapes, and transcriptions in two separate locked file cabinets.

Benefits: As a result of the study, I will contribute professional knowledge to the field that will result from my dissertation research. The benefits of the study will clearly outweigh the potential for minimal risks.

Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality: Access to the identity of the school and subjects will be limited to me. Other than a randomly assigned code number for each subject, no other identifiers will be used that could lead to their identification. I will be the sole transcriber of any audiotaped meetings and interviews, and will use the transcriptions to assist my analysis of the school’s literacy program for my dissertation study. Once the study is completed, all audiotapes will be destroyed.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participation in the study.

Freedom to Withdraw: You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty by informing the researcher of your wish to be removed from the pool of case study participants. Notation of your withdrawal will be made on the original Informed Consent Sheet, signed by both researcher and participant, and dated.

Subject’s Responsibilities: I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities: To work with the researcher in her role as language arts coach facilitator in my school. As I engage with the researcher, other school personnel, and students, I understand that the researcher will observe and record her observations. The recording may be in the form of field notes or audiotapes. Number coding will be used in place of teacher names, and characteristics that might allow identification of individuals will be modified in order to protect participants’ anonymity.

Subject’s Permission: I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date 9/01/07
Subject Signature

_____ Date _____
Witness (optional except for certain classes of subjects)

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects’ rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Barbara Anzalone
Investigator(s)

Telephone/E-mail

Faculty Advisor

Telephone/E-mail

Departmental Reviewer/Department Head

Telephone/E-mail

Appendix G. Planning the Way Forward Agenda, August 23, 2001

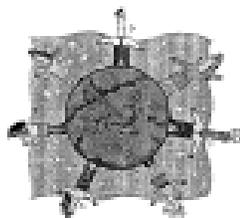
Planning the Way Forward

August 23, 2001



Barbara Anzalone

S.



Agenda

- Sign in and networking
- Welcome
- Snowball fight
- Guided reading in a balanced literacy program
- Guided reading video
- Using assessment to inform instruction and to group students

Lunch on Your Own

- Getting started in the classroom
 - Establishing routines and procedures
 - Designing the instructional environment
 - Setting realistic expectations



Appendix H. Staff Development Reflections 2002–2003

Grades K–2:

- Large number of literacy levels: Teachers were concerned about having enough time to meet with as many as five different guided reading groups during the school year.
- Room arrangement: Teachers expressed concern about lack of sufficient space in their classrooms to accommodate a balanced literacy program for at least 25 students.
- Establishing routines: Teachers asked what the rest of the class would be doing while they met with small guided reading groups.
- Keeping kids on task: Teachers were concerned that there would be some students in every classroom who would not be able to stay on task while working independently.
- Resources for assessment: Teachers asked for guidance about formative assessments they could use to monitor academic progress that would not take inordinate amounts of time to administer and analyze.
- On-going record keeping: Teachers expressed a need to keep record-keeping to a minimum.
- Scheduling resources for group instruction: Teachers discussed the problem of sharing resources located in a central bookroom instead of each teacher having a set of resources located within each classroom.
- Language arts block: Teachers expressed the need for the establishment of an uninterrupted block of time sufficient to teach language arts.

Grades 3–6:

- Familiarity with components of reading/writing workshop: Teachers indicated the need to learn what the components of the workshop should be, what each component looked like in action, and how to teach the components in a logical sequence that would make sense to elementary students.
- Classroom management: Teachers asked what the other students would be doing while they met with small guided reading groups.
- Physical classroom setup: Teachers asked for examples of different classroom arrangements that lended themselves to a balanced literacy program.
- Schedule to allow taking advantage of expertise of resource teachers: Teachers wanted a schedule that would allow the two reading specialists and the specialist team members to support the needs of all of the classroom teachers.
- Opportunities for resource teachers to meet with teams to plan: Both classroom teachers and resource teachers indicated the need to have common planning time.
- ESL issues: Teachers discussed the ways that ESL teachers could work with the classroom teachers that would maximize their support of both the teachers and the students.
- Time for everything: Teachers expressed concern that there was not enough time in a week to do everything necessary to implement a successful balanced literacy program.

- Multiple ability levels/diverse background: Teachers were concerned about meeting the diverse needs of their students, including a wide range of reading abilities and a wide range/lack of background knowledge.
- Assessment: Teachers indicated the need for ongoing assessment to inform instruction and to group students for instruction.
- Instructional materials: Teachers discussed the problem of sharing resources located in a central bookroom instead of each teacher having a set of resources located within each classroom. (“Barriers to Introducing Reading/Writing Workshop,” collected document, Summer 2002)

Appendix I. Classroom Walkthrough Form—Reading/Language Arts

CLASSROOM ACADEMIC PROFILE

DATE _____

GRADE LEVEL _____

CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGH FORM—READING/LANGUAGE ARTS

| Instructional Techniques –use O (Observed), I (Inconsistently Observed), or N (Not Observed) | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Focused lesson POS/SOL essential knowledge or skills | | | | |
| Used higher level questioning techniques | | | | |
| Challenged students to think deeply | | | | |
| Chose text that invited reading, discussion, and extension of knowledge | | | | |
| Encouraged students to explore a variety of interpretations and analyze, generate and test hypotheses | | | | |
| Modeled reading/writing | | | | |
| Demonstrated by thinking aloud | | | | |
| Asked students to justify thinking | | | | |
| Integrated other subject areas | | | | |
| Acted as coach/facilitator | | | | |
| Used writer’s workshop/writing conferences | | | | |
| Used guided reading to meet the varied needs of students | | | | |
| Used shared reading to model what good readers do | | | | |
| Used shared writing to model what good writers do | | | | |
| Used reading workshop/reading conference | | | | |
| Student Activities—use O (Observed), I (Inconsistently Observed), or N (Not Observed) or key words to indicate activities evidenced | | | | |
| Independent seatwork | | | | |
| Sustained reading | | | | |
| Sustained writing | | | | |
| Independent Inquiry/Research | | | | |
| Student Discussion | | | | |
| Identified similarities and differences | | | | |
| Used summarizing and/or note taking | | | | |
| Used technology as tool | | | | |
| Used graphic organizers | | | | |
| Read/wrote for authentic purpose | | | | |
| Read: silent, oral, guided, partner, choral, echo, reader’s theatre | | | | |
| Read: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, periodical | | | | |
| Wrote: narrative, descriptive, informational, poetry, explanatory, journalistic, analytical | | | | |
| Used resources: dictionary, reference books, periodicals, trade books, anthologies, handbook, nonfiction, web | | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Focused lesson on POS/SOL essential knowledge or skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional/materials matched to appropriate Program of Studies and Standards of Learning • Stated purpose of assignments and practice |
| Used higher level questioning techniques | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions require more than factual information or “yes/no” answers • Asked “why”, “how”, “explain”, “assess”, how do you know that”, etc. |
| Challenged students to think deeply | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students asked to apply knowledge • Instruction was above factual level • Engaged students in decision-making activities • Students connected learning to real life, prior knowledge, or other content areas |
| Chose text that invited reading, discussion, and extension of knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students found text engaging • Test Level appropriate |
| Encouraged students to explore a variety of interpretations and analyze, generate and test hypotheses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students engaged in learning activities at levels above simple recall such as problem solving, decision-making, experimental inquiry, synthesis, comparison investigation, projects, gathering and/or interpreting data |
| Modeled reading/writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers modeled what good readers do • Teachers modeled what good writers do |
| Demonstrated by thinking aloud | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher demonstrated metacognitive processes • Used “thinking aloud” to demonstrate how to arrive at a solution/product |
| Asked students to justify thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students asked to explain thinking orally and in writings • Students asked to justify answers |
| Integrated other subject areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlap of knowledge from different subjects • Content of both subject areas involved in instruction • Separate objectives for each content area |
| Acted as coach/facilitator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher role was more than motivational • Occurred during student-centered activity |
| Used writer’s workshop/writing conferences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students planned, drafted, revised, edited, and/or published their writing • Students discussed their writing with the teacher and other students |
| Used guided reading to meet the varied needs of students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based upon assessment, a text with a small amount of new learning was used with a small group or an individual student • The teacher introduced the text, and the students read it silently while the teacher worked with individual students. • The students discussed what they read, and the teacher presented one or two teaching points. |
| Used shared reading to model what good readers do | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher read an enlarged text and invited students to read along. • The teacher provided instruction in a variety of reading strategies or skills. |
| Used shared writing to model what good writers do | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher and the students worked together to determine a topic and the content of the writing. • The teacher wrote, and the students observed. |
| Used reading workshop/reading conference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short focused lesson; guided reading • Children confer with teacher/peer; conversations/discussions on specific topic • Reflect/share/write reading responses. |

Language Arts Student Activities

| | |
|---|--|
| Independent seatwork | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students independently used worksheets or activities (including instructional games) to deepen their understanding of content and their proficiency and skills • Not sustained reading or writing |
| Sustained reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading a story or reference book in class • Purpose was “open” reading, not reading to find answers to objective questions |
| Sustained writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students engaged in writing on self- or teaching selected topic • Extended written response to a question or prompt |
| Independent Inquiry/Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent work to gather facts or answers to questions for purpose of sharing • Research involved use of materials other than a textbook |
| Student Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students involved in discussion groups or debates • planned and prompted • student talk beyond response to teacher questions |
| Identified similarities and differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students engaged in activities to help them examine similarities and differences among ideas, issues, events, etc. • Students engaged in comparing, classifying, creating metaphors, and using language to create informed analogies • Students completed comparison charts • students created/used Venn diagrams • Students used graphic organizers for classifying • Students applied the Frayer model (see the Looking at Words website (Look Around Word Webs or the Fourth Grade <i>Learning to Read Social Studies</i> (Words in Context) p. 67). |
| Used summarizing and/or note taking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students distilled and/or synthesized information accurately and concisely • Students used teacher prepared notes, colored pencils, and/or graphic organizers to take notes • Students generated verbal or written summaries • Summaries involved in teaching other students • Students revised notes |
| Used technology as tool | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students used technology as a tool (e.g., Internet research, spreadsheet, laser disk, word processor, tape recording) |
| Used graphic organizers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used graphic organizers to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Retrieve what they know about a topic by representing or elaborating in a visual form ○ Take notes or collect data ○ Summarize information |
| Read/wrote for authentic purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When writing, student knew the audience • Purpose for reading was clear |

Language Arts Student Activities (cont)

| | |
|--|---|
| Read: silent, oral, guided, partner, choral, echo, reader's theatre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate how students were reading |
| Read: fiction nonfiction poetry drama periodical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate genre |
| Words: narrative, descriptive, informational, poetry, explanatory, journalistic, analytical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate style of writing |
| Used resources: dictionary, reference books, periodicals, trade books anthologies handbooks nonfiction, web, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate resource(s) used by students |

Instructional Delivery

| | |
|--|--|
| Lesson Aligned with POS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective(s) of lesson is found in appropriate Program of Studies |
| Lesson Focused on objective(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson focused on stated objective(s) • Students understand the direction for learning; the objective is stated |
| Instructional content accurate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials used for lesson are free from errors • Lesson presentation was error free |
| Differentiated Instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction matched to unique need, interest, learning style of individual students • Instruction based on assessment of student progress • Materials selected for students based on student need, interest, learning style |
| Direct instruction with whole class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher controlled instruction • Small group of students • Can be lecture format |
| Direct Instruction with small group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher controlled instruction • Small group of students • Can be lecture format |
| Team Teaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one adult involved in teaching • Both adults must be involved in teaching roles |
| Cooperative Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grouping strategies used to provide meaningful small group work when appropriate • Small groups (or pairs) interacted with learning materials in experiences that required positive interdependence • Partner reading • Editing groups or partners • Peer tutoring experiences |
| Flexible Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students used differentiated materials • Students placed in groups based on performance levels, interest, learning style |
| Technology used to deliver instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology used to support or present instruction • May be used by teacher and/or students • Use of overhead project is NOT technology; calculator use IS technology |

| Assessment of Student Progress | |
|---|--|
| Monitored students' understanding of objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked questions during instruction to check understanding • Used varied questioning techniques • Used assessment methods (e.g., running records, writing conference) to check understanding • Monitored independent student work to check understanding |
| Matched content to student need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of lesson was appropriate (neither too hard nor too easy) • Content of lesson was based on appropriate grade-level essential knowledge or skill • Linked lesson to content already learned |
| Provided higher-level feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided answers and information relative to progress in learning • Feedback went beyond "correct" or "incorrect" • Gave explanation; restated to provide new information • Not a motivational response (e.g., "great work", "keep it up") |
| Adjusted lesson based on student cues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content of lesson modified based on evidence of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student confusion ○ Lack of underlying skill or knowledge on part of student ○ Students already have command of the content of the lesson ○ Students are unengaged |
| Included assessment items similar to SOL test items | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment items included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multiple choice items ○ Items using SOL, test language ○ SOL-style items |
| Used variety of assessment methods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment matched to lesson content • Methods may include performance assessment, self-assessment, written assessments, oral assessments, anecdotal records, running records, tests, quizzes, observations, task • Used scoring guides (rubrics) to identify what is "good" • Included practice that provided students with self-check opportunities |
| Use of Instructional Time | |
| Maintained an academic focus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students involved in educationally relevant activities • Time NOT spent in explaining routines, maintaining appropriate student behavior, non-instructional activities |
| Managed routines efficiently | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom routines obviously in place • Students moved from one activity to another efficiently • Students accessed materials quickly • Students managed independent activities with little teacher direction |
| Level of student engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were actively involved in learning activities • Students were attentive |
| Level of differentiation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction differentiated • Assignments/student activities differentiated • Students may have been grouped flexibly |
| Expectations of students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students were challenged to achieve at high levels • The belief that all students are capable of academic success was evident |

Appendix J. Assessment Wall



<http://www.davidson.k12.nc.us/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectionidetailid=47479> Retrieved 6/10/11

The purpose of the assessment wall (Dorn & Sofros, 2001) was to use the students' assessment results to learn about the level of students' achievement over time, and the effectiveness of the instruction that those students had received. The intention was to use the assessment wall as a visual feedback system for professional dialogue during the CLT meetings in order to guide instructional improvements.

All of the teachers were asked to add their students' assessment information by creating an individual card for each student. An identifying color was assigned to each grade level. For example, first grade used pink cards, second grade used green cards, etc. Directions for how to code the cards were given to teachers at their CLT meetings, and they had the opportunity to suggest the addition of any other information they deemed important.

Appendix K. Staff Survey May 2008

ES Language Arts CLT Survey

Page 1 of 3

ES Language Arts CLT Survey

[Exit this survey >>](#)

1. Default Section

1. To help us in our planning for the 08-09 school year, we would like your feedback so that we can more effectively collaborate with each other and use the ideas exchanged to improve literacy in our school.

Please provide information about your position.

- K-3 Teacher
- 4-6 Teacher
- Resource/Specialist Teacher

*** 2. Please select one answer**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|
| The instructional strategies presented or discussed during the language arts CLT have been applied with my class. | | | | | |

*** 3. Please select one answer**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|
| The way I teach reading has changed based on the topics discussed during the language arts CLT. | | | | | |

*** 4. Please select one answer**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|
| The members of the grade level teams should continue to rotate | | | | | |

the responsibilities for facilitating the language arts CLT.

*** 5. Please select one answer**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|
| The reading teacher or literacy coach should facilitate the language art CLT. | | | | | |

*** 6. Please select one answer**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|
| The agenda for the language arts CLT should be developed by the grade level team in collaboration with the reading teacher, literacy coach, and resource specialists. | | | | | |

*** 7. Please select one answer**

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|
| The language arts CLT meetings should be scheduled during one of our double planning times instead of pulling teachers out of class for another meeting. | | | | | |

8. Please select one answer

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A (Not Applicable)

The language arts CLT is a valuable use of my time.

*** 9. In your opinion, what is the most valuable aspect of the language arts CLT?**

*** 10. If you could change one thing about the language arts CLT, what would it be?**

Next >>

View Summary

Filter Responses

Download Responses

Browse Responses >

Page: Default Section

1. To help us in our planning for the 08-09 school year, we would like your feedback so that we can more effectively collaborate with each other and use the ideas exchanged to improve literacy in our school. Please provide information about your position.

| | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| K-3 Teacher <input type="text"/> | 42.3% | 1 |
| 4-6 Teacher <input type="text"/> | 19.2% | |
| Resource/Specialist Teacher <input type="text"/> | 46.2% | 1 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | 2 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | |

2. Please select one answer

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|---|----------------|------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| The instructional strategies presented or discussed during the language arts CLT have been applied with my class. | 19.4% (6) | 54.8% (17) | 9.7% (3) | 3.2% (1) | 12.9% (4) | 3 |
| <i>answered question</i> | | | | | | 3 |
| <i>skipped question</i> | | | | | | |

3. Please select one answer

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| The way I teach reading has | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------|------------|------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------|
| changed based on the topics discussed during the language arts CLT. | 9.7% (3) | 32.3% (10) | 38.7% (12) | 6.5% (2) | 12.9% (4) | |
| | | | | | | <i>answered question</i> |
| | | | | | | <i>skipped question</i> |

4. Please select one answer

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|---|----------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| The members of the grade level teams should continue to rotate the responsibilities for facilitating the language arts CLT. | 9.7% (3) | 48.4% (15) | 22.6% (7) | 3.2% (1) | 16.1% (5) | |
| | | | | | | <i>answered question</i> |
| | | | | | | <i>skipped question</i> |

5. Please select one answer

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|---|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| The reading teacher or literacy coach should facilitate the language art CLT. | 35.5% (11) | 29.0% (9) | 29.0% (9) | 3.2% (1) | 3.2% (1) | |
| | | | | | | <i>answered question</i> |
| | | | | | | <i>skipped question</i> |

6. Please select one answer

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| The agenda for the language arts | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|---|
| CLT should be developed by the grade level team in collaboration with the reading teacher, literacy coach, and resource specialists. | 35.5% (11) | 51.6% (16) | 6.5% (2) | 3.2% (1) | 3.2% (1) | 3 |
| | <i>answered question</i> | | | | | 3 |
| | <i>skipped question</i> | | | | | |

7. Please select one answer

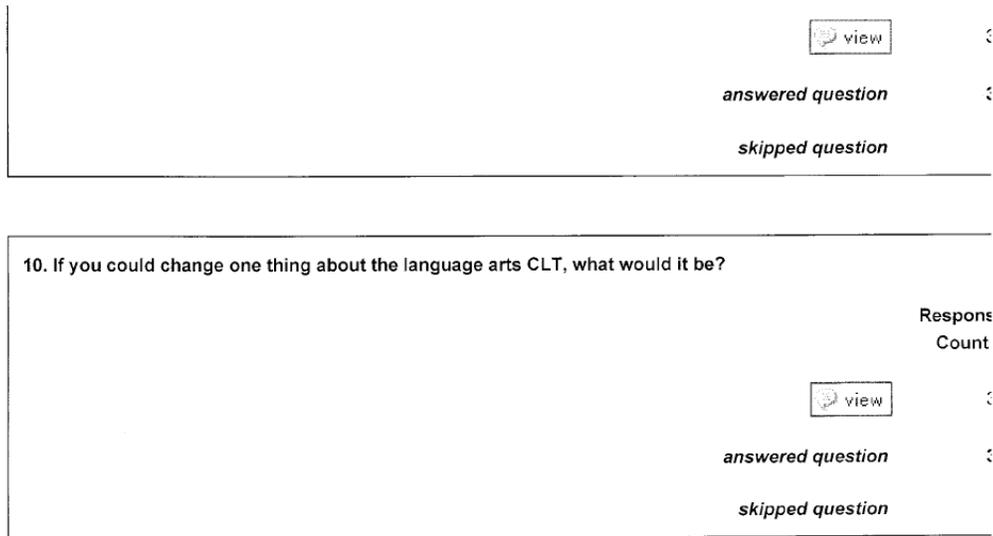
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| The language arts CLT meetings should be scheduled during one of our double planning times instead of pulling teachers out of class for another meeting. | 9.7% (3) | 16.1% (5) | 29.0% (9) | 41.9% (13) | 3.2% (1) | 3 |
| | <i>answered question</i> | | | | | 3 |
| | <i>skipped question</i> | | | | | |

8. Please select one answer

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | N/A (Not Applicable) | Response Count |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| The language arts CLT is a valuable use of my time. | 6.5% (2) | 41.9% (13) | 29.0% (9) | 19.4% (6) | 3.2% (1) | 3 |
| | <i>answered question</i> | | | | | 3 |
| | <i>skipped question</i> | | | | | |

9. In your opinion, what is the most valuable aspect of the language arts CLT?

| | Response Count |
|--|----------------|
| | |



Open-Ended Responses

“CLT provides an opportunity for professional dialogue and collaboration.”

“The most valuable aspect of the language arts CLT was having the literacy coach and reading teachers plan the agendas, facilitate the CLT meetings, and provide the notes from the CLT meetings.”

“I like having some time to discuss language arts as a team, without it coming from our personal time. If it came during my planning time, I wouldn’t like it because too much of our planning time is already eaten up by things that don’t directly help planning.”

“At times, the meetings seem redundant with what we are already discussing in team meetings. It would be more valuable if we would be presented with lessons prepared by the reading specialists and discuss how to present those lessons in the classroom. For the last four months, we seem to discuss DRA/DSA results only. While that is worthwhile discussion, it monopolized many meetings.”

Appendix L. Commonwealth ES—Non-Negotiables for Language Arts and Mathematics



ELEMENTARY PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC CENTER

Language Arts Non-Negotiables

- ☞ Daily 2-Hour Uninterrupted Language Arts Block
 - Common language arts block at each grade level
- ☞ Balanced Literacy Framework
 - Reading Workshop
 - Focus Lesson
 - Shared Reading
 - Guided Reading
 - Independent Reading
 - Literature Circles (4-6)
 - Sharing
 - Writing Workshop
 - Focus Lesson
 - Community Writing
 - Guided Writing
 - Independent Writing
 - Sharing
 - Word Study
 - Focus Lesson
 - Word analysis
 - Word sorts
 - Vocabulary development
- ☞ DRA2 Assessment
 - K - 2nd October, February, May
 - 3rd - 6th November, March
- ☞ DSA
- ☞ Other On-going Assessments
 - Running Records
 - Miscue Analysis
 - Anecdotal Notes
 - Rubrics
- ☞ Language Arts CLT
 - Analyze SOL and Assessment Data
 - Plan instruction
 - Share and discuss instructional strategies
 - Use e-Cart to develop common assessments
 - Discuss individual students and brainstorm interventions
 - Review and discuss research and professional literature
 - Participate in professional development



ELEMENTARY PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC CENTER

Mathematics Non-Negotiables

- ~ Daily 1-Hour Uninterrupted Mathematics Block
 - Common block at each grade level
- ~ Differentiate Instruction Based on Readiness
 - Content
 - Process
 - Product
- ~ Hands On Activities, Manipulatives, and Investigations
- ~ Technology to Support Instruction
- ~ Literature to Support Instruction of Math Concepts
- ~ Targeted intervention for struggling students
- ~ Everyday Counts Calendar Math
- ~ Math CLT
 - Analyze SOL and Assessment Data
 - Plan instruction
 - Share and discuss instructional strategies
 - Use e-Card to develop common assessments
 - Discuss individual students and brainstorm interventions
 - Review and discuss research and professional literature
 - Participate in professional development



ELEMENTARY PROFESSIONAL ACADEMIC CENTER

Common Planning Time Non-Negotiables

- ~ Agenda
- ~ Notes to Summarizing Meeting
- ~ Plan Instruction
- ~ Discuss Instructional Strategies
- ~ Discuss Individual Students
- ~ Develop Common Assessments
- ~ Review and Discuss Research and Professional Literature
- ~ Participate in Professional Development (i.e. language arts, math, technology)

Appendix M. CLT September 2008 Answers to Four Questions

1) *What do we want students to learn?*

- All of the teams referred to the Program of Studies and the essential knowledge outlined in the state standards.
- Most teams asked for an opportunity to “unpack” the standards for their grade level.
- All teams mentioned the Commonwealth curriculum map, and an intention to determine how well it fit with the district’s pacing guides.
- All of the upper grade teams (gr. 3–6) expressed a need to integrate language arts with the content areas.
- All teams intended to read research on best instructional practices.
- Most teams mentioned the need to differentiate instruction.
- Most teams intended to identify specific resources for teaching the standards.
- All teams planned to analyze the previous year’s data to identify instructional needs.

2) *How will we know if they’ve learned?*

- All teams planned to look at the previous year’s data and analyze it to identify patterns of strengths and needs.
- Some teams intended to analyze student writing.
- All teams planned to cross reference multiple data sets (e.g. DRA, eCART, SOL, VGLA) to look for consistent patterns.
- All teams planned to develop common assessments at their grade level.
- Most teams planned to use assessment data to group students for instruction.
- Some teams mentioned the need to develop greater interrater reliability for scoring the DRA.

3) What does the data reveal?

- Most teams planned to use the data to identify students in need of intervention.
- Most teams intended to use the data to determine the pacing of their instruction (i.e., slow down or speed up).
- Most teams planned to use the data to determine what worked and what didn't work.
- All teams intended to use the data to identify next steps.
- Some teams would use data to decide what not to teach because the students already know it.
- Some teams planned to use the data to restructure flexible groups.
- All teams planned to look at data for each of the subgroups.

4) What are we going to do if students already know it or do not learn it?

- Most teams would decide on a plan for intervention.
- Most teams would look at different ways to reteach.
- A few teams planned to give students feedback.
- Most teams would share how resources are being used.
- Most teams planned to challenge the students and develop deeper understanding.
- Some teams planned to ask coaches to model other ways of teaching.
- Several teams planned to use peer tutors and/or reciprocal teaching.
- Most teams would use the information to plan professional development for teachers.