A Naturalistic inquiry of the restructuring of a middle school: An NCLB mandate

Susan Ann Moulden
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A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY OF THE RESTRUCTURING OF A
MIDDLE SCHOOL: AN NCLB MANDATE

by

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ABSTRACT
A Naturalistic Inquiry of the Restructuring of a Middle School: An NCLB Mandate

by

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As the 2013-2014 school year approaches, more and more schools across the United States are finding it problematic to meet the annual measurable objective of 100 percent of the school’s population meeting its adequate yearly progress (AYP) target, as prescribed by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2002. Pursuant to NCLB, schools are required to meet the (defined) academic needs of all demographic populations within the school, and to ensure that all students are on grade level.

The purpose of this study was to explore first-hand the perceptions, insights and strategies comprising the implementation of a major restructuring plan, and how that restructuring plan affected the school, the teachers, the students, and the school governance on the campus of a middle school in the southwest United States. The study analyzed the restructuring of the school along with the replacement of its administration and staff two years prior to the NCLB time frame requirement.

A naturalistic inquiry approach was selected for this research because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of how and why a school was restructured. Data were collected during the 2008-2009 school year using a variety of data collection methods, which included observation, interviews, and document review. The participants of the
study consisted of new teachers to the school, rehired teachers, not-rehired teachers, and others, which consisted primarily of non-teaching personnel and administration.

Despite claims by district administration, the school was not restructured, it was reconstituted. The reconstitution was used to rid the school of mostly core subject teachers without strict regard to individual abilities or efforts towards offering academic improvement. Discipline was a major unresolved issue on campus and district communication was virtually non-existent. The district’s intent to restructure the school into a Professional Development School was superficial and excluded all stakeholders. And because the school was restructured two years before it was required to do so, and then the school was subsequently unable to make AYP with the then new teaching staff, the school had to plan for restructuring all over again during the 2009-2010 school year.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher strongly recommends that before restructuring is considered, it must be well planned, widely communicated, and input should be sought from all stakeholders. In addition, a complete re-evaluation of the school’s situation, the teachers and administrators abilities, and the climate should be conducted, thereby mitigating the creation of a negative and hostile environment.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation with love to my best friend, my husband, Gary Horton.

I cannot begin to express how much I appreciate all that you have done for me during this adventure in my life. Every step of the way you believed in my abilities, you encouraged me to follow my dream, and you motivated me to see the study through to completion.

Thank you for sharing your friendship, your laughter, and your love!
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- To the participants of this study, who willingly shared their experiences, time and trust in me to tell their story.
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Chapter One provides the background for this naturalistic research study. This study examined a district administration’s decision to restructure a middle school that had promoted a unique and innovative vehicle for change at the beginning of the school year. This chapter includes information on the purpose of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, definitions, significance, methodology, conceptual framework, limitations, delimitations and assumptions of the study.

Introduction

In 1994 the federal Improving America’s Schools Act introduced the concept of holding schools accountable for student performance on state assessments. Although the act encouraged states to assess whether schools were making progress and imposing sanctions on those that did not, it lacked sufficient enforcement to make the act truly effective. According to the National Center on Education Evaluation (2008), that all changed when the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 was enacted, requiring a regimen of annual testing in grades 3 through 8 and 10, and the imposition of sanctions on schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Most recently, the Center on Education Policy (2008) analyzed state and federal records, discovering that more than 3,500 schools, and about seven percent of all Title I schools in the nation, were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring during the 2007-2008 school year. This was an increase of 50 percent of the schools in the restructuring phase from the previous year as reported by the U. S. Department of
Education (Center on Education Policy, 2008). Typically schools that are in the restructuring phase serve traditionally disadvantaged populations. For example, in 2004-2005, 60 percent of students in restructuring schools were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch compared to 41 percent of all public school students. In addition, 40 percent were Hispanic, and 37 percent were African-American across all public schools (Le Floch, Taylor, & Zhang, 2006).

Today, there are more elementary schools identified for restructuring than middle and high schools because there are far more of them. In addition, they do not stay in the restructuring phase as long as middle and high schools due to the secondary school’s structural complexity of academic departments, highly qualified teachers, numbers of staff and students, subjects taught, and length of school day (Le Floch, Taylor & Zhang, 2006; National Center of Education Statistics, 2005). Therefore, a middle school was chosen for this study.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), “the worth of a study is the degree to which it generates theory, description, or understanding” (p. 34). Exploration of the experiences and perceptions of participants provides both a description and an opportunity for increased understanding of the restructuring process at one middle school. This study will include the participants’ perceptions of their experience while at this middle school, their assessment of the restructuring process, and the researcher’s suggestions for some do’s and don’ts in the restructuring process as well as suggestions for further research in the area of school restructuring.
Purpose of the Study

Many policymakers, educators, and parents are deeply concerned about the performance of the nation’s public schools. They universally cite sub-par test scores, unruly student behavior and unsafe school buildings as evidence that public schools are failing (Education Commission of the States, 2002). Although the term “failing” as applied to all public schools may seem exaggerated, general agreement asserts that public schools do need to improve, especially those at low-performing levels and particularly those serving disadvantaged student populations.

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe first-hand knowledge, perceptions of the process, and insights into the strategies and methods that went into developing a major restructuring plan, and how school governance was affected on the campus of a middle school in the southwest. The study addressed detailed planning efforts, the replacement of administration and staff, perceptions of how the process was managed, implementation of a new Professional Development School, and how the school and staff received it. In addition, the research provided final outcomes as a result of the restructuring process.

A naturalistic inquiry research methodology was exclusively used in order to produce a holistic picture of how a middle school community experienced this undertaking. We have much to learn from the perspectives of those who experienced first hand the restructuring process, including the positive and negative elements of the process that enhance student achievement and the unique aspects of the restructuring process that detract from the teaching profession.
Statement of the Problem

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Public Law 107-110). This legislation was one in a series of reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was first passed in 1965. ESEA was the first federal statute (Title I) that provided substantial amounts of federal money to local schools such that better education could be provided to historically underserved student groups, such as minority and low-income children. Prior to 1965, almost all of the funds to operate public schools came from local tax dollars (Popham, 2004).

This most recent reauthorization of the original ESEA encompassed a set of significant regulations regarding how to determine the instructional quality of American schools, specifically Title I schools. This federal law established new ground rules requiring the nation’s public schools to be carefully and rigorously evaluated in such a way that the quality of an individual school could be methodically determined. The results of these evaluations must, as declared by this significant law, be relayed to parents and the general public in the form of a school report card (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002).

In order to meet the guidelines set forth under NCLB, all states must install annual reading and mathematics tests in grades 3 through 8, and one-time reading and mathematics tests in grades ten, eleven or twelve. The tests must be standardized, diagnostic, and provide relevant details about weaknesses in the students’ mastery of what was supposed to be learned (Popham, 2004).
In addition to the demand for expanded testing, NCLB requires each state to define what adequate yearly progress (AYP) should be for each elementary and secondary school population. Beginning in 2002, each state was to establish a timeline to ensure that all students in each defined subgroup [School, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), White/Caucasian, Black/African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaskan Native] will meet or exceed the state’s proficiency level of achievement on the state-determined assessment by school year 2013-2014. AYP looks at the percentage of students in each school that scored at or above the “meets” or proficient level on the state test. This measure is not about growth of student achievement; it is only about the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the target. This measure also indicates the percentage of students who were not tested, because if a school fails to test at least 95 percent of the eligible students, the school will be identified as failing this particular AYP category.

All schools, whether or not they receive Title I funds, will be identified if they fail to satisfy AYP targets. Schools that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years are designated as schools in their first year of “in need of improvement” and must develop a school improvement plan (see Appendix A, NCLB Consequence Flow Chart). In addition, the parents of children in such schools that receive Title I funds have the choice to transfer their child(ren) to another public school in the district that has not failed AYP. The district’s Title I funds must pay for the transportation of the child(ren) from one school to the other.
If a school fails to make AYP for three consecutive years, the students are eligible once again for public school choice, as well as supplemental education services free of charge. Supplemental education services (SES) are described as before- or after-school tutoring service provided by a state-approved contractor. Schools that fail AYP for four consecutive years are designated as being in “corrective action”. Schools that have not satisfied their AYP targets for five consecutive years are placed in a “planning for restructuring” category. Once again, parents are provided the opportunity for school choice and supplemental education services. The parents must also be made aware of the restructuring planning process for the school, and given the opportunity to be a part of the planning team. The plan that the district and school develops will be implemented during the following school year (NCLB, 2002). Appendix A provides a flow chart diagramming the consequences and action steps a school must follow if it is deemed “in need of improvement”.

As more and more schools across the country are entering the fifth, sixth, and beyond years of unsuccessfully satisfying the school improvement requirements proposed by state and federal governments, it is imperative that educational leaders make informed decisions about the various options that currently exist under the NCLB guidelines (Center on Education Policy, 2008). School restructuring is a complex compound of specialized knowledge about teaching and learning, organizational structure, administrative organization, and political decisions (Elmore, 1990).

With the focus of restructuring becoming more intense in the minds of educational leaders the higher they advance up the “in need of improvement” ladder, teachers, administrators, and districts are scrambling to navigate their way with the least
amount of time, pressure, and resources. The fact that by the 2013-2014 school year, every child, irrespective of disability, ethnicity, sex or socio-economic status, is to be proficient and on grade level tends to leave educational leaders with the question, “How does one restructure a school and provide the best benefits for all stakeholders without causing fear and tension across the teaching profession?”

An in-depth naturalistic inquiry of one middle school in a suburban setting in the southwest provided insight into the restructuring of a school that replaced virtually its entire staff and implemented a new innovative program by transitioning to a Professional Development School (PDS). This transition allowed educational leaders the opportunity to glean insight into the strategies and processes that are essential to restructuring a school and implementing a PDS.

Research Questions

This inquiry studied four principle research questions that dealt with the restructuring of one middle school:

1. What decisions were required, and by whom, for the planning and implementation of restructuring a middle school?
2. What is the relationship between teachers and administrators at the school due to the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of the teachers and administrators regarding the restructuring process?
4. What role did leadership play in the school being restructured?

Definitions

The following terms are defined to clarify and assist in understanding the study:
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – No Child Left Behind (Public Law 107-110) requires each state to define what AYP should be for each elementary and secondary school. Beginning in 2002, each state was to establish a timeline that would ensure that all students in each subgroup would meet or exceed the state’s proficiency level of achievement on the state-determined assessment by the school year 2013-2014. AYP looks at the percentage of students in each school that scored at or above the “meets” or proficient level on the state test. This measure is not about growth in student achievement; it is only about the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the target.

Appeal Process – An appeal is a formal request to the State Department of Education presented by the district on behalf of its schools (or the district itself) to re-examine the data or information upon which the AYP analysis was based.

Case Study – In qualitative research, this is the study of a “bounded system,” with the focus being either the case, or an issue that is illustrated by the case (or cases) (Stake, 1995). A qualitative case study provides an in-depth study of this “system” based on a diverse array of data collection materials. The researcher situates this system, or case, within its larger “context” or setting (Creswell, 2007). Lincoln & Guba (1985) view case study research not as a method of inquiry but as a form of writing or presentation for reporting the results of a naturalistic inquiry.

Educational Change – Making a difference, undergoing a transformation in beliefs and/or practices. Fullan (1991) provides further elaboration: (1) “First-order changes are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done. (2) Second-order changes seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures and roles” (p. 29).
*English Language Learners (ELL)* – Students whose primary language is one other than English, and who are receiving academic services in English as a Second Language (ESL) to meet their core English requirements.

*Key Informant (or Participant)* – These are individuals with whom the researcher begins in data collection because they are well informed, are accessible, and they can provide leads about other relevant information (Gilchrist, 1992).

*In Need of Improvement* – The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 developed the rules and regulations for school accountability to ensure that all students meet state standards. NCLB also determines whether schools make AYP, and delineates the school improvement procedures and consequences when schools do not make AYP. If any elementary or secondary school fails to make AYP for two consecutive years, the school district identifies the school for improvement. Each year, for a school to make AYP, each defined group of students must meet or exceed the objectives set by the state, and 95 percent of enrolled students in each subgroup must participate in the assessments (NCLB Act, 2002).

*Naturalistic Inquiry* – The investigation of a phenomenon within and in relation to their naturally occurring contexts (Willems & Raush, 1969).

*No Child Left Behind Act* – A reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA), which relies on test-based accountability, and operates on the theory that measuring performance, identifying schools and districts that fail to meet an expected performance level, and applying a series of sanctions is what is needed to induce schools and teachers to work harder and smarter to improve student achievement (Sunderman, 2008).
November 1st Report – In accordance with its findings, on or before November 1 each year, written revisions to the most recent School Improvement Plan (SIP) to improve the achievement of the school’s pupils by the School Support Team (SST) will be provided to the board of trustees of the school district, the State Board, and the State Department of Education concerning additional assistance for the school in carrying out the plan for improvement of the school (Nevada Department of Education, 2007).

Phenomenological Approach – The attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions of people in particular situations. Emphasis is placed on the subjective aspects of people’s behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Van Manen, 1990).

Professional Development School – A Professional Development School (PDS) is an innovative institution formed through partnerships between professional education programs and Pre-Kindergarten - 12 schools. PDS partnerships have a four-fold mission:

- the preparation of new teachers;
- faculty development;
- inquiry directed at the improvement of practice; and
- enhanced student achievement (NCATE, 2008).

Program Improvement – This is the formal designation for Title I-funded schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years. The criteria for identifying schools for program improvement differ according to the program being implemented at the school, either targeted-assistance school (TAS) or school-wide program (SWP). A school will exit program improvement status when it makes AYP for each of two consecutive years.

Reconstitution – Replacement of staff and leaders in failing schools (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005).
Restructuring – Changing the very structure, e.g., length of school day or school year, programs offered, class structure affiliation, etc., of a chronically failing organization in an attempt to spur dramatic improvement (Hassel, Hassel Arkin, Kowal, & Steiner, 2006).

Safe Harbor – If a school or subgroup does not meet the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) target goal, a Safe Harbor analysis is conducted to determine if the group has made substantial improvement. Safe Harbor analyses consider the percent reduction in non-proficient students that a school or sub-group has made since the previous school year, as well as group performance on the other indicator (for elementary and middle schools, it is attendance; for high schools, it is graduation rate). If a school or subgroup demonstrates a 10 percent reduction in the percentage of non-proficient students, and the group being evaluated meets the other indicator criteria, AYP criteria are considered as “being met” for that group (NCLB, 2002).

School Improvement – The process of altering specific practices and policies in order to improve teaching and learning.

School Improvement Plan (SIP) – In order to comply with NCLB, all schools must submit a school improvement plan or revised plan to their district on or before November 1 of each year. School improvement plans are action plans created to activate change within schools in order to improve student achievement.

School Support Team (SST) – A school support team is a group of skillful and experienced individuals charged with providing struggling schools with practical, applicable and helpful assistance in order to increase the opportunity for all students to meet the State’s academic content and student academic achievement standards.
School Support Team Leader (SSTL) – As a part of the NCLB direction to provide technical assistance to the school, the Nevada Department of Education trains and finances School Support Team Leaders to lead all schools in the third year and beyond of in need of improvement through the School Support Team process.

Substantive Questions – Questions focused on a particular setting or subjects under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) – A provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This program provides tutoring or other supplemental academic enrichment activities beyond the regular school day.

Title I – A federal program that provides funding to schools based on the number of students who qualify for free or reduced school lunch program.

Turnaround – A dramatic improvement in performance created by various changes within an organization (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). In this study, the researcher will refer to “turnaround” as a specific restructuring option under the NCLB Act; for example, district-management replacement of a school leader and staff relevant to the school’s failure (NCLB Act, 2002).

Watch List – The Watch List identifies schools that are in their first year of not having demonstrated Adequate Yearly Progress. Beyond being classified as not demonstrating AYP, schools are designated as being on watch for any of the three AYP content areas (1, ELA; 2, mathematics; 3, other indicator) in which they did not meet the target goals.

A list of acronyms and their meanings that are used throughout this study can be found in Appendix H.
Significance of the Study

The researcher entered into this study with a significant interest in the school improvement process. The researcher began teaching fourteen years ago in a Catholic high school on the west coast. After only one year, the researcher accepted a teaching position in a local public elementary school. Realizing immediately the number of opportunities the public school system could provide for students, the researcher also became acutely aware of the many challenges the system faced.

Five years later, the researcher decided to broaden her education base by accepting a teaching position at a nearby middle school while at the same time attending the local university to obtain an administrative credential. Shortly after receiving her administrative credential, the researcher began her administrative career in a small district in a western state. At every level that she taught, the researcher was able to work closely with the administrative team, always attuned for the “best” practice or approach to use when working with students who are academically, physically or language challenged.

In a way, the researcher believed that she was indeed fortunate to be at the right place, at the right time throughout her career in education. More importantly, the researcher was able to learn firsthand from some of the most student-centered individuals of their time. As the researcher gained experience and insight, first as a teacher and then as a principal, she realized that she was becoming increasingly dedicated to pursuing new methods towards improving student achievement. The researcher believed that addressing educational issues and concerns are a responsibility of the administration as well as the school in which she was able to identify as an administrator. After four-and-a-half all too brief years as a elementary school principal, the researcher was offered a
position at the State Department of Education to work with schools deemed “in need of improvement” as a School Improvement and Title I consultant. This new position afforded a considerably larger stage upon which to gather new insights and apply new methods for improving educational achievement in schools throughout the state.

As a school improvement consultant, the researcher was assigned to work with schools throughout the state that had been unsuccessful in meeting their AYP targets for four consecutive years or more. Merriam (1988) suggested that a situation that the researcher is familiar with is a good thing to study. She stated that, “…the investigator as the human instrument is limited by being human; that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, and personal biases interfere” (p. 37). Some of these “opportunities” may not be overlooked if the researcher is familiar with the situation. Merriam (1988) explained how then to deal with the personal bias:

“All observations and analyses are filtered through one’s worldview, one’s values and one’s perspective. It might be recalled that one of the philosophical assumptions underlying this type of research is that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations on reality. All research has its biases. But there are ways to deal with investigator bias in qualitative research.”

Guba & Lincoln (1981) wrote that, “The best cure for biases is to be aware of how they slant and shape what we hear, how they interface with our reproduction of the speaker’s reality, and how they transfigure truth into falsity” (p. 148).

As the researcher began this study, she was working for a State Department of Education as a School Improvement and Title I Consultant. Therefore, her interest in the No Child Left Behind Act and its guidelines, which has forced many states and school districts to enforce various accountability policies and procedures, has inspired the researcher to delve into the literature, hoping to gain a better understanding of the NCLB
requirements and to determine what other federal policies and initiatives have existed and what influence they have had on the nation’s education system.

A close examination of the restructuring of a middle school and a rich description of the process will begin to fill the research void on this particular subject. Restructuring options associated with NCLB have only recently been explored and advocated in research (Center on Education Policy, 2008; Center on Innovation & Improvement, 2007; Education Policy Analysis Archives, 2005). This research will hopefully provide a description of the perceptions and events that were experienced during the restructuring of a middle school, which in turn may encourage other schools and school districts to consider all of the options available to them before pursuing the drastic events as detailed in this particular study.

**Methodology**

A naturalistic research methodology was selected in order to answer the questions posed for this study. This method is considered to be the most appropriate fit for this inquiry because the purpose of this study was to explore first-hand knowledge, perceptions of the process, insights into the strategies and methods that went into developing a major restructuring plan, and how it affected the school governance on the campus of a middle school in the southwest. In addition, naturalistic research methodology encourages the case study reporting mode, which allowed the researcher to present a rich picture of the restructuring process that had emerged at the school site.

Case study methodology utilizes situations ranging from where the researcher is as an outside observer to situations where the researcher is intimately involved in the
study. Contrary to Merriam (1988), Bogdan & Biklen (1992) strongly suggest that the researcher not study something that he or she is directly involved with for several reasons. Specifically, they stated:

“People who are intimately involved in a setting find it difficult to distance themselves, both from personal concerns and from their common-sense understandings of what is going on. For them, more often than not, their opinions are more than ‘definitions of the situation’; they are the truth” (p.60).

Yin (2003) would categorize this involvement as participant observation. He defined it as, “participant observation is a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer. Instead, one may assume a variety of roles within a case study situation and may actually participate in the events being studied” (p. 94). Jorgensen (1989) insisted that participant observation offer possibilities for the researcher on a continuum from being a complete outsider to being a complete insider. Merriam (1998) defined participant observation as a “schizophrenic activity in that the researcher usually participates but not to the extent of becoming absorbed in the activity” (p. 103). In this study, the researcher was an outside participant that observed and recorded events of a school that had been restructured without becoming an active participant in the school’s group conversations or activities.

This naturalistic study took place in a middle school that had been restructured during the 2008-2009 school year. For confidentiality purposes, the names of the school, school district, and study participants have been changed. The announcement of the plan to restructure the school was made in April 2008. During a staff meeting that included the entire school staff, the following announcements were made: (1) The principal had been “promoted” to a new school and a new principal would be assigned within one
month’s time; (2) The school would be restructured as a Professional Development School in the 2008-2009 school year in partnership with the local University; (3) At the close of the 2007-2008 school year, the entire staff, including the new principal, would be released from their contract; they would have the option to reapply for their teaching position, or they would be relocated to another school within the district (i.e., the school would essentially be reconstituted).

The participants of this study consisted of four brand new teachers to the school, six teachers who had taught at the middle school prior to the restructuring and were rehired to continue teaching at the school; five teachers who had taught at the middle school prior to the restructuring and were either not rehired or elected not to return to teach at the school; the new and current principal that was hired prior to the restructuring announcement; the previous vice-principal; the University faculty member responsible for the “Professional Development School”; and the new School Support Team Leader working with the school. Data for the study was collected through observations, interviews, and relevant school data. Data analysis was inductive and ongoing during the study, with a period of intensive data analysis preceding the write-up.

**Conceptual Framework**

The lens through which the researcher viewed incidents throughout this study was based on the four-frame model of “Reframing Organizations” from Bolman & Deal (2008). Bolman & Deal’s “Reframing Organizations” is divided into four frames: (1) Structural; (2) Human Resource; (3) Political; and (4) Symbolic. All of these frames are rooted in managerial wisdom and social science knowledge. According to Bolman &
Deal, the structural approach focuses on the architecture of organization, the design of units and subunits, rules and roles, and goals and policies. The human resource lens emphasizes understanding people, their strengths and foibles, reason and emotion, and desires and fears. The political view sees organizations as competitive arenas of scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage. Finally, the symbolic frame focuses on issues of meaning and faith. The symbolic frame puts ritual, ceremony, story, play and culture at the heart of organizational life (p. 21).

**Limitations**

The following limitations helped define the boundaries for this study:

1. This study was limited to one school site, and it cannot necessarily be assumed that what was experienced at this school can be applied to all schools.
2. The collection sample was dependent on voluntary participation from staff members.
3. The time constraints of the school year made it imperative to choose a limited number of participants to interview so that each interview could be conducted during the twenty weeks that were available for the study.
4. The primary methods of collecting data from teachers, site administrators, SSTLs, and university faculty members were observations, documentation collection and interviews, all of which have inherent weaknesses.
5. The observations and interviews were merely a snapshot of the school at the various times that they were conducted.
6. Since the restructuring process took place in 2007-2008, much of the data was limited to the memories of participants during interviews.
7. The site administrators, staff members, SSTLs, university faculty members, and associate district superintendent selected for the study may not be completely representative of other staff in the school or district, thereby limiting the generalization of the findings.
Finally, the findings may not be able to be generalized, but will have situational applicability contingent upon the particular situation being studied, in this case, the restructuring of a middle school in the southwest. This contextual fit has been referred to as transferability, the degree of which is dependent on the similarities between contexts (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

**Delimitations**

The scope of the study was delimited in the following ways:

1. The participants of the study were limited because only the teachers, administration, School Support Team Leaders, and faculty involved in the Professional Development School that were involved in the restructuring process were chosen as informants in the study.
2. Limiting the number of informants also allowed for deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, which allowed the researcher to construct a rich picture of the restructuring process based on interviews, observations, and artifact collection and analysis.

**Assumptions**

The study made the following basic assumptions:

1. The school faculty, site administrators, SSTLs, university faculty member, and associate district superintendent were honest and truthful in their responses during all interviews.

**Organization of the Study**

The remainder of the study has been organized into five additional chapters, appendices, and a bibliography in the following manner. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. Chapter Three delineates the research design and methodology used in the study. Chapter Three also includes sections that describe
gaining access, design of the study, site and participants, data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness. Chapter Four presents the case study that started it all; the events that led to the restructuring of Sutter Middle School. Chapter Five presents the findings of the study through all extensive analysis of the interview responses, and Chapter Six provides an explanation of how the findings answered the research questions as well as the implications of the findings, conclusions and possibilities for further research. The study concludes with the document appendices and bibliography.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“American schools are in trouble. In fact, the problems of schooling are of such crippling proportions that many schools may not survive” (Goodlad, 2004, p. 1).

Overview

In his fourth Annual State of American Education Address in 1997, then-U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley (1997), urged:

“We need to stop making excuses and get on with the business of fixing our schools. If a school is bad and can’t be changed, reconstitute it or close it down. We cannot and must not tolerate failing schools. To meet the new expectations of the American people, we must confront that all-too-common problem of schools that are low achieving and even dangerous. In America today, there are schools that should not be called schools at all”.

In the United States, efforts to provide support to failing and ineffective schools have often taken the form of school-wide reform and school restructuring programs aimed at particularly low-performing schools and schools serving low socioeconomic status student populations (Anyon, 1997). Based on the multitude of educational change efforts of the past, it is evident that reform, restructuring, and educational changes are longstanding norms (Ravitch, 1983; Strayer, 1983).

This review of relevant literature begins by addressing the complexity and history of school reform and exploring the educational change process by identifying differing perspectives, strategies, and useful principles that can be used by all schools and school districts. Those sections are followed by a discussion on the difference between restructuring and reconstitution. The final section discusses some of the research that has
examined the changes in leadership necessary for school improvement to occur. A summary concludes this chapter.

**Addressing the Complexity and History of School Transformation**

Education is regarded as a “domestic issue” (Nitta, 2008, p. 1). Policy decisions about what will be paid for, what students will be taught, who will teach them, and where they will be educated have been made with regard to national histories, cultural norms, and local political conditions (Nitta, 2008). Mainly it has only been within the last fifty years that public school educators have had to respond to initiatives calling for school reform on a national scale. However, school reform and improvement demands were made even before the 1940s, with varied results and consequences.

From colonial times to the present, public and private schooling has evolved many times. According to Spring (1994), schools in pre-Revolutionary America focused on preparing students to live a religious life and to confer status; however, after the American Revolution, focus changed, emphasizing that schools could serve public policy by reforming society and preparing students to become good citizens.

During the 1830s and 1840s, the idea that schools were to serve society led to the development of a system of common schools, which have become the basis for the public school as it is known today (Spring, 1994). As the early public school struggled to meet the demands of its growing population, schools also struggled to resolve the social issues of dealing with diverse populations. According to Kaestle (1983), “It was during that time educators advocated for free common schooling dedicated to moral education and good citizenship…(and) was confident that improved public education could alleviate a
host of worrisome problems” (p. 75). Kaestle (1983) also added that, at the same time, there were those who resisted government intervention in institutional and private life, in addition to regional and cultural differences that prevented a common agreement on the definition of suitable schooling for all (p. 77). Prior to the turn of this century, most school reform movements were focused on general issues and were locally resolved.

Since the early 19th century, advocates of public schools in the United States have answered to multiple reform movements and responded to rapidly changing social, political, and educational contexts. According to Cuban (1990), early reforms were ways to find solutions to the “problem of how to balance societal values of excellence and equity in tax-supported public schools enrolling children of different abilities, social classes, religions, and racial and ethnic groups” (p. 135). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, despite significant opposition to loss of local control of educational institutions, communities were persuaded to support school consolidation movements as a means of improving educational opportunities for children. In large urban areas the educational focus centered on building schools for immigrant children in order to transmit a form of social control as schools became “agents of cultural standardization” (Katz, 1988, p. 104; Spring, 1994; Tyack, 1974). In each of these situations, the public was persuaded that either the children, or society, or both would benefit from these reforms. These two approaches have generally been the basis for subsequent reform efforts. As Ellwood Cubberly (1916), a leading reformer of the time, wrote:

“Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) [his parentheses] are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of twentieth-century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down” (p. 338).
With this thought, 1893 was the year that the first major national report came out, the “Committee of Ten”, which was cast with hopes of bringing order to the idea of high school curriculum and to standardize preparation for higher education (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In addition, the first meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) was held in 1917, giving principalship professional recognition. Principals were now in charge of supervision and instruction (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005).

**School Transformation in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s**

Depending on social and economic conditions, teachers, and administrators connected with educational institutions received ample direction for improving education. During the 1920s, educational institutions were examining and implementing elements of John Dewey’s Progressive Education movement, and moving toward embracing the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (Presseisen, 1985; James & Tyack, 1983). The *Cardinal Principles* were written in 1918 by professional educators and sponsored by the National Education Association. Many educators welcomed the *Cardinal Principles* as an enthusiastic rationale and blueprint for “social efficiency,” the broad socialization of youth for work, family life, good health, citizenship, ethical character, and worthy use of leisure (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 51). Social inequities in secondary schools were widespread, and public schools, both wittingly and unwittingly, contributed to perpetuation of systems of racial, gender, and cultural bias (James & Tyack, 1983).

The Great Depression of the 1930s brought the principal’s attention to caring for the child. The Eight Year Study, a report involving 30 schools from 1933 to 1941, criticized the principal, stating, “…only here and there did the principal conceive of their
work of democratic leadership of the community, teachers, and students” (Goodwin, Cunningham & Eagle, 2005, p. 4).

During the early 1940s, the focus of education changed again with the onset of World War II. Schools became instruments of patriotism and nationalism, concentrating on educating students to do their part for the war effort. It would take thirty years before the criticism of schools became the mouthpiece for maintaining social and political inequities or would receive important attention and consideration (Apple, 1990; Giroux, 1983; Illich, 1970; Spring, 1994).

On another note, the war also impacted schools. The war interrupted attendance patterns, with some students leaving school early to join the military and returning as veterans needing to complete their education. Principals during that time overlooked the goals of educating the students in exchange for the social goal of winning the war and saving democracy. The war moved the schools and principals toward being a “tool of society” (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005, p. 4).

**School Transformation in the 1950s**

There are several examples of federal actions involving education that took place in the 1950s. In the 1950s a new set of reformers echoed the Committee of Ten’s call for an academically challenging curriculum. They blamed the progressive philosophy and practices of the *Cardinal Principles* for the erosion of intellect and the trivialization of culture in the high schools. In 1954 with the *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision, the Supreme Court set in motion a process of dismantling a system of school segregation that had existed for hundreds of years in the United Stated in both the south and the north. At the launching of the Russian satellite, Sputnik I, in 1957, federal officials questioned
and criticized the overall effectiveness of the educational system, which led the American education system to be pushed toward exceeding the accomplishments of our foreign competitors (Drake & Roe, 1994). One consequence of the Sputnik success was the passage of the *National Defense Education Act* of 1958. Financial support became the prime importance of the federal government, which was to place much more emphasis on science, mathematics, foreign languages and other traditional liberal arts, as well as putting principals in charge of managing these funds (Woodring, 1983; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Goodwin et al, 2005).

**School Transformation in the 1960s and 1970s**

According to Tyack & Cuban (1995), “reforms in the 1960s and 1970s came fast and furious from many quarters as the high school became an arena for achieving new forms of equality, participation, ethnic self-determination, and liberation from bureaucratic controls” (p. 53). As James and Tyack (1983) noted:

“The 1960s and 1970s were a time of massive change in the larger society and in education. Blacks, Hispanics, women, the handicapped, and other groups too long ignored in educational policy now demanded a say in shaping the high school. Reformers turned to the courts and to legislators to bring about changes in school finance, in ways of classifying students, in student discipline and in student rights, in segregated schooling, in rights for linguistic minorities, in entitlements for the handicapped, and in a host of other matters previously left to professionals” (p. 405).

These demands brought about legislative changes that resulted in internal criticism of schools. In the 1960s, frustration with the public schools on the part of some public school teachers and educators produced active and vocal critics who wrote for an audience outside the usual educational establishment (Holt, 1964; Illich, 1970; Kohl, 1967; Kozol, 1967). These teachers and writers seriously questioned the purpose and effects of public schooling on the hearts and minds of students that these schools were
supposed to serve. Based on high expectations, concerned parents, politicians and business people were no longer willing to leave the direction of schooling entirely in the hands of professional educators (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

One of the consequences that came about due to the outpouring of concerns by the outside audience was the federal government’s authorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA), which guaranteed a free and appropriate education for all in 1965. Shortly after the authorization of ESEA was the passage of Title IX and Public Law 94-142, *Education Act for Handicapped Children*, the student rights movement. Due to the demands of the public, school principals were required to develop a legal understanding of issues dealing with student rights, due process, sexism, and mainstreaming disabled students. In addition to more legislative mandates and collective bargaining units, the school principal was forced to become a program manager of compliance issues rather than focusing on student outcomes and instruction (Goodwin, Cunningham & Eagle, 2005).

**School Transformation in the 1980s and 1990s**

In many respects, schools of the 1980s and 1990s were no different than the earlier ones because pressures to change in response to individual and social needs continued to persist and because “the demands for vastly improved schools are too compelling to fade away” (Reavis & Griffith, 1992, p. 1). In fact, the 1980s were known as “the decade of educational reports”. Between 1982 and 1986, eight major national reports on education in the United States were presented to the American public. The belief that we were falling behind other industrial powers in development, productivity, and quality was the theme of several reform reports (*Carnegie Forum*, 1986; *Coalition of*
Essential Schools, 1985; Education Commission of the States, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; National Governors Association, 1986; National Science Board, 1983; A Nation at Risk, 1983). Each of these reports identified problems in education that needed to be resolved, as well as made recommendations for needed changes.

In 2004, Guthrie and Springer posited the 1983 A Nation at Risk as its principal thesis that downwardly spiraling pupil performance had rendered the U.S. education system “dysfunctional”, thereby threatening the nation’s technological, military, and economic preeminence. The report further asserted that only by elevating education achievement could the United States avoid subordinating itself to its educational superiors and economic competitors. In addition, Graham (2005) stated that the A Nation at Risk alerted the American people, often in rather colorful and occasionally purple and erroneous prose, to the danger the country faced if the academic achievement of schoolchildren did not improve. The commissioners opened, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war” (p. 155).

At the same time that national reports were being issued, such as the one noted above, individuals and special interest groups were also questioning traditional school practices. Contemporary reformers used educators to pursue school reform from a variety of points of view (e.g., Gardner, 2000; McCombs & Quiat, 2002; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002), while others asserted that leadership is central to school improvement (e.g., Goodwin, et al., 2005; Fullan, 1997; Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, & McGauphy, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1996). Other prospects were also examined, such as
academic tracking of school students (Oakes, 1985); equity versus excellence (Nathan, 1983); gender discrimination (Gilligan, 1982); multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983); and school improvement (Goodlad, 1984). Research also indicated that organizational climate (e.g., Chrispeels, 1997; Fullan, 1993; Smylie & Hart, 2000); high-stakes accountability (e.g., Hess, 2004); or commitments to multicultural plurality (e.g., Nieto, 2003; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) are the newly added approaches to the critical list for those who seek to promote substantive change.

**School Transformation of the 21st Century**

Highly publicized reports and manifestos (*Goals 2000, 1994; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983*) have repeatedly put the spotlight on performance deficits in American K-12 schools. As Don McAdams, President of the Center Reform of School Systems noted, “…even the best-run school districts are still dysfunctional organizations.” The truth is that our nation’s schools today fail to fulfill their essential obligation, and only forceful action will reverse this state of affairs (Hess, 2004).

In order to dramatically change the focus of schools today, President George W. Bush made high-stakes accountability measures the cornerstone of his education agenda. In 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (Public Law 107-110) became the most recent and arguably the most comprehensive articulation of educational accountability policy in the United States. The federal government created NCLB, a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA), which relies on test-based accountability, and operates on the theory that measuring performance, identifying schools and districts that fail to meet an expected performance level, and applying a series of sanctions is what
is needed to induce schools, administrators, and teachers, to work harder to improve student achievement (Sunderman, 2008, p. 2). The theory of reform embedded in NCLB is that holding schools accountable for improved student performance will drive school reform; that is, schools will reallocate resources in ways that will enhance student achievement and thereby create the conditions for continuous improvement. In this way, school improvement that results in high levels of learning for all students will be both accelerated and sustainable (Sunderman, 2008).

Fullan (1991) explains that “…real change, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth. The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational change, and to success or failure—facts that have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform” (p. 32).

**Exploring Educational Change**

Elmore (2002) explained, “The pathology of American schools is that they know how to change. They know how to change promiscuously and at the drop of a hat. What schools do not know how to do is to improve, to engage in sustained and continuous progress toward a performance goal” (p. 1). Elmore (1990) also states, “…behind the idea of restructured schools is a fragile consensus that public schools, as they are presently constituted, are not capable of meeting society’s expectations for the education of young people (p. 1). Elmore (2004) further adds, “If schools are not meeting expectations for student learning, it is largely because they do not know what to do”
(p. 217). Fullan (1993) echoed these comments, noting, “It is probably closer to the truth to say that the main problem in public education is not resistance to change but the presence of too many innovations mandated or adopted uncritically and superficially on an *ad hoc* fragmented basis” (p. 23). Furthermore, Fullan (1991) concluded, “…the process of educational change in modern society is so complex that the greatest initial need is to comprehend its dynamics” (p. 16).

Existing literature reviews point to research on educational change as beginning around the late 1950s with regard to the early work of Chin and Benne (1969) as most significant (Sashkin & Egermeier, 1992). These same reviews have been most helpful in presenting different perspectives or ways of looking at educational change over the years since the 1960s. Diagrammatic models will be used to help elaborate these different perspectives.

One such model identifies three influential perspectives on educational change (House, 1981). These three broad perspectives have been summarized as follows:

- The rational-scientific or R&D perspective position states that change is created by dissemination of innovative techniques.
- The political perspective, also known as the top-down approach, brings about change through legislation and other external directives.
- The cultural perspective, also known as the bottom-up approach, seeks to influence change through encouraging value changes within organizations.

These broad perspectives have been applied to 30 years of educational change history to help identify major trends. Specifically, the metaphor of “waves of reform” has been used to categorize these three perspectives into a chronology of the history of educational change (Sashkin & Egermeier, 1993).
The first wave of reform in the 1960s and early 1970s centered on the perspective of the rational-scientific or R&D approach. This perspective assumed that people accept and use information that has been scientifically shown to result in educational improvements. However, change has proved to be a much more complex process than this perspective assumed. The failure of the rational-scientific perspective was linked to the fact that people do not necessarily take up new ideas solely on the basis that they will be good for them. An example of this approach would be a set of programs sponsored by the National Science Foundation. Although these programs were developed, tested, and validated by experts, it does not mean that the teachers who receive them are going to use them as designed. This in turn led to the perspective that if people will not take up new ideas because they have been proven to be good for them, then legislation will need to be enacted to make things mandatory for people to effect change. Therefore, the failure of the R&D approach led into the 1980s, and to the second wave or perspective on change.

The second wave is known as the political perspective on change, which was dominated by strong external policy controls, usually mandated by legislation. Compliance was often accompanied by the threat of sanction, and involved compromise among power groups. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) describe four policy instruments that are used by states under this perspective: mandates, inducements, capacity building, and system changing. An example of this perspective would be under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. Should a school not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) on the annual state assessment, then that school would be deemed “in need of improvement” and would be required to make AYP for two consecutive years to get out from under this sanction. This perspective also failed because people refused to effect change, or did so
in name only. The failure of the political perspective led to a third wave perspective on change.

In the 1990s, the dominant perspective on educational change was the cultural perspective, which emphasizes changes in meaning and values within an organization undergoing change. This third wave perspective recognizes that in order to achieve deep and significant change, there needs to be a transformation in the beliefs and values of the organization, and that culture changes as a consequence of the actions of leaders who transform their organization (Moorman & Egermeier, 1992).

According to Sashkin & Egermeier (1992), these three broad perspectives on change in schools form a backdrop for understanding the nature and use of certain operational approaches or strategies for change. The four strategies represent an attempt to invoke one or more of the three perspectives. In other words, a particular strategy may focus on one of the three perspectives, drawing on it as a primary force for change, while making use of one (or both) of the other perspectives to provide added strength (p. 3).

The four operational strategies for change are:

1. *Fix the parts*, which involves improvement by adopting proven innovations of various types;
2. *Fix the people*, through training and development;
3. *Fix the school*, by developing school organizations’ capacities to solve their own problems; and
4. *Fix the system*, by reforming and restructuring the entire enterprise of education, from the State Department of Education to the district and the school building.

In order to describe the nature of educational change, Fullan (1993) examined the complexity of the change process in depth, and has developed eight interrelated lessons regarding the change process. These lessons are summarized below:
1. **Lesson One: You Can’t Mandate What Matters.** The more complex the change, the less you can force it because complex change requires new skills, new behaviors, and new beliefs or understandings.

2. **Lesson Two: Change is a Journey, Not a Blueprint.** Change is non-linear: it is loaded with uncertainty and excitement, and sometimes it is perversive.

3. **Lesson Three: Problems Are Our Friends.** Problems are inevitable, and, rather than be viewed as an unwelcome barrier, they should be looked at as a productive challenge that provides organizational members with better insight into the organization and into an understanding of themselves.

4. **Lesson Four: Vision and Strategic Planning Come Later.** Premature visions and planning can blind and be obstructive if they are not based on shared experience and information.

5. **Lesson Five: Individualism and Collectivism Must Have Equal Power.** There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and group thinking; rather a balance must be struck and a shared vision constructed.

6. **Lesson Six: Neither Centralization Nor Decentralization Works.** Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary in creating an environment that leads people at the top and the bottom to a shared vision and enables them, through maximizing the flow of valid information, to jointly develop and implement that vision.

7. **Lesson Seven: Connection with the Wider Environment is Critical.** The best organizations learn externally as well as internally, since change is dependent not only on what happens in the school but outside of it as well.

8. **Lesson Eight: Every Person is a Change Agent.** People are important as the potential sources of change in the organization, since we need the ideas, attention and dedication of every person if the potential of an innovation is to be maximized (pp. 22-40).

Fullan (1993) inserts that there are no comfortable positions in contending with the forces of change, because one must always fight against over-control on the one hand, and chaos on the other. Fullan further explains that there is a pattern underlying the eight lessons of change that concerns one’s ability to work with polar opposites of pushing for change while allowing self-learning to unfold. Change also involves being prepared for a journey of uncertainty; seeing problems as sources of creative resolution; having a vision,
but not being blinded by it; valuing the individual and the group; incorporating centralizing and decentralizing forces; being internally cohesive, but externally oriented; and valuing the personal change agent as the route to system change.

Fullan has carefully analyzed the major school reform efforts of the past 30 years, and has reached some compelling conclusions about the nature of the change process. Even though those conclusions were not all that surprising, they bear repeating, because he found that substantive change is both a time-consuming and an energy-intensive process. He concluded that the total timeframe from initiation to institutionalization is lengthy because even moderately complex change takes from three to five years and major restructuring efforts can take from five to ten years to be successful. Therefore, one might be inclined to ask if it would be better for a school to restructure or reconstitute itself.

**Restructuring vs. Reconstitution**

**Restructuring**

According to the Center of Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2008), “Restructuring is defined as changes in the very structure of an organization” (p. 6). Perlman (2007) stated that, “Restructuring is a change process. It requires substantial organizational transformations that differ from the minor, incremental changes that suffice to help already good schools improve” (p. 46). According to Michael Kirst, “Restructuring is a word that means everything and nothing simultaneously…it is in the eye of the beholder” (Reavis & Griffith, 1992, p. 2). Likewise, Goodlad noted that, “We are rapidly moving toward the use of the word ‘restructuring’ whenever we talk about
school reform at all…This is becoming another catchword, when the truth of the matter is that hardly any schools are restructured” (Reavis & Griffith, 1992, p. 2). Whereas, Stoll & Fink (1996) claim that, “Restructuring means a total, critical reexamination of our use of time and space, roles and relationships, with a view to adopting new structures which enhance the learning of all pupils and abandoning those structures which are unproductive and obsolete” (p. 129). Hess, on the other hand, terms restructuring as the “death penalty” (p. 59). Hess also clarifies that this “death penalty” provides three things: (1) It puts additional muscle into the accountability system by forcing faculty in low-performing schools to worry about how well the entire school is serving students; (2) It creates an end point for those schools in a death spiral where good educators are trying to flee to other schools and no one is able to make the school work; and (3) It ensures that states are periodically flushing the worst school out of the system while creating fresh opportunities for new talent (p. 59).

Under the current NCLB Act, restructuring is defined as the transformation mechanism for schools failing to make “adequate yearly progress” toward their state’s student achievement targets for five or more consecutive years (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). Therefore, during the fifth consecutive year of being deemed “In Need of Improvement” the district and the school, in collaboration, are required to develop a plan for restructuring. If they fall short of their state’s academic targets again, that is, in the sixth consecutive year, they must implement the restructuring plan the following year. NCLB offers districts five options for school restructuring:

1. Reopen the school as a public charter school;
2. Replace “…all or most of the school staff (which may include the principal) who are deemed relevant to the failure to make AYP”;

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3. Contract with an outside “…entity, such as a private management company, with a demonstrated record of effectiveness, to operate the public school”;

4. Turn the “…operation of the school over to the State educational agency; if permitted under State law and agreed to by the State”; or

5. “Other.” Engage in another form of major restructuring that makes fundamental reforms, “…such as significant changes in the school’s staffing and governance, to improve student achievement in the school and that has substantial promise of enabling the school to make adequate yearly progress” (No Child Left Behind, Sec. 1116, 20, U.S.C.A. § 6301-6578; 2002).

Non-regulatory guidance from the U.S. Department of Education in 2006 further define the fifth “other” option to include reforms such as:

- Changing the governance structure of the school either to diminish school-based management and decision-making or to increase control, monitoring, and oversight by the Local Education Agent (LEA) (i.e., the local school district);
- Closing the school and reopening it as a focus or theme school with new staff or staff skilled in the focus area;
- Reconstituting the school into smaller autonomous learning communities;
- Dissolving the school and assigning students to other schools in the district;
- Pairing the school in restructuring with a higher performing school; or
- Expanding or narrowing the grades served.

The theory of reform embedded in NCLB is that holding schools accountable for improved student performance will drive school reform (i.e., schools will reallocate resources in ways that will enhance student achievement) and thereby create the conditions for continuous improvement (i.e., accelerate and sustain school improvement that results in high levels of learning for all students) (Sunderman, 2008). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, restructuring will be defined as:
“A complete change in the culture, organizational assumptions, leadership, curriculum, instructional approach, and accountability of the school. Ideas of how things get done, work norms, decision making, authority, motivation, and professional expertise all must be radically revised” (Reavis & Griffith, 1992. p. 2).

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) (2008) has been studying the restructuring of schools due to the enactment of NCLB since the 2004-2005 school year, which would be the first year under NCLB that any school entered into the restructuring phase due to not making adequate yearly progress for four consecutive years. Over the years the CEP has evaluated the restructuring programs in the states of California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan and Ohio. As recently as February of 2008, the CEP completed its study, addressing the key findings that became apparent from their research:

- More schools are entering the restructuring process each year.
- Although urban schools remain over-represented among restructuring schools, the percentage of restructuring schools that are suburban is rising.
- Few schools are exiting the restructuring process.
- Taking “any other” action to restructure remains the most popular choice among states.
- No single federal restructuring option stands out as more effective than the others.
- To raise achievement, restructuring schools used strategies in addition to the federal options.
- Factors outside of school appear to hamper schools’ efforts to raise achievements (e.g., challenges of trying to emphasize academics when students come to school unprepared to learn, lack of support for homework, influence from gangs, etc.).

Based on these findings, it does not appear that restructuring has had a dramatic or lasting effect on schools that have not been successful in raising student achievement in order to get out from under the sanctions of NCLB. The American Institute for
Research (AIR) did additional research on 24 school-wide reform projects, which concluded that evidence of positive effects on student achievement is so far extremely limited, and argues that more rigorous evaluations are needed with broad dissemination of findings (Herman, R., et al., 1999).

In conclusion, the pressure of the restructuring movement is not a new phenomenon, and as a result of the restructuring movement, teachers and administrators are being asked to redefine and rethink their teaching and learning practices. Teachers, administrators and even district personnel have the potential to create public schools that are significantly changed from the traditional ones of days gone by, although, restructuring tends to have different meanings, different strategies for different school communities, and the results of restructuring have had varying impacts.

So then, what does reconstitution mean, and how does it work?

**Reconstitution**

According to WestEd (1998), reconstitution refers to the highly controversial practice of replacing a school’s entire staff, from principal to custodians, as a remedy for failure. The assumption behind the practice is that things are so bad at the school that the district administration does not have any other options.

School reconstitution began in San Francisco, originally as a product of school desegregation. In 1982, a federal court crafted a consent decree to settle a suit brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to end school segregation (Fraga, Erlichson & Lee, 1998; U.S. Department of Education, 1998). The suit also aimed to change educational outcomes for African-American students, concentrated in certain schools, which had significantly lower test scores. Part of the
decree mandated desegregation. In the future, no school would be permitted to have more than 45 percent of its students from one racial or ethnic group (and at alternative schools, no more than 40 percent), and no more than 70 percent from two groups. A second provision of the decree tried to fashion a remedy for poor achievement. The decree initiated a practice that had never been used before. Schools where African-American students were not achieving well would be reconstituted, which meant that all employees at the school, from the principal to the teaching staff to the classified personnel, would be forcibly transferred out. They would have the option to reapply to return to the school under a new regime, but if not accepted, they would be given a position somewhere else in the district (Bacon, 1997).

Although school reconstitution can take a variety of forms, the strategy mainly involves removing a school’s incumbent administrators and teachers (or a large percentage of them), and replacing them with educators who, presumably, are more capable and committed (Malen, Croninger, Redmond, & Muncey, 1999). Malen and Rice (2003) explained that “…reconstitution is a human capital reform grounded in the assumption that upgrading the human capital in low-performing schools will improve the performance of those schools” (p. 635). Nonetheless, reconstitution has become a key component of high-stakes accountability reforms being enacted as both a consequence for low performance and the corrective action for it.

Since its beginning in San Francisco, other cities including but not limited to Cleveland, Chicago, Denver, and Washington DC have experimented with reconstituting low-performing schools (Hendrie, 1998; Moreno, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 1998, 2001). Most recently, the option of reconstitution is one of the sanctions specified
in the NCLB legislation. Some reconstitution efforts have been studied (Adcock &
Winkler, 1999; Hansen, Kraetzer, & Mukherjee, 1998; Khanna, Flores, Bergum &
Desmond, 1999; Wong, Anagnostopoulos, Rutledge, Lynn & Dreeben, 1999); but even in
locations with extensive experience with this approach the data regarding its success is
rare.

In fact, there is little research to support the efficacy of school “reconstitution”
efforts for dysfunctional schools by bringing in a whole new staff and administration. In
addition, there is little definitive research on whether reconstitution actually improves
student achievement (Orfield, 2000). Nonetheless, this rather severe restructuring
method has been characterized as a wrenching and disorienting process, and it has been
accepted that it can take years to yield positive results (Orfield, 2000). Broadly based
restructuring efforts, such as reconstituting a school, have made little difference in
classrooms (Cohen, 1995; Elmore, 1995; Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995) because different
contexts bring diverse and often contradictory values, beliefs, and purposes for education
(Fink, 2000).

O’Day (1998) from the WestEd Policy Center adamantly states that “…wiping
out the faculty alone will not lead to long-term improvement in student performance”.
O’Day does, however, offer several suggestions as to why success requires a
comprehensive approach instead of reconstitution:

- The school suffers from “a legacy of failure.” The problem with
  starting anew is that, in reality, you aren’t. The community is the
  same, and their first reaction is often negative. To overcome that, the
  new team needs to go out constructively and rebuild community ties.
  The school also must battle its reputation within the district. Few
  experienced teachers are willing to transfer into a school known as a
  failure. New staff may be talented and enthusiastic, but may also be
  inexperienced and devoid of veteran educators. Many affected
educators report initial chaos as people settle in, build a team and set up instructional strategies.

- Rebuilding a school requires leadership and a supportive structure between school and district leadership. San Francisco learned this lesson. At one school, after three unsuccessful years and four principals, the district sent in a top principal and the school is finally turning around. Mechanisms are in place that coordinate resources for reconstituted schools, and foster networking and leadership development among the principals.

- Recruitment and training of teachers is critical. Lead-time to recruit and plan is critical. In one high school, the new principal had just five weeks to prepare for the new school year, and the legacy of failure precluded finding teachers from within the district. Many credit the success of San Francisco’s first round of reconstitutions to the months of lead-time and the degree of responsibility assumed by the district for putting the necessary pieces in place.

- Changing a school requires vision and a long-range strategy. At schools that have succeeded, the principal not only had extra help and resources, but also a strategy for reaching the goal. One danger is assuming, and leading the public to believe, that in a year or two everything will be fine. Things should get better, but seeing the full impact takes much longer (O’Day, 1998).

In conclusion, the majority of the research literature today is mainly focused on “restructuring”, which is defined as “…a complete change in the structure of the organization and the underlying beliefs that have given rise to that organization” by Reavis & Griffith (1992, p. 2). Therefore, according to the most recent federal mandate from the U.S. Department of Education, any school or district that does not meet the state average on the annual state assessments for five consecutive years or more will begin the “restructuring process”. According to Linda Darling-Hammond (1992), this means that educators have been called upon to “…rethink how schools are designed, how school systems operate, how teaching and learning are pursued, and what goals for schooling are sought” (p. 1).
What Leadership is Best for Restructuring a School?

The traditional “custodial school” included the triangle table of organization in which the top level of management (the central office) informed middle management (the individual school leadership) to shape up the troops at the bottom (the classroom teachers) (Rothberg & Pawlas, 1993). The school principal, however, has taken on a whole new role in context to the restructured school (Murphy, 1994). In a restructured school, the administrator must be less of a director and more of a facilitator (Payzant & Gardner, 1994; Gainey, 1994; Hall & Hord, 1987). The principal of today is required to effectively and productively orchestrate and lead the restructuring, renewal, and reforms that are needed in education to facilitate change. Such individuals characterize the new breed of school administrator (Bookbinder, 1992). According to Payzant & Gardner (1994), the principals’ enabling, facilitating, and collaborating behaviors must replace the controlling, blocking, and competing behaviors.

Murphy (1994) grouped principal role changes into three areas: (1) Leading from the center; (2) enabling and supporting teacher success; and (3) extending the school community. Leading from the center meant that the principal is willing to orchestrate from the background, to become a support element or facilitator or “an equal participant in shared decision making” (p. 96). According to Chapman and Boyd (1986), the principal becomes relocated from the apex of the pyramid to the center of the network of human relationships and functions as a “change agent and resource” (p. 55).

Murphy (1994) then describes the second change role as enabling and supporting teacher success, whereby principals in schools engaged in reform endeavors perform five functions: (1) formulation of a shared vision; (2) development of a network of
relationships; (3) allocating resources consistent with the vision; (4) providing information to staff members; and (5) promoting teacher development (p. 96). Stein and King (1992) maintain that the principal is the “keeper of the dream,” and his/her primary function is to be an advocate for the entire belief system (p. 29).

Extending the school community is the last change role for principals (Murphy, 1994). A dramatic shift for principals who have undergone reform is the need to expand public relations activities with external constituents. Because the public image of schools has become a matter of increasing concern, more and more of the principal’s time in restructuring schools is being directed toward public relations and the shaping and promoting of the school’s image, selling and marketing the school and its programs to the community (p. 98).

Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) referred to this change in leadership in restructured schools as “transformational leadership.” According to Roberts (1985), transformational leadership is leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a people’s mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment, and the restructuring of their systems for goal accomplishments. Transformational leadership requires a principal to maintain a collaborative culture. In collaborative school cultures, teachers and staff members talk often, observe, critique, and plan together (Rothberg & Pawlas, 1993). In addition, in collaborative school cultures leaders actively communicate the school’s cultural norms, values and beliefs in their day-to-day interpersonal contacts, and they share power and responsibility with others through delegation of power to school improvement teams within the school (Johnson, 1990).
The fostering of teacher development is also important in transformational leadership. School leaders enhance teachers’ development when they give them a role in solving non-routine problems of school improvement within a school culture that values continuous professional growth. Likewise, transformational leadership is important when the principal improves group problem-solving skills. During this role, the leader of the school assists group discussions, ensures open discussions, and avoids commitment to preconceived solutions; instead, they actively listen to different views, and clarify and summarize information. These leaders share a genuine belief that their staff members as a group can develop better solutions than the principal can alone (Payzant & Gardner, 1994). In restructured schools, the principal must not only assist staff in reaching their own conception of the problems facing the school, but also help generate and develop potentially unique solutions (Hallinger, 2003). In addition, with school restructuring, the principal, rather than representing the primary source of professional expertise and instructional leadership, is urged to tap into the expertise and leadership of his or her teachers.

At the outset of the effective schools era in 1982, Stephen Bossert and his colleagues made the following observation:

“Like earlier leadership studies…no single style of management seems appropriate for all schools…principals must find the style and structures most suited to their own local situation…a careful examination of quantitative studies of effective schools…suggests that certain principal behaviors have different effects in different organizational settings. Such findings confirm the contingency approach to organizational effectiveness found in current leadership theories” (Bossert, S., Dwyer, D., Roman, B., & Lee, G., 1982, p. 38).
Stoll & Fink (1996) described school improvement as a journey. If school improvement is a journey, one could hypothesize that a more directive leadership style might be more suitable in contexts that are less organized around effective models of teaching and learning. Schools-at-risk may initially require a more forceful top-down approach focused on instructional improvement (Hallinger, 2003).

Lunenburg (2002) states that the only way that school improvement can be successful is if school leaders can accomplish the following tasks: (a) clarify purpose, (b) encourage collective learning, (c) align with state standards, (d) provide support, and (e) make data-driven decisions. Taken together, these five dimensions of effective school improvement provide a compelling framework for accomplishing sustained district-wide success for all children. After completing a two-year study on the key skills necessary to be an effective “change agent,” Miles, Saxl, & Lieberman (1988) noted, “It is clear that the outcomes of school improvement efforts may be as much a function of the school and district characteristics as they are of the skillful change agent interventions” (p. 188).

Hallinger & Heck (1996) conclude that it is virtually meaningless to study principal leadership without reference to the school context. The context of the school is a source of constraints, resources, and opportunities that the principal must understand and address in order to lead (p. 346). Therefore, school leaders must understand their school, its patterns, the purposes they serve, and how they came to be. Changing something that is not well understood is a surefire recipe for stress and ultimate failure (Deal & Peterson, 2000).

Brower (2006) argues, “We are doing it all wrong by constantly forcing change in our public schools without scientific proof that any of the changes will make significant
positive improvement” (p. 37). Brower also states that, “…school leaders now push
change in schools in the hope that by simply changing the status quo, improvement will
follow” (p. 38).

Perhaps Gainey (1993) put it best when he said:

“As principals work in an institution that is being altered in various ways,
they will find they are competing for resources and powers as different
groups strive to assume control and exert influence. Federal legislators
and state-elected officials will continue to work to influence the direction
of education through the power of legislation. Local special interest
groups will exert pressure on school boards, school administrators, and
community groups in order to gain an advantage in the control of
education. In the mix of schools and society, principals will find they are
often in the eye of the storm for control of education. Being at the center
of the educational debate has the advantage of placing principals where
the action is…in a place where they can exert leadership and provide
direction. Thus principals are challenged to become ‘leaders of leaders’
who have a great sense of purpose, as they establish clear definitions of
priorities...and assume the responsibility to be leaders for change” (p. 56).

Summary

Based on the existing research and the citations reviewed here, it is evident that
the literature is extensive in the areas of school reform and education change. The NCLB
Act of 2001 is a most recent reform that demands accountability for principals, teachers,
and students. It has been the impetus for states in redesigning its state assessment
program. NCLB has also established the requirement for schools and districts to meet an
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goal. This goal is set as a progressive annual goal in
order to achieve 100 percent student proficiency in reading/language arts and
mathematics by the year 2013-2014 (Ed Source, 2005).

This study will therefore address the detailed planning efforts, the replacement of
administration and staff, perceptions of how the process was managed, and
implementation of the new “Professional Development School” and how the school, staff, and community have received it. In addition, the study will provide final outcomes of the school as a result of the restructuring process. With such a wide array of perspectives, the researcher felt that in order to make sense of the restructuring process that took place at a particular middle school, it would be much more insightful to conduct a naturalistic inquiry and specifically look through the conceptual framework proposed by Bolman & Deal’s “Reframing Organizations” (2008) to assess the effectiveness of the restructuring efforts at this school. The Bolman & Deal approach uses several lenses, which specifically focus on the structural, human resource, political and symbolic aspects of an organization and how they affect the leadership and individual members of that organization. Chapter Three describes the method in which the naturalistic inquiry was conducted and how the Bolman & Deal framework was utilized.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used in the study. Specifically, it presents a rationale for the adoption of a particular research approach, namely naturalistic inquiry. It then defines the particular study under investigation, and discusses how the method for data collection was determined. This chapter concludes by describing the procedures utilized for organizing and analyzing these data to build the case.

Research Approach

This study explores and describes the first-hand knowledge, perceptions of the process, and insights into the strategies and methods that went into developing a major restructuring plan, and how school governance was affected on the campus of a middle school. Given the nature of the research focus and the specific research questions, a naturalistic research method was deemed to be the most appropriate.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) developed and defined the fourteen characteristics of naturalistic research, which helped guide the actual research operations of this study. Lincoln & Guba describe the characteristics of a naturalistic inquiry as natural setting, human instrument, utilization of tacit knowledge, qualitative methods, purposive sampling, inductive data analysis, grounded theory, emergent design, negotiated outcomes, case study reporting mode, idiographic interpretation, tentative application, focus-determined boundaries, and special criteria for trustworthiness.
Williams (1988) observes, “Naturalistic inquiry is appropriate when the literature and the inquirer’s experience do not sufficiently describe the context in which potentially relevant variables operate” (p. 12). In describing the phenomenological approach, which was used in this type of study, Bogdan & Biklen (1982) comment, “Researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations” (p. 31). Bogdan & Biklen also note, “Researchers who use this approach are interested in the ways different people make sense out of their lives. In other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perspectives” (p. 29). Therefore by using this method in this study, the researcher found that she was able to develop a better understanding of the restructuring implementation, as well as learn more about the perspectives of all those who were involved in the restructuring process and the implementation of the new “Professional Development School” at a middle school located in the southwest.

The sections that follow provide an explanation of the first thirteen characteristics of naturalistic inquiry and examples of how they had been applied to this study. In addition, a separate section is provided, which details the special criteria for trustworthiness and how this study attended to those criteria.

**Natural Setting**

In order for the naturalistic researcher to understand the environment of the study, the researcher elects to carry out the research in the natural setting or context of the entity of which the study is proposed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). Bogdan & Biklen (1992) note the importance of the setting in this type of research: “Qualitative researchers assume that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs
and, whenever possible, they will go to that location” (p. 30). Research interaction also needs to take place with an individual within their environment in order to achieve the fullest understanding possible. The environment is also vital in determining whether the research findings may have a different meaning in another situation. This naturalistic research study took place in a middle school located in the southwest United States where the district administration had made the decision to reconstitute a school by replacing staff members and implementing a new “Professional Development School.” The school and district allowed the researcher the opportunity to examine the phenomenon in the actual school environment. In addition, by the district granting the researcher permission to visit the school on a regularly scheduled basis, the researcher was able to engage in casual conversation with teachers and staff members, which helped the researcher develop a better understanding of the environment and a more in-depth picture of the participants’ experiences.

**Human Instrument**

In a naturalistic research study, the researcher chooses to use him- or herself as well as other humans as the primary data-gathering instrument. According to Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen (1993), the researcher is the primary instrument in a naturalistic study, using all of the senses, as well as intuition, to enable the human to be a “powerful and perceptive data gathering tool” (p. 82). The researcher for this study was the primary data gather, and since the majority of the study was conducted via interviews, the researcher had to rely on her ability to be flexible when trying to schedule and reschedule appointments with participants in order for the participants to feel comfortable and for the study to be completed. The naturalistic paradigm acknowledges the shared influence that
the researcher and participants have with each other, and therefore suggests that the researcher seek to establish relationships with the participants. Lightfoot (1983) stated that, “In qualitative research ‘the person’ is the research tool, the perceiver, the selector, the interpreter and the guard against distortions of bias and prejudice” (p. 370). In addition, she said that, the researcher “listens and accepts, but is not controlled, enhanced, or diminished by others’ perceptions or judgments” (p. 377). Furthermore, the researcher must be on watch for misinformation introduced deliberately or inadvertently by respondents. In this study, the researcher made every attempt to be on campus as much as possible and to establish relationships with the participants in order to construct reality in ways that are consistent and compatible with the perceptions of the participants.

In addition, the researcher gathered data from a variety of sources and in a variety of ways. First, the researcher made an appointment with the administration of the school in order to be granted permission to observe activities of administrators, teachers, students, and university professors on campus. During the observation opportunities, the researcher created detailed field notes that were referenced before all interviews with each participant were conducted. Second, the participants were asked several questions during the interviews or guided conversations (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The researcher developed a set of interview questions prior to each interview, realizing that more probing questions may arise during interviews which may lead the researcher away from her prepared questions. Finally, the researcher tried to engage in causal conversations with the participants to allow any hidden assumptions or constructions to surface (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). In addition, the researcher looked at the school support team leader’s (SSTL’s) November 1st and End of the Year Reports in an
effort to gain further insight into the constructed realities of the school, administration, students, and teachers.

**Utilization of Tacit Knowledge**

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), naturalistic research encourages the use of tacit knowledge. Naturalistic research suggests that researchers use the five senses (i.e., sight, touch, hear, smell, and taste) plus intuition to gather, analyze, and construct reality from the data. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) suggest that, “Relying on all its senses, intuition, thoughts, and feelings, the human instrument can be a very potent and perceptive data-gathering tool” (p. 82). The researcher entered into this study with educational background knowledge, which was learned while being a teacher and short-term administrator of a middle school, and that knowledge was recalled throughout the study. The researcher used her five senses and intuition to gather and analyze the data, especially when transcribing interviews, as well as when developing and verifying shared constructions in order to enable the meaningful expansion of knowledge (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

**Qualitative Methods**

Qualitative methods were used to examine the research questions presented in this study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that, “Qualitative methods are more open to “mutual shaping and exposing the relationship of the researcher to the respondent” (p. 40). Merriam (1998) defined qualitative research and emphasized the need to explore subjective phenomenon:

“[Q]ualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities – that the world is not an objective thing out there, but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring” (p. 17).
Qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to gather data and to examine the detailed planning efforts, leadership styles and strategies, replacement of administration and staff, implementation of a new Professional Development School, and final outcomes as a result of the restructuring process. The researcher was able to accomplish this by observing the setting and its inhabitants, interviewing former and current administration and teachers, and collecting and analyzing the school improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation documents for the Professional Development School, as well as assessment data.

**Purposive Sampling**

Purposive sampling is central to naturalistic research. Purposive and directed sampling increases the opportunity of being exposed to the data and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms. Patton (1990) writes:

“The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issue of central importance to the purpose of the research; thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169).

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), “Selection of participants continues until redundancy with respect to information is reached, at which point sampling is terminated. The sample may be large or small, but is sufficient when the amount of added resource expenditure has reached the point of diminishing returns” (pp. 233-234).

In naturalistic inquiry, the researcher looks for samples that contain information rich on the main topic or questions presented in the study. The purposive samplings for this study were teachers (new, rehired, and not-rehired), administrators (new and not-
rehiest), university faculty, and school support team leaders (former and new). The
sample that was chosen included both males and females, representing a range of
positions throughout the district, as well as some who were not representative of the
district. All participants volunteered to participate in a comprehensive way, allowing the
researcher to uncover an information-rich collection of realities that were encountered in
the research setting. Given the nature of this study, it was not possible to predict the
maximum number of subjects to be interviewed or the amount of time needed to collect
data.

**Inductive Data Analysis**

According to Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen (1993), in a naturalistic research
study, the researcher uses inductive data analysis because it is more likely to identify the
multiple realities found in the data. Inductive analysis is more likely to fully describe the
setting and to make decisions about transferability to other settings. Inductive analysis
also makes investigator-participant interactions more precise, and identifies the
influences that interact within the research setting. All of the data gathered in this study
was analyzed as the data was gathered. In fact, data analysis is an ongoing process,
which begins the very first time the researcher appears at the location where the study
will take place (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). The first available data
allowed the researcher to begin discovering emerging themes, alter interview questions,
and form observation strategies as well as develop other data collection procedures.

Although data analysis in most qualitative research coincides with the data
collection, the procedure of both is more like a process. Owens (1982) summarized, “the
data collection/analysis mode as a true process. Typically, the strategy will emphasize
data gathering in the early phase of the project. Checking, verifying, testing, probing and confirming activities will follow in a funnel-like design resulting in less data-gathering in later phases of the study along with a concurrent increase in analysis-checking, verifying and confirming” (p.11).

One of the challenges of a qualitative study is collecting and sorting out the masses of data that are available. Data analysis in a qualitative study is defined by Bogdan & Biklen (1992):

“Data analysis is the process of systemically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 153).

Being able to work inductively with the data to refine the data collection was an important part in developing a rich image of the setting and the participants. This interactive process was ongoing throughout the study.

**Grounded Theory**

According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), “Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; it builds ‘grounded theory’” (p. 112). In a naturalistic research study, the researcher prefers to have the substantive theory emerge from the data rather than precede them. In other words, theory is grounded in the data because no *a priori* theory could possibly encompass the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered in a research setting. Theory that is grounded in data and emerges during the research study will represent the perspectives of the participants more than the perspective of the researcher. In this study, the researcher
established herself as a neutral researcher without any prior generalization of what it would be like to work in a restructured school.

**Emergent Design**

In naturalistic research, the researcher assumes that other methods do not allow for flexibility or change due to the results. In other words, naturalistic research allows the research design to emerge during the study. It is unthinkable that outcomes could be known ahead of time about the multiple realities that are likely to be encountered, especially since it is virtually impossible to predict the interactions between the participants and the researcher, or to influence the outcome of this particular naturalistic research study. Therefore, emergent design allowed the researcher to let the design of the study unfold throughout the study rather than constructing it in advance.

**Negotiated Outcomes**

The naturalistic researcher negotiates meaning and interpretations with the participants from which the data had been drawn. It is the participant’s perception of reality that the researcher attempts to reconstruct; therefore, the meaning of the data and the working hypotheses that apply to the context will be verified and confirmed by the participants in the school context. This kind of member checking (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) was conducted after each interview session, as well as throughout the study. After participants were interviewed, the researcher transcribed the interview data to allow the participants to correct errors, question the researcher’s interpretations, or provide additional information that may have been left out during the actual interview. In addition, during the interviews, the researcher confirmed interpretations and data gathered from observations, documents, and previous interviews.
The researcher also engaged in causal conversations with participants, asking them to provide additional comments on parts of the inquiry report throughout the study.

**Case Study Reporting Mode**

Naturalistic research prefers the case study reporting mode because it is more adaptable, provides for naturalistic generalizations, and “…it is suited to demonstrating the variety of mutually shaping influences present; and because it can picture the value position of the researcher, substantive theory, methodological paradigm, and local contextual values” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 42). In other words, case study reporting enables the reader to gain a better level of understanding by presenting lifelike descriptions of the participants’ undertakings. In addition, the case study report allows for the demonstration of the interaction between researcher and participant. Educational literature over the last 30 years or so contains a prevalence of qualitative case studies, and it is generally accepted that case study research is the most widely used approach to qualitative inquiry in education. In this naturalistic research study, the researcher used the particular experiences of one case to gain an insight into the factors that went into the restructuring of a middle school. This case study is richly descriptive and focuses on the process, meaning and understanding of the restructuring process, which will allow a school or district contemplating restructuring or reconstitution to make the needed comparisons of similarity to allow for transferability of the findings.

**Idiographic Representation**

The naturalistic researcher prefers to interpret data idiographically because different interpretations are likely to be more meaningful for different realities. In other
words, rather than making broad, law-like generalizations about a situation within a case, the naturalistic researcher draws conclusions in terms of the particulars of the case. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), naturalistic researchers realize the impossibilities of generalizing, and therefore prefer deep understanding and clarification of a social phenomenon as observed in their own context. In this study, the objective was to gain an understanding of the perceptions and insights into the strategies and methods that went into implementing a major restructuring plan on the campus of one middle school in the southwest. Even though it would be impossible to generalize the findings of this study, the depth of understanding provided a thick description of the research participants and context that has the potential for transferability to other sites.

**Tentative Application**

In a naturalistic inquiry, the naturalistic researcher is sometimes tentative about making broad application or claims of research findings because the realities are often multiple and different. The findings are also to some extent dependent upon the particular interaction between the researcher and the participants. Throughout this study the researcher understood that the “transfer of understandings across social contexts depends on the degree to which thick description of one set of interrelations in one social context allows for the formulation of a ‘working hypotheses’ (Guba, 1981) that can direct inquiry into another” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 16). Therefore, the tentative applicability of this study’s findings to other studies is up to those who are looking to make the transfer of understanding of this study’s interpretation. The researcher has provided a thick description of the restructuring process at a particular
middle school to enable others to determine whether or not this is a strategy that they would want to use at their own school site.

**Focus-Determined Boundaries**

In a naturalistic inquiry, the naturalistic researcher begins with a focus to establish the boundaries for their study and to effectively determine the criteria for new information that becomes available. The naturalistic researcher is ready to alter the focus of the study as new and relevant information emerges. In this research study, the researcher began with four relevant research questions, which provided the focus of the inquiry. As the study progressed, the researcher made “wider sweeps of the data-collection net” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 228) in order to determine which information should be retained as well as which information should be discarded.

Determining the relevance of data is not an easy task. However, as this study progressed, the researcher was able to narrow the scope of the study as items of relevance came into focus using inductive data analysis and emergent theory. Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that the naturalistic researcher should always expect and anticipate change, but more importantly they should be able to recognize the inevitable changes in focus that are constructive and “signal movement to a more sophisticated and insightful levels of inquiry” (p. 229).

**Special Criteria for Trustworthiness**

Naturalistic research classifies special criteria for trustworthiness and defines the operational procedures that apply to them. In the naturalistic paradigm, the conventional trustworthiness criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity are
found to be inconsistent with the procedures of naturalistic inquiry. However, in a naturalistic research, trustworthiness of an inquiry is established through the following four standards: credibility (truth value), transferability (applicability), dependability (consistency), and confirmability (neutrality) (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Lincoln & Guba (1985) recommend specific techniques that were used in this study to enhance the credibility of the research: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy materials, peer debriefing, member checking, reflective journal, thick description, purposive sampling, and an audit trail. A description of each of these techniques is provided in the following sections.

**Prolonged Engagement**

Prolonged engagement is a technique that helps build a basis for establishing the credibility of the naturalistic inquiry. Prolonged engagement is described by Williams (1988) as “…being present in the site where the study is being done, long enough to build trust with the participants, experience the breadth of variation and to overcome distortions due to the presence of the researcher in the site” (p. 33). The length of time that the researcher can remain in the study setting, the more trust and rapport he or she will develop with the participants. For this research study, the researcher made every effort to be on campus other than the scheduled interview times to observe the interaction between the administration, teachers, professional development faculty, and students.

**Persistent Observation**

Williams (1988) describes persistent observation as “a technique that ensures depth of experience and understanding in addition to the broad scope encouraged through prolonged engagement” (p. 34). Persistent observation also enables the researcher to
search for sources of data identified by the researcher’s own emergent design. Persistent observation gave depth to the study because the researcher became a part of the culture, which enabled the researcher to “sort out relevancies from irrelevancies and determine when the atypical case was important” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 137).

**Triangulation**

Triangulation involves the verification of findings through multiple sources of information, using multiple methods of data collection. Lincoln & Guba (1989) stated that each form of information in a study should be expanded by at least one other source, such as a second interview or a second method. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) pointed out that, “Single items of information contribute little to an understanding of the context of the study unless they are enriched through triangulation” (p. 138).

Throughout the study, triangulation provided credibility by reproducing similar data from differing perspectives. Therefore, looking through more than one lens at the restructuring process and strategies provided triangulated data for the research (Creswell, 2003). This was evidenced through the convergence attained through multiple data sources: interviews, observations, and document collection.

**Referential Adequacy Materials**

Referential adequacy materials involve the archiving of some of the data collected to be used later as reference material against which conclusions, based on analyzed data, can be checked for adequacy. If the unanalyzed (archived) data substantiates the conclusions reached with the analyzed data, then the conclusions are validated and are thus more credible (Williams, 1988). In this study, referential adequacy materials
included tape recordings of interviews, school assessment data, SSTL November 1st and End of the Year reports, and memos that are produced without reference to the researcher. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen (1993) refer to these materials as a “slice of life” that may be invaluable to the researcher in understanding the context of an organization (p. 139).

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing, as described by Williams (1988), involves a meeting by the researcher with a disinterested peer (i.e., someone who is willing to ask probing questions but who is not a participant in the setting where the study is being conducted), in which the peer can question the methods, emerging conclusions, and biases of the researcher (p. 34). This process may be informal, using friends and colleagues. The debriefing session should include a discussion of the design and any other issues or concerns that may have arisen. Several friends and family agreed to participate in peer debriefing sessions with the researcher during the course of the study.

Member Checking

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), member checking is the most important step in establishing credibility. Member checking is the step when members of the setting that is being studied have a chance to indicate whether the reconstructions of the researcher are recognizable. Participants were encouraged to respond to what the researcher had identified as emerging themes, to raise questions and concerns, and to make suggestions for the study as it proceeded. Member checking is done continuously, both formally and informally. Member checking can be accomplished during an interview, at the end of an interview, in informal conversations with members of the
organization, by supplying copies to various stakeholders and asking for a written or oral commentary of the study. Before final submission of the study, respondents and other persons in the setting being studied will be given a complete copy for final review.

**Reflective Journal**

The reflective journal is a tool that supports the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the naturalistic inquiry. The reflective journal for this study provided information regarding the researcher’s daily notes, ideas, schedules, insights, reflections, and developing decisions. The researcher continued the writing practice throughout the research process, and a printout of the journal became part of the audit trail for this study.

**Thick Description**

In a naturalistic inquiry, the thick description provides for transferability by describing the data in such a way that the reader is able to understand the findings. Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that, “The findings are NOT part of the thick description, although they must be interpreted in the terms of the factors thickly described…” (p. 125). A person reading a descriptive study should be able to feel, taste, hear, see and even smell what is actually going on in a classroom or school. The researcher sought to provide a thick description through prolonged engagement and persistent observations during the course of this study. Ideally, the person reading this study should be able to understand and relate to the feelings being expressed by the participants in the study.
**Purposive Sampling**

Purposive sampling is central to naturalistic research. Purposive and directed sampling increases the opportunity of being exposed to the data, and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), “The object of the game is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the many specifics that give the context its unique flavor. A second purpose is to generate the information upon which the emergent design and grounded theory can be based” (p. 210).

The researcher asked the principal of the school of study to identify faculty members that had been rehired and not-rehired, and this group became the initial group in the purposive sample. The second step was for the researcher to send out interview invitations to everyone on the initial group list. Once faculty members agreed to be part of the study, they then became the study sample group.

**The Audit Trail**

In order for an audit trail to be completed, the naturalistic researcher must keep adequate records throughout the study, which thereby establishes the dependability and confirmability of the study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe six categories of audit trail records that should be kept by the researcher:

1. Raw data. The naturalistic researcher will keep raw data files that include notes acquired from interviews, observations, documents and other sources, including the time and date that the data was obtained.

2. Data reduction and analysis products. These should include the researcher’s write-ups made on 3x5 cards or other suitable medium, plus peer-debriefing notes that clarify the data shortly after it will be acquired.
(3) Data reconstruction and synthesis products. These include files that will track themes that emerge from the raw data files and data reduction files to form the overall themes for the study.

(4) Process notes. The process notes will include methodological notes that provide information regarding the process of inquiry and how the procedures and day-to-day decisions were made during the study. These procedures will be acknowledged in the reflective journal.

(5) Materials relating to intentions and dispositions, including the research proposal, the reflexive journal, and peer debriefing notes.

(6) Information relative to any instrument development, including the key questions that provide the focus for the study, preliminary interview protocols that might be used, and the various tools that will be used to collect and analyze the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319-320).

Throughout the study, the researcher kept files to establish dependability and confirmability. The researcher’s first file contained all of the guidelines and applications from the University’s Office of Human Research and from the School District in order to be able to perform the study. The researcher’s second and third files combined all of the participant’s invitation letters, signed informed consent documents, copies of their participant profiles, interview questions, all interview transcriptions, email transactions, and schedules, and one file for each scheduled interview. The researcher’s fourth file included all of the research material that was utilized throughout the study. The researcher’s fifth and final file held the reflective journal, peer debriefing notes, and all of the written versions of the study that were ready for clarification and editing.

The following sections of this chapter include the details about gaining access, the design of the study, the site and the participants, the researcher’s role, data collection and data analysis.
Gatekeepers and Gaining Access

Qualitative researchers are in a unique position when negotiating entry because many people are not familiar with the approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The qualitative paradigm uses the term, “gatekeepers” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to designate those people from whom it is necessary to obtain permission to do research. In order to examine the nature of a restructured middle school, the researcher needed to gain access into one of the five largest school districts in the United States. This process was accomplished by fulfilling the school district requirements, obtaining district sponsorship, and receiving school administration approval. Getting permission to conduct a study involved more than merely getting a stamp of approval. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992), “…it involves laying the groundwork for good rapport with those with whom you will be spending time so they will accept you and what you are doing” (p.82).

The Site

In order for the naturalistic researcher to understand the environment for which the study is purposed, the research must be carried out in the natural setting or environment. Lincoln & Guba (1985) believe that naturalistic research must be carried out in a natural setting or context for which the study is purposed because the naturalistic research paradigm firmly believes that realities cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts. Therefore, in this study, the interactions between researcher and participant took place at the school site in order to achieve the fullest understanding possible. In order to determine if the research findings may have meaning in another
context, this naturalistic research study took place in a middle school where the district administration made the decision to replace the entire staff and implement a Professional Development School in conjunction with a local university. The phenomenon was examined in its natural context. A description of the school district, the school, the participants, the Professional Development program, and the School Support Team involved in this study are provided in the sections below.

**The School District**

The study took place in a middle school located in the southwest United States. It is the largest school district in the state, encompassing over 70 percent of the state’s student population, and is divided into six separate regions. The school district is the largest employer in the community area, employing approximately 39,000 people. The enrollment of the district is approximately 311,240 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, and includes 210 elementary schools (90 year-round, 120 nine-month); 59 middle schools; 45 high schools; 25 alternative schools; 8 special schools; 13 charter schools; and 107 private schools. The district covers over 7,910 square miles, and serves several large communities as well as surrounding rural areas. The community is home to one public research university, which serves approximately 28,000 students. In addition to the university, there is one publicly supported four-year college and one community college, as well as other degree-granting private and for-profit foundations of higher education in the surrounding area. The mission statement for the district reflects the characteristics and ideals of the community. The mission statement of the school district reads: “All students will have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and ethics necessary to succeed academically, and will practice responsible citizenship at a justifiable cost.”
The School – Sutter Middle School

During the 2008-2009 school year, Sutter Middle School had 949 students with a gender breakout of 545 males and 489 females. Ethnicity stratification consists of 0.9 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 6.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 73.3 percent Hispanic, 11.1 percent Black/African American, and 8.0 percent White. Further, 9.8 percent of the students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and 36.2 percent are Limited English Proficiency (LEPs). Also of note is that 69.6 percent of the school’s student population is on the Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) program, providing an indication of their “At-Risk” or Title I status. The Hispanic concentration of this school is particularly noteworthy, as it is significantly higher than the average of 38.5 percent of Hispanic students for the total school district and 36 percent Hispanic ethnicity for all of the state schools.

The mission statement of the school reads: “Our mission is to empower, engage and excite our students to successfully navigate a rigorous path of learning, self-determination and success that extends beyond K-12 education.”

The Adequate Yearly Progress Status

During the 2007-08 school year, the school had been designated as a school in its third year of “In Need of Improvement” as a Title I school. Based on that classification, the Department of Education assigned a School Support Team (SST) to assist the school in raising the academic performance of the students and to improve the Average Daily Attendance (ADA). At the conclusion of the 2007-2008 school year, the middle school was able to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on appeal, which put the school in Year 3-HOLD status under the No Child Left Behind guidance. Therefore, if the school
were to make AYP again the following year (2008-2009), the school would no longer be deemed “In Need of Improvement” under federal law.

The Participants

The School District Administration

Under the leadership of a regional superintendent, each region is responsible for developing programs and services tailored to meet the needs of the students and their communities.

The School Administration

During the 2008-2009 school year, the school administration was made up of the following positions: principal, assistant principal, and dean of students. The current principal has been in the district for a total of six-and-a-half years: two-and-a-half years as a teacher, one-half year as a dean of students, two-and-a-half years as an assistant principal, and one year as the principal at the school of study. The assistant principal has been in the district for a total of fifteen-and-a-half years: fourteen years as a teacher, one year as a dean of students, and one-half year as the assistant principal at the school of study. The dean of students has been in the district for a total of six-and-a-half years: one-and-a-half years as a teacher, three-and-a-half years as a special education facilitator, one year as a project facilitator, and one-half year as the dean of students at the school of study. For this study, the principal of the school was the only participant.
**The School Teachers**

Due to the reconstitution of the school, the vast majority of the teaching staff is new to the school. A total of 46 teachers currently teach at the school, with a good balance in the breakdown in levels of teaching experience: 14 staff members have 5 or fewer years of experience; 15 members with 6 to 10 years of experience; and 17 members with 11 or more years of teaching experience. Of the 46 teachers; 6 are in the math department; 10 are in the English department; 4 are in the social studies department; 6 are in the science department; 1 is in foreign language; 6 are in special education; 2 are in physical education; 3 are in music; 2 are in art; 1 is in health; 1 is in computers; 3 are in electives; and 1 is in English language learners.

For this study, the key teacher informants were divided as such: 4 core subject teachers new to the school, 6 non-core subject teachers that were rehired by the new principal, and 5 core subject teachers who had not been rehired by the new principal.

A primary issue throughout this study was teachers’ concern with confidentiality, and they expressed concern toward district repercussion due to their participation in the study. The researcher guaranteed all of the participants that their identity would remain anonymous throughout the study. The researcher also remained keenly aware of the affect of her position with the Department of Education while asking participants to share their personal thoughts and experiences.

**University Professional Development Faculty**

The university faculty member who is working in conjunction with the school of study is an associate professor who has been with the local research university for 18 years, specializing in special education and school psychology. This is her first year.
working in a school setting with the Professional Development School model as coordinator.

**The School Support Team Leader**

The School Support Team Leader (SSTL) is a former teacher, counselor, dean, vice-principal, principal, area superintendent, and superintendent. He has been in education for almost 40 years. In fact, during the time of this study, he was the acting interim superintendent in a neighboring state. This was his first year as the SSTL at Sutter Middle School.

**The Researcher’s Role**

Meaningful qualitative research is dependent upon rapport and trust between participants and researcher(s) (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The researcher of this study has a unique perspective of both teachers and administration; her role as a Title I/School Improvement consultant for the State Department of Education has provided a meaningful stance from which to observe the experiences and perceptions of the teachers and administrators at the school site. Actually, a researcher can assume one of several stances while conducting observations, ranging from complete participant to complete observer (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the researcher’s role will be categorized as “participant as observer” (Merriam, 1998, p. 101). The researcher’s primary role at the school was as an observer and information gatherer.

Little doubt exists that the researcher’s position within the school system may have influenced the definition, collection, and interpretation of the data. However, all researchers are affected by bias regardless of whether the study is a qualitative or
quantitative design. Quantitative methods such as questionnaires and surveys often mirror the beliefs and biases of the researchers who create them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). To minimize the impact of bias, “qualitative researchers try to acknowledge and take into account their own biases as a method of dealing with them” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 34).

No matter what type of research is undertaken, bias is an issue and ways of dealing with it have been explained in the literature. Merriam (1988) explains that in order to deal with a personal bias, all observations and analyses should be filtered through one’s worldview, one’s values, and one’s perspective. All research has its biases, but there are ways to deal with investigator bias in qualitative research. “The best cure for bias,” write Guba & Lincoln (1981, p. 148), is to be aware of “how they slant and shape what we hear, how they interface with our reproduction of the speaker’s reality, and how they transfigure truth into falsity” (p. 39).

Research bias in this qualitative study will be addressed by stating my position as the researcher and my direct involvement at the onset of this study. By communicating personal bias and through acknowledging the constructivist lens by which the restructuring method was implemented and research was analyzed, the researcher bias will be communicated and understood by the reader.

**Data Collection**

This research was a naturalistic study whereby the researcher gathered data through observation, interviews, and analysis of a variety of documents and artifacts. The use of multiple data collection methods provided the researcher with the opportunity
to confirm emerging findings through triangulation (Merriam, 1998), increasing the confidence in the research findings and contributing to trustworthiness of the data (Glesne, 1999). The researcher interviewed staff and observed classrooms and daily activities that took place at the subject middle school.

The researcher relied heavily on interviews or guided conversations (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) to gather data from the participants, and also to engage in less formal conversations with participants to allow their hidden assumptions and constructions to surface (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Each set of interview questions was intentionally written as open-ended questions to solicit responses that would answer the research questions of this study. These questions were designed to elicit both information and perspective, and the research eliminated questions that would lead to or provide only ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses (Merriam, 1998, pp. 78-79). Interviews were semi-structured to ensure that certain issues were discussed while offering participants the opportunity to elaborate on perceptions and experiences they believed were relevant and valuable. Participants did not know in advance the questions to be asked during interviews in order to gather spontaneous and unrehearsed data. However, participants were informed of the topics to be discussed during interviews on the consent form. The questions that were asked during the interviews are listed in Appendices E and F.

The topics addressed during the interviews included, but were not limited to, the following: perception of a restructured/reconstituted school; the detailed planning efforts; leadership styles and strategies; replacement of administration and staff; the implementation of the new Professional Development School, and final outcomes as a
result of the school restructuring process. Additional themes and accompanying questions relevant to the participants’ experiences were explored when appropriate.

Although audiotaping of interviews and note taking during observations were primary methods of recording data at the school site, documents relating to the school were also collected. Documents relevant to the study include, but were not limited to, the school mission statement, schedule of classes, School Improvement Plan, the 2007-2008 Restructuring Plan, Adequate Yearly Progress data, the School Support Team Leader’s November 1st and quarterly reports, in addition to other correspondence. What follows is a description of each of the procedures utilized during the study.

**Observation**

Observation was a technique used during the study to explore the interaction between the administrators, teachers, and university faculty associated with the reconstitution of the school and the new Professional Development School model. During the observations, the researcher took field notes that included what was heard, seen, and experienced while on campus. The researcher documented her personal impression of what was taking place. The naturalistic research paradigm states that often the nuances of multiple realities can be appreciated only in this way and, by “relying on all its senses, intuition, thoughts, and feelings, the human instrument can be a very potent and perceptive data-gathering tool” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 82).

Upon arriving at the middle school for the first time, this researcher stood in the parking lot to develop a mental picture of the school. The researcher was greeted with what appeared to be a fresh coat of bright white paint and grey trim covering large brick walls. Painted high upon the building was a sign that read, “Sutter Middle School”. To
the right of the main building was a park that is maintained by the city; however the school is allowed to use this area throughout the school year for physical education classes. Interestingly, a city pool separates the school from the park. Historically Sutter Middle School was the only middle school in town that had a pool, which was considered quite elaborate. As the researcher left the parking lot and headed toward the main office, she observed that there were decorative hand-made tiles about the school mounted upon the brick wall. What few windows the school had were either constructed of glass block or covered with metal grated bars. More perplexing was the eight-foot high chain-linked fence that surrounded the school, giving the first-time visitor an uncomfortable feel. The only entrance to the school was through a very heavy metal gate that led visitors directly to the main office.

As the researcher entered the lobby of the main office, everyone she came in contact with greeted me and other visitors warmly. The researcher was asked to sign in, indicating the individual who she was there to see and the location that she planned to visit. On her first visit, the researcher was scheduled to meet with the principal in order to introduce herself, share her passion for the study to be completed, and to provide details of what she would be doing over the next several months. After an hour-long visit with the principal, the researcher was given carte blanche to walk about the campus. She spent the rest of her first day observing students and teachers chatting amiably while moving about the campus and in classroom doorways. The researcher observed and admired more hand-made ceramic tiles mounted upon brick walls across the campus, and finally, observed the clamor of students rushing to be first in line to purchase their lunch and then to find that perfect seat for their lunchtime festivities. The researcher used
binder paper to write down her field notes and comments, and then placed all of her notes in a file.

**Interview**

Another technique used during this study was interviewing. The interviews were scheduled to provide enough interaction to adequately discuss the participant’s perception of their experience at the middle school before and after the restructuring process. The first interviews were originally scheduled for the month of February, but were unable to be scheduled until the end of March 2009 due to the annual CRT testing schedule and spring break. The second set of interviews was scheduled approximately ten weeks later, which happened to fall during the last week of school. Each interview took from 30 minutes to 1 hour, and was conducted on a day and at a time that was most convenient to the participant. The interviews were audiotaped to ensure that the information obtained was accurately reported. There were seven questions per interview. Participants’ identities were protected to the extent allowed by law. Fictional names were used throughout the study and participants were assured that they will not be identified in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

The first set of interviews was structured and utilized to obtain information from administrators (both current and former), teachers (both rehired and not-rehired), the university faculty member associated with the Professional Development School, and the current School Support Team Leader assigned to work with the school. Each set of interview questions was intentionally written as open-ended questions to solicit responses that would answer the research questions of this study (See Appendix E for the first set of interview questions). These questions were designed to elicit both information and
opinion, and the research eliminated questions that would lead to or provide only yes or no responses (Merrian, 1998, pp. 78-79). Follow-up questions did arise during each of the scheduled interviews, and the researcher allowed them because they provided additional information that had not been anticipated.

This researcher found the first set of interviews to be longer and much more emotional for interviewees. As people were asked to recall the second semester of the previous year, the questions seemed to draw out a great deal of frustration, anger, and even tears. I assured those individuals that were experiencing difficulties that they could stop at any time, and reminded them that their identity would remain confidential. While some individuals had a difficult time with the questions, others were thankful for the chance to share their feelings and experiences. Further, the first set of interviews allowed me the opportunity to develop a rapport with all those involved by getting to know them better and by finding out what their perceptions and knowledge of the restructuring process was before and after it occurred at Sutter Middle School.

The second set of interviews was more semi-structured (See Appendix F for the second set of interview questions). The second set of interviews fell during the last week of school, which gave me an opportunity to ask questions in a more relaxed manner. Both administrators and teachers alike seemed to be relieved that the school year was coming to a close, and, when presented with the preliminary data for the school (final data would not be available for three months after the interviews were completed), everyone from rehired to non-rehired seemed to portray a genuine hope for success for the school, but, more importantly, for the students. The second and final interviews also
allowed me to follow up on items that the participants had brought up during the first interview, and vice versa.

**Document Collection**

Document collection was the third and final method used during this study. This compilation included interviews; observations; note-taking; audio-taping; a reflexive journal; as well as the Sutter Middle School AYP data for both the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years of the restructuring process; the school improvement plans for both years; the restructuring plan for the 2007-2008 school year; interim assessment data for the 2009 school year; the SSTL’s November 1st report; quarterly reports; and the End of the Year reports for both years; as well as any information that I could obtain regarding the school district and the school. All of the collected forms of data were compiled and included in the audit trail.

As the researcher, I relied heavily on the interviews and observations for the major portion of the data collection. Participants’ attitudes, feelings and beliefs about the restructuring process were the focus of the interview questions, which were the primary source of data. This researcher has kept a copy of all of the data collected separately for both school years so that they could provide me with valuable information and insight needed to answer the research questions and to develop the final analysis.

**Timeline of the Study**

The study extended from February 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009. This time period allowed the researcher to collect data and to specifically observe school and classroom interactions, perform interviews, and complete the collection of documentation. The first
A set of interviews was carried out during the week of March 23-March 26, 2009, while the second set of interviews was conducted during the week of June 2-4, 2009.

**Data Analysis**

This naturalistic research study examined and explored first-hand knowledge, perceptions of the process, and insights into the strategies and methods that went into developing a major restructuring plan, and how the school governance was affected on the campus of a middle school in the southwest.

In the naturalistic paradigm, data analysis is an ongoing process, which begins the very first time the researcher appears at the site of study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Data collection and data analysis interacted as the data emerged during the study. Although data analysis in most qualitative research coincides with the data collection, the procedure of both is more like a process. Owens (1982) summarized the data collection/analysis mode as a true process. Typically, the strategy will emphasize data gathering in the early phase of the project. Checking, verifying, testing, probing and confirming activities will follow in a funnel-like design resulting in less data-gathering in later phases of the study along with a concurrent increase in analysis-checking, verifying and confirming (p. 11).

One of the challenges of a qualitative study is collecting and sorting out the masses of data that are available. Data analysis in a qualitative study is defined by Bogdan & Biklen (1992):

“Data analysis is the process of systemically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with the
data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (p. 153).

The data were analyzed from a phenomenological perspective using the lens of the four-frame model of “Reframing Organizations,” by Bolman and Deal (2008). Utilization of this lens allows one to understand the participants’ experiences without imposing preconceived ideas of the restructuring process. This approach of the data permitted themes to emerge and limited the imposition of the researcher’s bias or beliefs.

The data were manually analyzed, and coded with care to include all themes mentioned by participants. Recurring and consistent themes emerged among the participants throughout the study. The researcher initially attempted to maintain boundaries by artificially separating participant statements. However, there were several complex issues that defied categorization, and were relevant to more than one area of the study. For example, communication (or lack thereof) emerged as a meaningful and enduring theme throughout the participants’ interviews, affecting them socially, professionally and emotionally. Several participants also discussed the issue of discipline of students. These perceptions pertain to the participant’s desire for support and of the restructuring process.

The resulting themes are discussed in narrative form, and are also presented in frequency format. For example, “four out of six participants mentioned that…” will be found in the results section. Themes addressed by a majority of the participants are presented first, followed by themes expressed by one or two participants. The results include a comparison of each participant’s responses to questions asked by the researcher, including quotes from several participants that represent the group. To the
extent possible and appropriate, responses are in the participants’ “voices” to provide the most accurate representation of their perceptions.

Summary

This chapter has described the methodology that was used in this naturalistic research study that took place from February 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009. The data was collected through observations, interviews, and document collection in an effort to answer the research questions established in this study. From these methods, the data was compiled in the form of field notes, interview transcripts, reflective journals, and school documents. The data was sorted, analyzed, and interpreted for meaning. Once this was completed, the writing began. Chapter Four introduces the case study that influenced the research study in the first place. The findings of the study are discussed in Chapter Five, and the conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE CASE STUDY THAT STARTED IT ALL

This chapter chronicles the specific details of the case of the Gold County School District’s rush to restructure Sutter Middle School during the 2007-2008 school year. The specific events that were critical to the restructuring of the school are described and identified through extensive interviews and related documents located in this chapter following a detailed description of what happened on the morning of April 1, 2008, as described by the Sutter Middle School SSTL:

“Silence, utter silence…Silence was all I heard as I sat in the cafeteria of Sutter Middle School. The Associate Superintendent had just reminded the entire school staff that the school’s former principal had accepted a position at another school within the district. She explained that it was a promotion for him and insisted that he was given this as an award for being an outstanding principal. She also explained that it was the district’s choice who the next principal would be.

“I looked around the room at the faces of teachers sitting nearby; I could see the frustration and dejection immediately. Then came the final blow: She rather cavalierly told everyone that the region had this wonderful opportunity to work in partnership with the local university, and that the middle school would be totally reconstituted for the upcoming school year. She added that at the end of the current school year staff members would need to reapply for a position if they wanted to stay at the school. There were no guarantees that they would get rehired back at Sutter Middle School. Should they not be hired back, they would be relocated to another school within the district. At this time, I could feel the shock on my face, as well as on everyone else’s in the room.

“As I sat there the following questions quickly flashed through my mind: how could they do that? Why would they do this after all of the hard work the teachers have put into making changes at this school? How come no one had mentioned that this might happen? How is staff supposed to trust them after this? What is the school support team (SST) supposed to do now? What should I do now as the school support team leader? If we had only known about this at the beginning of the school year, we could have planned for the change…Reality check – What didn’t I do that I should have done? My training with the State Department of Education had not prepared me for this and I felt like I had failed – as a team leader, as a support for teachers, and as an agent of change.” [Quote from the School Support Team Leader at Sutter Middle School (Interview, 6/23/08)].
In order to better understand the events that led to this point, the case that follows is presented in a descriptive chronology and includes a narrative of events and activities that were conducted by employees of both the Gold County School District and Sutter Middle School, as well as through the documentation collected from the School Support Team Leaders assigned to work with the school during that school year. To help set the stage for the ensuing events and to provide some historical context to the district’s actions, relevant information about the school, the staff and the evolving ordeal prior to the decision to restructure is presented.

**The Case Begins**

At the conclusion of the 2006-2007 school year, the Sutter Middle School principal introduced a unique and innovative vehicle for change due to the school’s disappointing adequate yearly progress (AYP) results. According to the principal, many of the teachers recognized and embraced the need for a new teaching direction, students were highly motivated and parents were supportive of the efforts. However, some long-serving staff members remained reluctant to embrace the new policies and were unable to share in the new vision or fully participate in the policies being promoted by the school administration for the upcoming school year (Interview, 7/17/08).

**The School**

Sutter Middle School is located in the southwest and is part of the Gold County School District. During the 2007-2008 school year, the school was under the leadership of Mr. John Walker, Principal. Through that same year, the school had 1,088 students, with a gender breakout of 552 males and 536 females. Ethnicity stratification consisted
of 0.8 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 5.8 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 73.5 percent Hispanic, 10.8 percent Black/African-American, and 9.1 percent White. Furthermore, 10.4 percent of the students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and 33.3 percent were Limited English Proficiency (LEPs). In addition, 67.5 percent of the students were on the Free or Reduced Lunch program, providing an indication of their “At-Risk” or Title I status. The Hispanic concentration of this school was particularly noteworthy, and was significantly higher than the average of 39 percent of Hispanic students for the total Gold County School District and 35 percent Hispanic ethnicity for all of the state’s schools.

According to the School Improvement Plan (SIP) of the school, the mission of Sutter Middle School is to prepare its students for academic, behavioral, and social demands of their futures within a safe and challenging educational environment. However, during the 2007-2008 school year Sutter Middle School had been designated as a school in its third year of “In Need of Improvement” as a Title I school due to a low student attendance rate, student transience, and the weak academic skill level of many students, especially in the areas of English and mathematics. Due to this designation, the State Department of Education assigned a team to jointly serve as the School Support Team Leaders (SSTLs) for the school to help support and assist the school in its pursuit to improve student achievement levels, while the Gold County School District would determine the remaining composition of the team to work with them.
**The School Support Team Leaders**

Between the two SSTL’s was 63 years of experience in the field of education. One had received a Ph. D. in the area of Curriculum and Instruction, and currently serves as the Chair of the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at a public research university within the state, while the other received an Ed. D. in Administrative Leadership and is a retired Superintendent of Schools in a state located on the east coast. This was the first time that the Department of Education had assigned a husband and wife team to work together as SSTLs. Although this was their first SSTL assignment for the Department of Education, the joint assignment gave them the opportunity to mentor each other throughout the school improvement process.

**The Principal**

Mr. Walker had been assigned as principal to Sutter Middle School in April of 2007. He was hand-chosen by the Associate Superintendent of the region where the school of study is located. He had 24 years in the district, of which 20 years were at the high school level. Prior to coming on board at Sutter, Mr. Walker was extensively prepped by district administration personnel about the climate of the school and the urgency of the task at hand. According to Mr. Walker:

“I knew it would be a process, but I also knew that we could get there. It is going to take a three-year plan and we will have to evaluate it along the way. This school will no longer be centered on adults; instead it will be student-centered” (Interview, 7/17/08).

On September 11, 2007, Mr. Walker met with the SSTLs to better familiarize them with the challenges that the students, teachers, and administrators face each day at Sutter Middle School. During the meeting, the principal revealed that he was newly
assigned to the school, having been appointed the previous April (2007). Since assuming leadership, he had begun a reorganization of the school based on the data that he and the region administration had analyzed. He summed up his concerns into 3 main areas: (1) the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) challenge; (2) the issue that forty-two percent of the students who enter the 6th grade did not complete the 8th grade; and (3) the fact that he had a group of teachers that evidenced a strong allegiance to the former principal. According to Mr. Walker:

“I had a group of teachers that I called my “high flyers.” They saw the big picture right away. They were ready to tackle the world. I also had a group of teachers that were sitting right in the middle of the road; they wanted to wait and see what was going to happen before they made a decision one way or another. And then I had a group of teachers that did not want to play the game at all. Instead, they informed me that they were going to outlast the new plan and me. At that time, I decided that I would meet with the last group one-on-one. During those meetings I was very upfront with them. I told them that change was hard for all of us, but we, as a school, were moving in a different direction. From now on, kids are number one; there are no hidden agendas; and if you want to be a part of this team, you are going to have to accept the plan as is and put your heart and soul into this school and the students” (Interview, 7/17/08).

The 2007-2008 Reorganization Plan

The first focus of the school reorganization plan set forth by the administration was the extremely poor graduation rate of the sixth-grade students. Before school even opened in the fall of 2007, incoming sixth-graders would be given the opportunity to become members of one of two academic “houses of learning”. These houses were community houses: the Engineering House and the Communications House. Students would continue their basic studies of math, reading, and English, but would incorporate subjects germane to each particular learning community. For example, in the Communication community, students would learn public speaking and debate, French,
creative writing, and journalism. Students who elected to be a part of the Engineering community would study transportation science, robotics, model building, and city planning. Students would engage in each strand or subject of learning for a quarter of the school year. Students would remain as part of their selected school community during each grade they were enrolled at Sutter Middle School.

**The School Motto**

According to the SSTLs, they learned from the administration during their September 11th meeting that “Believe” became the new motto word that was supposed to drive whatever happened in the school during the 2007-2008 school year. Students, teachers, parents, the community, and administration started to “believe” that great things were in store for Sutter Middle School. Therefore, the principal and school community set out a vision for improvement beginning with the core belief statement, “Believe”.

Then, on September 25, 2007, the school support team met with the school’s department chairs. According to the SSTLs, the staff was hesitant to share their concerns with the SST, but after the team was assured that they would be able to express some of their ideas, the staff began to relax and became more expansive. The teachers explained how the administration had introduced the new school concept of seven periods, without a homeroom period, and two student-lunch periods at the conclusion of the previous school year. Even though the teachers were given the opportunity to have a voice, they did not approve of the seven-period school day that was put into place by the administration. In fact, several teachers filed a formal grievance against the administration over this decision, but lost, so this was a change that never actually achieved a consensus or “buy-in” of all staff members.
With all of the information gathered, the SSTLs, with the assistance of the SST, looked over the disaggregated data of the school and considered all of the concerns of the administration, as well as those of the staff. The SST was then able to recommend that the school should keep many of the current positive practices and use them as the foundation to begin the new school year.

Therefore, with the guidance of the SST, the principal and the staff decided to focus on several critical areas: (1) student achievement, (2) staff collaboration, (3) student leadership and empowerment, (4) teaching strategies, (5) leadership, (6) parent involvement, and (7) small learning communities.

The SST believed that the excitement for change and camaraderie would help the Sutter school community meet several of the AYP and ADA challenges head-on. When looking at the AYP data for Sutter Middle School, several “red cells” appeared in the areas of math and English Language Arts, which indicated that students did not achieve their Criterion Reference Test (CRT) goals as required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards. However, in the past three years they had shown a steady growth pattern in English Language Arts (ELA) results. For example, in 2004-2005, 25.1 percent of the students did not score at or above the passing percentage in reading. In 2005-2006, 19.3 percent did not pass, and in 2006-2007 only 5.9 percent fell short of the mark. These results clearly indicated significant student achievement growth at Sutter Middle School, although not sufficient to make AYP. Math, on the other hand, remained a particularly weak area; the negative percentages were very high in the 2006-2007 school year and only slightly better than the previous two years, indicating scant improvement in this area.
As the 2007-2008 school year progressed, the principal reported that the school was making steady progress toward the goals set forth in the School Improvement Plan (SIP), the formulation of which is a state requirement. One of the items the principal and his team also developed was a plan that focused on curriculum and academic rigor. Formerly, the teachers used instructional worksheets that were below students’ actual grade level, but under the principal’s guidance and professional development trainings, the teachers were made aware of multiple strategies to teach reading, to look at assessment and classroom data, to plan together during common planning times, to work within their smaller learning communities, and to better share their classroom experiences with their colleagues. Even though the school was seeing a turn in the right direction with academics, the principal admitted that he was still experiencing some entrenched difficulties with his math department, especially the 8th grade math teachers.

According to the principal, it had become apparent that this group of teachers did not seem to be particularly concerned about anything going on in the school. For example, at the beginning of the school year every math teacher received a Smartboard (an interactive whiteboard) to use in each of his or her classrooms, in addition to receiving several hours of training on how to utilize it to meet the needs of all students. During a classroom walk-through with a region administrator, the principal noted that these math teachers were not utilizing the boards during their lessons. The Region Associate Superintendent remarked:

“I could hardly believe my eyes when I observed one teacher had turned his Smartboard totally around to face the wall, and another asked for a cover for his Smartboard because he did not want his students to break it! What good are they if the staff won’t even use them?” (Interview, 7/16/08).
According to the principal:

“We have some outstanding teachers...we are trying to get the ‘weak’ teachers to come on board as they negate another teacher; if we don’t, gains will be wiped out. This is a difficult time for the teachers”  
(Interview, 7/17/08).

To confirm the statements made above, the SSTL approached individual teachers to seek confirmation. The teachers responded to school changes on different levels of personal commitment: approximately one-third were totally committed; one-third were waiting to see how this whole process would affect them personally; and the remaining one-third were apparently not committed at all.

**Change Is in the Air**

To everyone’s surprise, the principal, Mr. Walker, did not return to school after the 2007 Christmas vacation. It was a shock to everyone, especially the SSTLs. According to the district administration, Mr. Walker accepted a job as the principal of a high school located in another section of town. The assistant principal was assigned to act as the interim principal until the district had determined how they would handle this situation. After his departure from the school, Mr. Walker explained during an interview that,

“The decision to leave Sutter Middle School was not an easy resolution because of all the great things that were going on at Sutter, but this position as principal of a particular high school was an opportunity of a lifetime that I could not pass up”  (Interview, 7/17/08).

Even with all of the movement that was starting to gain attention, the Sutter Middle School teachers voiced their concerns that the state team was even on their
campus during the January 18th SST meeting. Then, as the first semester came to a close, the results of the interim math assessments were reported and did not turn out to be what everyone had hoped for. What's more, the entire district had performed poorly on the math interim assessment. Sutter teachers thought that they had prepared their students better for the test. Teachers were becoming a bit more apprehensive about the rest of the year. According to one SSTL, “change was definitely in the air” (Interview, 6/23/08).

In addition, during the January SST meeting, at which the Department Chairs, Assistant Principal and Region Associate Superintendent were present, all began to voice their concerns. The assistant principal pointed out that other schools with comparable demographics have many of the same issues as Sutter Middle School, but their students were achieving AYP results. She also shared that other principals from other schools had been coming onto Sutter’s campus as classroom visitors to serve as “multiple outside eyes.” According to the Assistant Principal, these observers had seen teachers showing movies for three consecutive days just before vacation and had also observed teachers eating breakfast in their classrooms with students present. It appeared to them that classroom discipline was an issue.

The department chairs in turn began leveling accusations at the Assistant Principal, and indicated that more help was needed in the classrooms to deal with difficult students. In addition, the Department Chairs expressed that they were also having difficulties contacting parents because of the language barrier or that the telephone numbers on record were incorrect. Also a handful of students did not come to school at all, or they were more or less consistently spending their academic day in suspension. They added that a homework club was offered, but the students were
unwilling to participate. The frustration of these teachers was becoming evident. In order to bring out the positive points that were made during the conversation with the team, the SSTL made the following recommendations during the meeting: (1) continue with communication and collaboration of teams; (2) expand on what you are already doing well; and (3) have more departmental meetings with the school’s administration.

Following the SST meeting, a school-wide staff meeting was held at the end of the day. During that meeting the Regional Associate Superintendent announced that Principal Walker would no longer be on campus, and a potential new principal was being discussed. This sudden announcement caught most off guard. The process of change that many had feared and some even resisted had finally arrived. The next morning, one of the SSTLs sent an email to the Associate Superintendent as well as the rest of the SSTs to propose the following concept:

“Most of the SSTs have corresponded after the meeting on Thursday to look more closely at the selection process of the next principal for Sutter. The school faculty has a strong need to have a more solid connection to the next change agent, the principal. We propose that teachers and a parent representative be involved in the selection of the new principal. It is suggested that a diverse group of teachers be selected from the faculty, by the faculty, to interview potential candidates. The final decision, naturally, would be in the hands of the Superintendent and you. This process may help to increase the “buy in” from teachers and avoid the expression that ‘no one got to be involved in the process.’ Best of luck in your search” (e-mail transaction, 1/19/08).

The following reply came from a district representative, who served on the SST and spoke on behalf of the Associate Superintendent:

“While I think your idea would pull together the current staff, I’m not sure what kind of precedent this would set. Administration moves in this district a great deal. Some are placed in very difficult situations. Would this give staff opportunity to take the ‘we’ll make this administrator miserable…so we can pick our own’ mentality? If this school is to be
‘reconstituted,’ then this principal would be selected by those who may not be part of the new team. Keep in mind the selection they made for one of their department heads. Can they truly select wisely? What if the Superintendent doesn’t select the candidate they choose? Just questions...” (e-mail transaction, 1/19/08).

**The New Principal Arrives**

The new principal was assigned to Sutter Middle School in the middle of February 2008. He was a young man who was previously an assistant principal for 6 months at another middle school. Prior to that he was a teacher, dean, and assistant principal at a local high school within the same region. During his first few weeks on campus he was very visible to the students and staff. He did classroom observations, monitored the hallways during passing periods, and supervised during both lunch periods. In fact, during the first 2 weeks of being on the job, he broke up a huge fight on campus, which resulted in several students being expelled from the school. This action alone made a large impact on both students and teachers.

During the February 20, 2008 SST meeting, the new principal shared his vision for the school and what actions he had planned to take during the final months of the school year. During the same meeting, the Assistant Principal updated the team as to the perception of the staff since the last meeting and the results of the interim assessments.

Shortly after the submission of the SSTL’s quarterly report to the Department of Education, the Associate Superintendent sent an inter-office memorandum to the school district stating her concerns about the level of service being provided at Sutter Middle School by the SSTLs. She stated:

“The SST process would have much more merit, if the school had a leader that understood it and was dedicated to it and its students. The SSTL assigned to Sutter does not spend enough time at the school. They come in late and leave early to go to one of their other schools assigned to
them. They continue to ask for school data, but they expect it immediately and are not very patient. And finally, they do not spend enough time in the classrooms. If they do not spend time with teachers, how are they going to be able to paint a ‘true’ picture of this school?’” (Memorandum, 2/25/08).

Shortly, after the submission of the memo, the SSTLs sent a rebuttal to the State Department of Education regarding the accusations from the Associate Superintendent. The rebuttal began with:

“The Associate Superintendent is not even an official designated member of the SST. She came in October, sat down, and immediately took over the meetings. She answered questions that were directed toward the principal or vice-principal. She tended to intimidate the other members of the team who worked in the same region. This was apparent in both meetings and in emails. She admonished us for what other SSTs were doing at their schools. We tried to explain our process and procedure, but she was unwilling to listen to us. In addition, the SSTL stated that the Associate Superintendent directed them to meet with the staff of Sutter Middle School and to tell them that it was their fault that the school might be restructured, and they should leave if they were not willing to change. The SSTL refused to do this, stating that: “The purpose of the team was to be supportive, not confrontational”” (e-mail transaction, 3/17/08).

The remainder of the school year for the SSTLs was extremely tense and trying, but they refused to give up on the students and teachers at Sutter Middle School because of all of the hard work that they had accomplished thus far.

**The Big Announcement**

On April 1, 2008, the SSTL had scheduled their monthly visit to Sutter Middle School. In order to meet with the entire staff to share their latest data, the SSTL had scheduled their meeting to fall on the same day as an already scheduled staff meeting. To everyone’s surprise, the Regional Associate Superintendent made an appearance that was followed by the “big” announcement, stating that, “During the 2008-2009 school year,
Sutter Middle School was to be restructured as a Professional Development School. The school had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to form a union with the local research university to transform the school into a Professional Development School, as well as to be the first and only Professional Development Middle School in the state. Therefore, at the close of the 2007-2008 school year, the entire staff, including the new principal, would be released from their contracts at Sutter Middle School. Everyone would have the opportunity to reapply for their position at Sutter Middle School, if they chose to do so, or they would be relocated to another school within the district”. As soon as the announcement was made, the school bell rang for school to begin for the day. As students arrived on campus, the teachers returned to their classrooms stunned and confused. “Shock” would not be too strong a word.

**The School Year Goes On**

During the May (2008) SST meeting, the new principal reported that he had just finished observing all of the teachers. He concluded that he had observed significant inconsistency in instruction and in lesson planning. He added that the effective components of a lesson were missing, such as the focus, the closure, teaching bell-to-bell, student’s awareness of the purpose of the lesson, as well as teaching to the state standards. Due to all of the upcoming changes in the school, the principal also added that teachers reported that they were feeling “frazzled” and did not have a good focus on anything at this time. The principal also reported that during the upcoming school year, the school, with its new team of faculty/teachers would continue with the two academies within the structure of the Professional Development School in place to support the new direction and programs that will be housed at the school.
End of the Year Administrative Interview

What follows is one of the end-of-year interviews that took place between the SSTL; the Department of Education representative assigned to the SST (DE); the new principal (P); and the region associate superintendent (A) that took place on May 21, 2008. This interview was reported in the SSTLs End-of-the-Year report:

**SSTL:** Do you have any idea of the achievement of students at Sutter Middle?
**P & A:** Not at this time. The CRTs have been returned to us, but the data needs to be cleaned up. Data will be provided on June 14th.

**SSTL:** What do you think is going on in the classroom with assessments and teaching?
**P:** I have spent minimal time in the classrooms, although not a lot is going on in them. I have been working 12-hour days. I have hired three math teachers and have four more left to be hired. I will wait to select a math chair once I have a full department.
**A:** The school has received press from Channel news. The station met with the University Dean and coordinating council and conducted an interview. There is a link on the Channel website about the positions available at Sutter for next year and because of that interview, the principal gets 5 to 10 inquiries a day about the available positions at the school.

**SSTL:** What will be taking place with the Professional Development School?
**P:** There will be a coordinator here, and at this time we are interviewing. In addition to this position, there is a PDS person for the district who also serves as the PDS coordinator at other schools. The PDS faculty will get a course release and will be coming from the departments of Curriculum and Instruction and Counseling. The coordinator will get half-time release and provide support for special education. In the first year, the PDS team will get acquainted with the staff and possibly provide pre-service support in the future. Instructional support will also be provided in terms of learning strategies. The Regional Associate Superintendent will be working with the Provost and the deans to talk about research opportunities, especially in the areas of Communication and Engineering.

**SSTL:** What is your vision for next year?
**P:** The vision for the school will come from the design team, a team that will make a concrete vision for the school. At this time, I do not have an administrative team in place.
A: The evaluation design will be included as part of this vision.

**SSTL**: What will you do to support your vision?  
**P**: We have $90,000 and will use this money to buy each teacher a laptop computer (probably a PC), which the teacher can use at school and take home. Teachers will receive training the week before school begins on team building and Algebraic Thinking (math teachers only) and literacy (trained by an out-of-district consultant) and a one-day science-based inquiry. Teachers who do not have a specific content area will go to the literacy training.

**SSTL**: What about programs and training that you had in place this school year, like HQSI?  
**P**: High Quality Sheltered Instruction will not be offered as a separate training because teachers need to infuse these strategies in their classroom. Next year, we will use two champions - newcomer training - one is from an area high school and the other one is adult education ESL division – to work with teachers and to support ELL learning.

**SSTL**: How would you describe the school mood at this time?  
**P**: Better than you would expect in this type of transition. The teachers have handled it professionally, students are ecstatic. On award night, when the idea of the Professional Development School was presented to the parents, they were fired up – feeder schools are excited.

**SSTL**: What programs do you anticipate purchasing for next year?  
**P**: I am looking to purchase Rosetta Stone, a language software. We will continue to use Achieve 3000. With the Rosetta Stone program the student can also use it in the parent center. Also, there will be two communication teachers who can help with instructional support for the use of the program. We are also in the process of purchasing Legos robotics. We anticipate having two labs in the future, and we can have competitive teams in both the 6th and 7th grades.

**SSTL**: Are you also talking about additional staff?  
**P**: Yes. We will have money from Title I for a teacher in math, science, one strategist, one ELA, and one counselor.

**DE**: What about the radio station that was in place this year?  
**P**: The radio station is being removed. We are starting broadcasting and communications – and using stop-animation software.

**SSTL**: Where do you see the bulk of your funding support – what initiatives?  
**P**: Two biggest funding areas are Algebraic Thinking for our first and second quartile students and the RTI model for our students who are
struggling to learn. We will have positions for two 6th and two 7th grade teachers, and they will work with our learning strategist using AIMSweb with RTI. Everything is currently funded.

SSTL: In closing, as this is our last meeting, I wonder if you can describe how you see the role of the SST?

P: I would like to know what more that this team could bring to this school? I have had experience with other teams and sometimes that team is more of a burden. I think about us as a faculty really being the driving force. Next year, I will provide a substitute so that department chairs can be involved in the process. The outside perspective is a good idea, but it has negative connotations. Teachers see the state team and begrudge them coming into their classrooms. I want to have teacher-driven change – model and buy-in. Teachers are defensive, and the School Improvement Plan needs to drive the process.

As the school year came to a close, the Department of Education representative assigned to work with Sutter Middle School wrote an email to the State Department of Education’s Title I Director, stating her concerns about what had taken place at Sutter Middle School during the 2007-2008 school year. In her e-mail, she made the following observation and request:

“I am requesting not to be placed again on the SST at Sutter Middle School. I also do not wish to be placed again on a team in the same Gold County School District region unless some norms are clearly agreed upon with district and site administrators. These norms relate to transparency and openness in sharing of information, and with expectations for the purpose and role of the School Support Team.

“It was announced by regional personnel in mid-April of 2008 that Sutter was to be restructured and will be reconstituted as a Professional Development School. Clearly, the process of planning and negotiating with the university as the anticipated partner, as well as the usual process of planning for and applying for sufficient grant funding was lengthy, and well under way before the announcement was made that such a reconstitution would take place.

“It is very probable that the decision to restructure Sutter and reconstitute it as a "model" Professional Development School middle school was either an a priori decision or was under serious consideration before the School Support Team began working with the school. In either case, the regional
administration and, by association, the site administrators were not forthcoming to the team as a State agent about this decision.

“Openness about such plans should have been part of the operant norms governing the compact between the SST as a State agent and the regional administration and site administration. Furthermore, attempts by the SST to have an impact upon student achievement by impacting upon school culture and teacher effectiveness have been an exercise in futility because of this lack of disclosure of intent. Also, because the region's intent was to restructure and to release all staff except the principal from duty at Sutter, there was pressure on the SST to act in a way that would support the position that staff was to be held to blame for Sutter's failure. It is not the role of the SST to affix blame, but to act in accordance with its mission to support improvement and remediation of causal factors.

“The SST made excellent progress in identifying causal factors. Among these were ineffective site implementation and support for district-wide expectations for improvement practices such as professional learning committees and common implementation of elements of effective lessons. However, these efforts could not be productive of change without a climate of openness and a regional and site intent to support remediation. Since Sutter was restructured before action could take place based upon the mentioned identified causal factors, in essence, the process of remediation was blunted at the school. In fact, we as a team had begun to see improvement among the staff and we had begun to fix upon point of leverage for improvement.

“Additionally, I question the practice of reassigning staff that are identified as problematic or underperforming to other schools. Gold County School District has great challenges in filling teaching positions. Would not a more realistic and productive practice be to focus school improvement efforts on supporting changed teacher and administrator behaviors? The practice of reassigning staff who do not meet the expectations of site or regional administrators without a fair and focused program and period of remediation will result in a concentration at some schools of those teachers who are perceived to be ineffective. This is a self-defeating practice and will produce self-perpetuating failure in those schools that host such staff.

“Again, the regional administrators and, by association, site administrators, need to agree to two important operant norms in working with SSTs: openness in sharing of information likely to impact upon reform efforts, and respect for and collaboration with the SST team in its role as mentor to site administrators and the school improvement team.
“The SST’s role is not that of acting upon regional intent nor is it designed to act as a disciplinary body imposing actions deriving from such intent upon staff. Rather, the SST's role is to support the site administrators and school improvement team in designing, implementing, reflecting upon, and if necessary, remediating improvement goals, objectives, and actions likely to lead to enhanced student achievement as reflected in school data gathered in the AYP analysis and in district and site measures of accountability.

“Thanks, for the chance to share this reflection upon my SST's experience at Sutter. I would welcome the chance to work with another school in another region next year. I also want to make it clear that our team (with the exception of site administrators) was fully committed to supporting improvement at Sutter, and was thwarted because the two above-mentioned norms were not an honored part of our compact with site and regional administrators” (e-mail transaction, 5/22/08).

In closing, at the time that the decision to restructure Sutter Middle was made, neither the Board of Trustees for the Gold County School District nor the State Department of Education were made aware of the restructuring plan that the Gold County School District had set into motion for the upcoming school year at Sutter Middle School. Ironically, on August 1, 2008, Sutter Middle School was informed that they had made AYP by “Appeal.” Therefore, the quest now is to determine whether the new restructuring plan had the same affect and final outcome on student achievement at Sutter Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year as the former administration and teachers had on student achievement during the 2007-2008 school year.

Summary

The case described above captures a moment in a school’s tortuous journey through the No Child Left Behind’s AYP transition. One can surmise that each player at the scene had a vision – a distinctly different lens imposed on a school in Year 3 of “In
Need of Improvement” under the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. The district administration’s decision to restructure the school was most assuredly premeditated, arguably vindictive, and very possibly premature due to its failure to recognize the numerous and substantive changes made by the teaching staff throughout the school year. For that reason, this researcher felt that it was necessary to disclose the seminal events that occurred during the 2007-2008 school year.

As a result, this case has demonstrated the need to study the philosophical underpinnings of a restructuring program for school improvement, as well as the themes that emerged at Sutter Middle School before and after the restructuring process occurred. In addition, we have much to learn from the perspectives of those who experienced the restructuring process, including the positive and negative elements of the process that enhance student achievement and the unique aspects of the restructuring process that detract from the teaching profession. Therefore, in Chapter Five, the researcher will investigate the “rest of the story.”
CHAPTER FIVE
A PRESENTATION OF “THE REST OF THE STORY”

Analysis and Findings

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1998), “People who are in search of a setting or a subject for a case often feel in a quandary about whether to look for a so-called “typical” situation (one that is similar to most others of the type) or an “unusual” one (clearly an exceptional case).”

This chapter presents an analysis of the data and an interpretation of the findings for this study. The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the first-hand knowledge, perceptions of the process, and insights into the strategies and methods that went into developing a major restructuring plan, and how the school governance was affected on the campus of a middle school in the southwest.

This naturalistic, descriptive study produced a rich collection of data upon which to build a description and an understanding of the participants’ perceptions, feelings and experiences during the restructuring process at Sutter Middle School. In accordance with the qualitative nature of this study, the results are not assumed to be applicable to all those who had worked at Sutter Middle School during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years.

For the purpose of this study, the following identifiers will be used to categorize the participants: Teachers new to Sutter Middle School are labeled “New”; teachers who were rehired after the reconstitution of Sutter Middle School are listed as “Rehired”; and teachers that were not retained at Sutter Middle School are labeled “Not-Rehired.”
administration, Professional Development faculty, and the School Support Team Leader are listed as “Other.”

The data are presented in a narrative format in order to provide a thick description. The data are introduced in the following order: educational teaching experience, the perception of the restructuring process, the detailed planning efforts, the replacement of administration and staff, perceptions of how the process was managed, the implementation of the new Professional Development School, and how it has been received by the school, students and the community. Additionally, the study analyzed the final outcomes of the school’s progress as a result of the restructuring process.

Utilizing the Four-Frame conceptual framework developed by Bolman & Deal (2008), the participant’s responses to the following research interview questions will be introduced, interpreted, and analyzed. The following section is an analysis of the perspective that the researcher attempted to observe and document during the first set of interview questions that took place during the week of March 23-26, 2009. This will be followed by a presentation and analysis of a second set of interviews that were conducted on June 2-4, 2009 in order to describe the restructured school year.

Several major themes emerged from the research that was found to be significant for understanding the effects of the restructuring process in the school that was studied. These emerging themes and the answers to the four research questions will be discussed in Chapter Six.
Round One – The Restructured Year

Educational Teaching Experience

In order to gauge the educational background of the sample group of “new,” “rehired” and “not-rehired” teachers at Sutter Middle School, and to determine if any bias was involved with respect to the retention of certain teaching staff, participants were asked the following questions regarding their educational teaching experience and the courses that they taught:

1. How long have you been teaching in the School District?
2. How long have or had you been teaching at Sutter Middle School?
3. Teaching assignment: core or non-core?

Participants’ responses with respect to experience ranged from 20 years in the district to as few as 3 years. The same participants responded that they had taught as long as 13 years at Sutter Middle School, not counting the “new” teachers coming into the 2008-2009 school year for the first time. Earlier discussions with district and prior school administration had introduced the perception that a number of the leading staff at Sutter Middle School had demonstrated reluctance to new learning ideas and methods. Therefore, it may be assumed that any significant restructuring of the school to meet AYP standards was likely to be resisted. Consequently, background information on the years in teaching seemed an appropriate means to assess possible resistance to change or innovative ideas and the administration’s targeted teachers to be replaced.

Based on the apparent entrenched attitudes of certain teaching staff, one might reasonably ask if the district administration had decided to replace all of the long-term teachers with younger, more energetic, and more adaptable teachers when they
implemented the restructuring plan. From Table 1 and the experience levels of those teachers “rehired” and “not-rehired”, the data do not support any consistent bias in getting rid of older or long-term teachers. The six “rehired” teachers that volunteered to be a part of this study ranged from 4 to 13 years teaching experience at this school and 4 to 20 years in the district. Similarly, the teachers that were “not-rehired” showed essentially the same amount of years of experience, three to twelve years teaching at Sutter and four to 16 years in the district. Therefore, one can reasonably argue that the number of years teaching either at the school or in the district did not play a significant role in the release or retention of certain staff members.

**TABLE 1. Educational Teaching Experience Of Sample Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW</th>
<th>REHIRED</th>
<th>NOT REHIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • District: 5 years  
  Sutter: 1 year | • District: 4 years  
  Sutter: 4 years | • District: 4 years  
  Sutter: 3 years |
| • District: 3 years  
  Sutter: 1 year | • District: 4 years  
  Sutter: 4 years | • District: 4 years  
  Sutter: 3 years |
| • District: 7 years  
  Sutter: 1 year | • District: 20 years  
  Sutter: 10 years | • District: 16 years  
  Sutter: 11 years |
| • District: 4 years  
  Sutter: 1 year | • District: 12 years  
  Sutter: 12 years | • District: 11 years  
  Sutter: 5 years |
|                     | • District: 13 years  
  Sutter: 5 years | • District: 13 years  
  Sutter: 12 years |
|                     | • District: 13 years  
  Sutter: 13 years |                     |

Despite the lack of evidence to support an apparent bias in using teaching years to retain or dismiss teachers as part of the restructuring/reconstitution process, the data on
the nature of the courses taught appears to be a much stronger criterion for teacher replacement, and leads to a much different conclusion. Here we can see from the interview sample of teachers “retained,” which were predominantly “non-core” teachers; teachers “not-rehired,” which were all core teachers; and teachers “newly hired,” which were exclusively core teachers, that there appears to have been a strong bias on the part of the administration to completely rejuvenate the core; i.e., the NCLB-mandated tested teaching areas of the school.

**TABLE 2. Core Vs. Non-Core Sample Group Of Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW</th>
<th>REHIRED</th>
<th>NOT REHIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
<td>Non-Core Teacher</td>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
<td>Non-Core Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
<td>Non-Core Teacher</td>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
<td>Non-Core Teacher</td>
<td>Core Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 2 out of the 4 members of the “other” group are primarily new to both Sutter Middle School and the district, the question in regards to how long they have been working in the school district or at Sutter Middle School was not meaningful to the study.

**Perception of the Restructuring Process**

As a reminder, for the purpose of this study, restructuring is defined as, “Changing the very structure of a chronically failing organization in an attempt to spur dramatic improvement,” (Hassel, Hassel Arkin, Kowal & Steiner, 2006). Therefore, in order to determine how participants perceived the restructuring process, the following questions were asked:
1. What is your perception of a restructured school?
2. What should happen to schools before they are required to be restructured?
3. Is there a good side to restructuring?
4. What are the detrimental aspects to school restructuring?

What Is Your Perception Of A Restructured School?

In response to the first question, the participants had mixed responses. The “new” teachers were not quite sure of the precise definition of a restructured school; their answers varied from getting rid of the entire staff (i.e., reconstitution) to reorganizing a school. One of the “new” teachers reported quite accurately that, “Sutter Middle School seems to have done a little bit of both (i.e., restructuring and reconstitution); they adopted a new math program and the people had to reapply for their jobs”.

On the other hand, the “rehired” group demonstrated the most knowledge of the restructuring process, which leads the researcher to believe that this greater insight was due to their continued employment at the school, allowing for more information on the process to be received and understood. A “rehired” teacher explained that it is “…restructuring the curriculum without restructuring the people”. However, another “rehired” teacher had a harsher point of view, which tended to describe unintended consequences. She defined restructuring as a method of “…destroying schools, families and student security”.

The “not-rehired” group of teachers described the restructuring process in a much more colorful, if not devious way, such that one “not-rehired” teacher stated, “It was a ‘get out of jail free card’. It is your one chance to do whatever you wanted to do with the
school – move whoever you want out, move whoever you want in, based on public or private reasons”.

Somewhat to the relief of the researcher, the “other” group was more on track about what a restructured school should look like. For example, one “other” responder defined a restructured school as “…a school that has embraced a different philosophy,” while another “other” participant considered a restructured school as a school that “refocuses academics.” Another “other” respondent explained their perception of a restructured school as, “…one in which the basic programs, operational procedures, educational programs, and instructional processes are significantly changed from what they had been in the past”.

Based on the 2006-2007 AYP results for this school and by means of the district administration observations and leadership meetings, the decision to restructure and/or reconstitute Sutter Middle School had been made and set into motion in December of 2007, the timing of which coincided with the former principal’s announcement that he was leaving the school to accept a position as the principal of a high school in another area of town.

The district administration took this opportunity to replace the outgoing principal with a new principal, serving in his first head administrative position at Sutter Middle School during the second (the remaining) semester of the 2007-2008 school year. The district administration asserted that, while never serving as a principal before, the new principal’s experience as an assistant principal and his strong background in math, coupled with his youth and level of energy, as well as the fact that he was bilingual and came from an inner-city background, demonstrated his considerable skills at working
with students and with challenging situations. A “rehired” teacher added this comment:
“We have had an administration change over and over. One guy retired, one came in and
he was only here for one-and-a-half years, and then the new principal came in. It had
been a mess. Within the first week that he [the new principal] arrived, there was already
change. He was very present, he was very visible, he was very positive, very happy to be
here, and that immediately brought changes.” Despite some confusion with respect to
terminology of what exactly was done at Sutter Middle School (i.e., restructured or
reconstituted), it appeared early on that the district administrators had chosen well with
their agent of change.

**What Should Happen To Schools Before Restructuring Becomes Required?**

In response to the second question pertaining to perceived necessary steps to be
taken prior to restructuring, it became apparent that the “not-rehired” teachers were in the
most disagreement. One former teacher in particular felt that in order for schools to not
be restructured, we need to invite both parents and legislators to become more involved
in the teaching of students. By contrast, the “rehired” teachers provided far more
practical advice by suggesting that the district needed to offer assistance to teachers that
may need help before relocating them to another school within the district. This
addressed the obvious question that, if the teachers were not good enough to teach at
Sutter, why would they be good enough to be at another school? Shifting deficient
teachers is merely a “zero-sum game” and just transfers problems to other locations.

Another one of the “rehired” teachers suggested that, “…there should have been
some dialog among the staff and community, not just from the top down prior to
restructuring Sutter.” Another “rehired” teacher felt that “…the district should give
teachers the opportunity to see first-hand successful programs.” However, a third “rehired” teacher believed that schools should be given more autonomy to do what they feel is best for the school and its students. Whereas three of the four “new” teachers insightfully proposed that, “…data should drive the decision whether to restructure or not.” Had this suggestion been rigorously followed it is doubtful that the “data” that was then available would have supported the restructuring and/or reconstitution steps that were ultimately implemented.

However, one of the “other” participants felt that, “The district should take a good look at the administrative practices before looking at teacher practices.” Another “other” respondent stated that, “The school should have a long record of not succeeding before they think about restructuring a school”. A third “other” respondent stated that, “Schools should have the opportunity to make the changes that the leadership and staff feel are necessary to achieve the results that are desired by the district, state, and federal entities.”

As stated in the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, any school receiving Title I funds that has been unable to adequately make AYP for five consecutive years must begin the restructuring steps toward improving student achievement. But in the case of Sutter Middle School, the district administration decided to restructure the school two years early. During the interview process, both the “rehired” and “not-rehired” participants shared that the district had mentioned reconstitution more than once during staff meetings, and threatened that the state would restructure the school if the school did not make massive improvements. It appeared evident from the participants’ responses that the teachers never expected that it would actually happen, nor in the fashion that it did.
Is There A Good Side To Restructuring?

In response to the third question pertaining to the possibility of there being a good side to restructuring, there was a definitive “yes” from all of the “new” teachers that there is a good side to restructuring. The “rehired” teachers were split fifty-fifty as to the good and bad aspects to restructuring, and the “not rehired” teachers were not sure of the benefits of restructuring. The “other” sample group was in total agreement with the “new” teachers that, “Absolutely, there is a good side to restructuring.” In fact, one “other” put it this way, “Once you get the mindset that it is okay that the kids don’t succeed and that it is not your fault, then it’s time to change.” One “new” teacher stated that, “He was an advocate for the big broom theory; bring in the broom, sweep it out, and then start all over again from scratch.” Whereas one “rehired” teacher felt that, “There would have been a good side to it if it had been handled differently.” This same teacher also added that, “The best part of this restructure (process) was that the administration changed. Teachers are now shown respect and are asked to give input about how the school should be run.”

A “not-rehired” teacher described that, “There can be (benefits), but with the pressure that we faced to pass the tests for years and the feeling like we weren’t doing enough, that we weren’t good enough. That was the feeling that we got from the district and the state. It definitely brought morale down.” However, according to the Center on Innovation and Improvement (2009), “In nearly every case of a chronically failing school, true change requires breaking the habit of dysfunctional processes and raising expectations for staff and students that has been low for years” (p. 4). The question that begs asking in the case of Sutter Middle School is whether or not the existing staff had
already begun to address the existing “dysfunctional processes” and only needed new administration that truly cared for the classroom needs?

**What Are The Detrimental Aspects To School Restructuring?**

In response to the fourth question, which addressed the potential detrimental aspects to school restructuring, both the “rehired” and “not-rehired” teachers had the same negative responses toward the detrimental aspects to restructuring. A “rehired” teacher summed it up this way: “I felt like the district was out to break us, not make us better, but rather out to destroy us. You knew something was going on, but nothing was really said. There was no communication.” A “not-rehired” teacher explained it this way: “The climate of the school that had been developed over the years had been done away with; in addition, the camaraderie between not only the teachers, but also between the teacher and student had also been done away with.” Another “rehired” teacher added that, “There were many teachers that were qualified and really good teachers, and they should have been rehired if they had reapplied, but the way they thought the district had handled the situation, they did not want to be a part of it any more.” While another “rehired” teacher added that, “There was a lot of ego damage. It created a climate of immense hostility and resentment. We lost very good teachers who shouldn’t have been asked to leave.”

The “other” group of respondents actually happened to agree with the other three groups. One “other” respondent agreed that, “The detrimental aspects are when teachers have to reapply for their jobs. You are uprooting their careers and tearing away some relationships.” While another “other” respondent believed that, “The detrimental aspects involve the imposition of change when the staff and administration are resistant. If the
staff does not buy into the need, then the implementation of change cannot truly be successful.”

Fullan (1991) once stated, “Schools cannot redesign themselves. The role of the district is crucial. Individual schools can become highly innovative for short periods of time without the district, but they cannot stay innovative without the district action to establish the conditions for continuous and long-term improvement” (p. 209). Therefore, it was the opinion of the district that sometimes you have to make the tough decisions in order to increase student achievement and that is obviously what they did. One powerful theme that began to emerge during the interview process was the theme of communication. It became clearly evident that neither the problems nor the solutions had ever been clearly communicated to the staff. This lack of communication would become pervasive in the district’s behavior during this restructuring process and figure singularly in interview responses.

**Perception Of A Reconstituted School**

Once again, for the purpose of this study, reconstitution is defined as, “The replacement of staff and leaders in failing schools” (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2005). So, in order to find out if participants knew the difference between the concept of a restructured school and a reconstituted school, the participants were asked the following questions:

1. What is your perception of a reconstituted school?
2. What is the difference between restructured and reconstituted, or Is there a difference?
What Is The Difference Between Restructured And Reconstituted, Or Is There A Difference?

After conducting the interviews, it became obvious to the researcher that the majority of participants from all four groups of participants were not quite sure of any difference between restructuring and reconstitution. In fact, the group of “other” participants, which was primarily district and school administrators who were the driving force behind the restructuring of Sutter Middle School, also failed to be able to effectively differentiate between the two concepts. One “other” participant described a reconstituted school as “A school that is reconfigured to meet some theoretical purpose of policy shift.” Another “other” respondent said it was an “Adult-centered focus.”

Overall, it appeared that the “rehired” group of teachers had a somewhat better grasp of the term, “reconstitution,” thereby leading the researcher to assume that this was due to their immersion in the turmoil at Sutter Middle School over the two-year period. One “rehired” teacher perhaps summed it up best: “I really don’t think there is that much difference, except that restructuring dealt more with changing the academics and curriculum of the school, and reconstituted meant dealing with the staff of the school. That basically is the difference.” This explanation was about as good as it got, but for the most part there was little evidence that these concepts had been extensively researched, discussed or communicated to the staff by those who should have known the differences (i.e., the district and school administration).
The Replacement Of The Administration And Staff

During the interview process, participants were asked to describe their perceptions of certain aspects of being at a restructured school. Therefore, the participants were asked the following questions about the school:

1. You are at a school that has been restructured. How would you describe the climate of the school?
2. What are or were the feelings and attitudes of the teachers?
3. What are or were the feelings of the students?

You Are At A School That Has Been Restructured. How Would You Describe The Climate Of The School?

When the “new” teacher group was asked to describe the climate of the school, their response coincided with what the researcher had observed at the school. All four teachers within the sample agreed that the climate of the school was overall positive. One teacher in particular described it as, “Very positive. Everyone that knows how tries to make it a team effort. There are always the first-year teachers who are just trying to survive, but I see people helping them out, not just staying in their classroom.” These comments tended to clearly reflect the positive and reinforcing attitudes the school and district administration was attempting to instill at the new school.

The “rehired” group as a whole was generally positive about the climate of the school after the restructure/reconstitution process. Another seminal theme that began to emerge in the interview responses was the dramatic change in discipline that came with the new administration. While up to now there appeared a preponderance of efforts by the former administration to hold the teachers accountable for the failure of the school, accountability of the students had been largely ignored. The new administration,
however, made dramatic changes in that regard. One “rehired” teacher explained that, “What I see in my classroom is fairly similar to previous years, but outside my room, the behavior is better, and I feel that it is just that they have cracked down on the kids when they are misbehaving. The administration is expecting the kids to behave in the hallways and in the classroom.” While another “rehired” teacher stated that, “The students are responding better to the expectations and that makes it more positive for the teachers and the students.” However, another “rehired” teacher felt differently. He stated, “I don’t see a lot of difference. I do think that there are fewer really bad teachers who tended to influence the climate of the school in a way that the students had less respect in some classrooms.” He also added, “I think that it is probably not as sweeping as some of the new teachers think because it comes up in our staff meetings regularly that there is a total change on campus, that the students have a totally different attitude, but they really don’t.” This opinion, however, was clearly in the minority. Suddenly, student discipline appeared to be elevated as a prime causal factor in teacher failure to teach effectively, and for students unable to learn in unsafe classrooms and the inability of the school on the whole to achieve adequate test scores. However, the “other” sample group added that the climate of the school is extremely strong and positive. “We are here to change these kids’ lives,” stated one “other” group member.

When the question was asked of the “not-rehired” teachers, there was a totally different impression. It must be noted that this group was responding to the question regarding the climate, and providing responses that related to the previous year. According to one “not-rehired” teacher, “The year started out rough because we went from a six-period day to a seven-period day. They split the school up into
communication and engineering programs, and there were no other electives added for the seventh or eighth grade students, so morale was low from the beginning.” Another “not-rehired” teacher added that, “People were upset. They didn’t feel like they should have to go and ask for their jobs. It did not make for a good work environment.” It was also said by another “not-rehired” teacher that, “They wanted us to act like professionals, but they did not treat us as professionals.” In addition, one teacher closed the question by saying, “We thought it was pretty shifty and sneaky the way they threw it (the decision to restructure the school and force the teachers to reapply for their jobs) at us on a Friday morning, then patted us on the back and said, ‘Have a great day’. I think that added to the already negative feelings.”

According to Covey (1989), trust is “the highest form of human motivation” (p. 178). It became clearly apparent from the interviews that trust was missing from the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year. The top-down management style, the evident lack of communication, and the indifferent and cavalier attitude towards the critical classroom needs of the staff led to a dysfunctional work environment that could not but adversely affect the climate of the school and student achievement.

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) (2008) asserted that, “The replacing of staff can have unintended negative consequences,” especially when trying to fill teaching positions. According to the report submitted by CEP on restructured schools (2008), some principals reported that they simply were unable to re-staff their reconstituted schools with qualified teachers. Due to a shortage of highly qualified teachers, the principals had to start the school year off with many substitute teachers.
**What Are Or Were The Feelings And Attitudes Of The Teachers?**

The second question pertaining to the feelings and attitudes of the teachers appears once again to result in mixed responses from among the four groups. The majority of the “rehired” teachers agreed that the previous year was a very rough year, but the discipline was a lot better, more consistent; therefore the attitude was better among the teachers. However, the “not-rehired” teachers were less positive. One “not-rehired” teacher echoed the remark, “We were never asked for our opinion or our input. We were always on guard.” While another “not-rehired” teacher commented that, “It was because of the climate and the communication breakdown that I chose not to come back to Sutter.” Another “not-rehired” teacher explained that, “It was like they were going to bring the faculty down, break our morale, and do whatever it takes.”

During the interview process, one “new” teacher stated that, “I was constantly worried; am I doing a good enough job? Am I going to have a job next year?” As the interviews continued, it was becoming evident that what happened at this school had set a new precedent, and a paradigm of a teaching environment of fear and uncertainty that the administration may not have intended. However, some research shows that this is a more normal reaction. Hall & Hord (2006), assert that these feelings and perceptions about the innovation and the change process can be sorted and classified into what they call “concerns” (p. 135). In the case of Sutter Middle School, the “new” teachers were portraying “self concerns,” which, according to Hall & Hord (2006), ‘self concerns’ tend to be the most prevalent when teachers take on a new role. They begin to experience an “egocentric frame of reference in terms of what the experience will be like for ‘me’ and whether ‘I’ can succeed” (p. 135).
In addition, a level of frustration seemed apparent for many of the “new” teachers coming to Sutter because they had never taught in an inner-city school. One “new” teacher exclaimed, “Oh my gosh, if this is what it is like to teach in an inner-city school, then I’m not sure if I made the right decision!” Perhaps, in the administration’s rush to replace the primarily core teaching staff, a realistic appraisal and indoctrination of this school’s unique and demanding teaching environment had been crucially overlooked.

However, when the question was given to the “other” group there was a mixture of responses. For example, one “other” recalled what the attitudes were like the previous year: “The teachers stopped teaching. Friendships were lost. They were angry and negative.” As for the current school year, one “other” respondent added that, “the overall attitude is positive. There is a level of frustration with the PDS piece and teachers stepping into an inner-city school for the first time.” While another “other” participant shared that, “There is a much more positive attitude; many were frustrated from working with the very needy kid.” According to Reina & Reina (2006), “When information is not shared or there is a perception that information is not shared, employees feel betrayed. They feel as though they have not been trusted, and therefore their trust in leadership erodes” (p. 38).

**What Are Or Were The Feelings Of The Students?**

The third question was asked in an effort to find out more about the attitudes of the students during the restructuring process. According to the “not-rehired” teachers, the students were under the impression that all of the teachers had been fired, which left the morale of the students in an understandable alarming state. The same teachers also stated
that the parents were also upset, as they were feeling their students’ concerns, and therefore the process was disturbing to the entire community.

However, the “rehired” teachers were probably better able to observe and compare the attitudes of the students over the two-year period. One “rehired” teacher stated that, “The students are thriving now due to the new administration, more discipline, and more structure.” Another “rehired” teacher shared that, “The students are making the adjustment. They see the changes, and they recognize that the school is a safer place to be.” Although one “rehired” teacher attested to lingering student concerns, stating, “…some of the students are still confused as to why their old teachers are gone.” This is another piece of evidence of a communication breakdown, both between the administration and staff, and the administration and students and parents. According to the majority of “rehired” teachers, a good explanation was never given to the students as to why many of the teachers had “left,” and therefore the confusion continued into the following year.

The “new” teachers all agreed that the students appreciated the new, stricter discipline environment. As one “new” teacher put it, “The students can see our enthusiasm for them; they see that we care.” The “other” group of participants was in agreement with the “new” teachers. According to one “other” respondent, “The kids have responded exceptionally well. There are fewer behavior problems. They know the expectation of good behavior, good academics, and respect for each other and the teachers”. Although another “other” participant explained it this way: “There is a line which you do not cross or it will be consistently upheld. They seem to take pride in the school now.” Peterson & Deal (1998) add that, “Strong positive cultures are places with
a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn” (p. 29).

**Perception Of How The Process Was Managed**

In order to determine how the restructuring process was managed, participants were asked the following questions:

1. Did they (the district or administration) explain why the school was restructured?
2. Did they explain the concept of a Professional Development School?

**Did They (The District Or Administration) Explain Why The School Was Restructured?**

When teachers from two of the three groups (“rehired” and “not-rehired”) were asked if they were given a clear explanation as to why Sutter Middle School was restructured/reconstituted, a unanimous “No” was given. According to one “rehired” teacher, “The only thing that was clear was that we were being restructured because we did not make AYP,” while another “rehired” teacher said that, “They wanted to expand the Professional Development School model up to the secondary level” (from an already existing elementary school model). Another “rehired” teacher, who had happened to be absent on the day that the announcement to restructure was made to the staff, stated that when he returned to work no one made an effort to explain any of it to him. As for other responses to this question, the “not-rehired” teachers were in general agreement with the “rehired” teachers. None of them recall receiving a clear explanation of why the school would be restructured. To one “not-rehired” teacher it was more like, “Congratulations,
this is what the school is going to do; now you have to reapply for your teaching position.”

By contrast, three of the four “new” teachers stated that they were given an explanation of the need to restructure during their interview process. In fact, it was primarily due to the description of the new program to be implemented at Sutter Middle School that enticed them to apply for the opportunity to teach there. The “other” participants indicated some confusion regarding the question. Where one “other” respondent gave an absolute “No,” another reported a “Yes and No,” whereas another “other” stated, “Absolutely. The dialog had already begun before I came on board.” While another “other” participant plainly stated that, “All I was ever told was that there was a pretty negative group of people that had been at the school for a long time and they did not want to change”.

Silins, Mulford, & Zarins (2002) explained that effective leadership is a function of “the extent to which the principal works toward whole-staff consensus in establishing school priorities and communicates these priorities and goals to students and staff, giving a sense of overall purpose” (as cited in Marzano, 2005, p. 620).

**Did They Explain The Concept Of A Professional Development School?**

In response to the second question pertaining to whether or not they received information about the concept of the Professional Development School, one is left to wonder about the administration’s commitment to that program. According to the “new” teachers, one stated that, “There are a lot of us still trying to figure out exactly what this whole PDS is all about,” while another mentioned that, “In regards to the PDS model, with some of the teachers there is sort of a disillusionment there. When we were hired
this was going to be a professional development school, but I don’t think anyone really even knows what that is at this point, other than, this is going to look good in a resume.”

One “rehired” teacher said that he remembered asking during his interview for his teaching position what the PDS was, and he stated that, “They were pretty candid and said that they did not know.” However, another “rehired” teacher recalled that it was presented as, “We would be working in conjunction with the local research university, and they would provide some extra help and support, and there would be some interaction with professors on campus and we would get to shape, to some extent, what the school would look like. So far, all that has happened is that we have nine student teachers on campus.”

When this question was asked to the new principal, he stated that, “The region’s vision of professional development was very much about the teacher pre-service piece; about developing pre-service teachers in the long term.” Even the SSTL stated, “I had trouble grasping the PDS model. There really wasn’t much evidence of it during the year.” In fact, it wasn’t until March of 2009 when some enlightenment was gained after a team of teachers and the principal traveled to Florida for the National Professional Development School Conference to discover what a middle school PDS model was. Upon their return, the team shared with the staff the team’s vision of the PDS model for the following school year.

However, this initial lack of communication caused many “new” teachers to be misguided with the concept of being hired to come to a school such as Sutter because it had something special to offer. Of interest was the virtual absence of the aforementioned
“research university” in setting the pace and framework to move this vision beyond a nebulous theory.

**Perception Of What It Takes**

The participants of the study were asked the following questions in order to determine what skills were necessary to work at a school like Sutter:

1. What skills does it take to be an administrator of a restructured school?
2. What skills does it take to be a teacher at a restructured school?

**What Skills Does It Take To Be An Administrator Of A Restructured School?**

In response to the first question, the participants from all three groups were in agreement that communication is the number one skill that an administrator should have when dealing with a school that is being either restructured or reconstituted. One “new” teacher advised that, “They should be a good listener, present a positive aspect and inform the teachers,” whereas another “new” teacher added that, “They need a sense of humor.” Likewise, a “rehired” teacher affirmed that, “Communication skills are needed in both directions, plus flexibility.” A teacher from the “not-rehired” group confirmed that, “Communication is key to making sure that staff members are informed and they need to be involved.”

However, when the question was asked of the “other” group, they focused more on people skills. One “other” participant stated that one must have, “Energy. Must be able to rally the troops, have a supporting family at home, be related as a coach, but more importantly, keep the focus on the kid issues.” While another one added, “An administrator of a restructured school must have effective skills in dealing with personnel issues and be a courageous evaluator.” Marzano (2005) once said, “Great leaders are not
mythological composites of every dimension of leadership. Instead they have self-confidence, and without hubris they acknowledge their deficiencies and fill their subordinate ranks not with lackeys but with exceptional leaders who bring complementary strengths to the organization” (p. 33).

**What Skills Does It Take To Be A Teacher At A Restructured School?**

In response to the second question regarding the skills necessary to be a teacher in a restructured school, both the “rehired” and “not-rehired” teachers’ focus was on the students. Statements such as, “must have a desire to work with kids,” “be interested in the kids,” “have a commitment to the kids,” “have respect for the students,” “have to love the kids,” and finally, “must be loyal to the kids” clearly showed where the loyalties of these more experienced teachers lay. However, the “new” teachers did not mention the students. Instead, they focused on, “setting high expectations for yourself,” “being a team player,” “needing organizational skills,” ending with “must have the ability to learn and grow as a teacher, and be able to take criticism.” According to Hall & Hord’s (2006) Concerns Theory, we all have personal concerns when first confronted with change, and this is very natural. However, they also add that, “The interventions to facilitate change need to be aligned with the concerns of those who are engaged with the change” (p. 138). The “other” group, however, could see both sides, as was evident in the following responses, “Must have the commitment to make life better for students,” and “Be well-versed in recent research. Have an open mind and practice best practices.”

These somewhat telling bits of enlightenment may lead one to conclude that maybe the former staff truly was committed to the school and students, whereas the new staff, by contrast, apparently had something to prove to the administration and that was
that they deserved to be there. Based on their interview question responses, the “new”
teachers evidently felt that they have what it takes to raise test scores, but only time will
tell whether they truly have what it takes to become part of the “Sutter” community, to be
trusted by the students and their families and, more importantly, to become part of the
rich history of Sutter Middle School.

**Round Two – The Restructured Year**

The second set of interview questions were scheduled during the last week of the
school year, June 2-4, 2009. Understandably, teachers were exhausted after a grueling
and very trying school year, and were ready for a well-deserved summer vacation. They
were also feeling positive that the preliminary results of the year’s criterion referenced
tests (CRTs) would demonstrate significant academic gains and that these results would,
to some degree, provide a testament to the administrations decision to restructure Sutter
Middle School. The preliminary data from the CRT tests, provided by the district,
showed promise for the success of the school. Each subgroup of the school had made
progress, but was it enough to meet the AYP targets of 51.7 percent proficiency in ELA
and 54.6 percent proficiency in Math? Alternatively, did they manage to decrease the
amount of non-proficient students by 10 percent and thereby qualify the school for “Safe
Harbor” and put an end to the “In Need of Improvement” saga? The official results were
not available at the time in which the interviews were conducted.
Perception Of Primary Cause

The second set of interviews sought to gain interview participants’ perceptions of the reasons behind the improvements shown by the early test results; the participants were therefore asked the following question: What do you feel was the primary cause for the academic improvement of the school: a new administration, a new staff, involvement of the university or the implementation of a stringent discipline environment?

What Do You Feel Was The Primary Cause For The Academic Improvement Of The School: A New Administration, A New Staff, Involvement Of The University, Or The Implementation Of A Stringent Discipline Environment?

The primary reason for asking this question was to get a better idea of what the entire interview sample felt was the underlying cause or reasons for the preliminary academic improvement at the school. Based on some of the responses from the first set of interviews, it was clear that the staff had mixed feelings regarding the teacher support afforded by former administrators. There were also issues relating to the dedication of the prior staff that had been long serving at the school, the university involvement was totally new, and according to several of the interviewees there had been discipline issues at Sutter Middle School that had gone unaddressed for far too long.

The results from each group were recorded as follows: The “new” teachers identified high expectations and a positive attitude for both teachers and students as the primary cause of the academic improvement, followed by the role of the administration, new teachers and discipline. The “rehired” teachers acknowledged discipline to be the primary cause of improved test results followed by the contributions of the staff as a whole, with new programs as the third factor. On the other hand, the “not-rehired”
teachers provided some of the most profound insights into the lingering problems at the school when they empathetically stated that discipline was the one and only cause that had led to the academic improvements. According to this group, discipline afforded the staff more energy and a more positive attitude, which then led to much-needed respect for the new administration. However, the members of the “other” group, which included both new and not-rehired administrators, in what may have been a self-serving effort to boost teacher morale and confidence, recognized the primary cause of improvement as the teachers themselves, in addition to the discipline. One “other” participant stated that, “Without question it was the classroom instruction, as well as having a shared vision and a no-nonsense policy on behavior.” Marzano (2003) supports this theme by stressing the following, “An emphasis on the effective management of the school in general is as important as individual classroom management, and may even be a bigger determinant of the climate of the school than the aggregate impact of the management in individual classrooms” (p. 106).

As the researcher listened to the participants share their impressions of improved changes over the year, it became apparent that discipline had been and continues to be a critical issue at Sutter Middle School. The researcher was also made aware that the new administration had been aggressively working to support and assist the teachers as they worked diligently with the student body to increase their levels of academic achievement. Even so, it became evident early on that prior administration had failed to recognize the importance of ensuring safe school and classroom environments and had allowed a relatively few wayward and persistently disruptive students to dictate the school’s
climate. These same students had also been prime contributors to the school’s attendance problems and related poor test score results.

**Perception Of How The Process Has Affected Them**

In order to determine whether the restructuring process had affected the participants either personally or professionally, the following question was asked: How has this restructuring process affected you personally or professionally?

**How Has This Restructuring Process Affected You Personally Or Professionally?**

When the researcher asked this question of the “new” teachers, they all seemed to evidence considerable pride at having made noteworthy accomplishments and participating at an inner-city school with its unique and challenging learning environment. One “new” teacher stated that, “This has been a different type of challenge. It has made me want to be a better teacher,” while another “new” teacher admitted that, “I am very thankful that I am here.” The “rehired” teachers had a more mixed set of responses to their personal and professional affects. One “rehired” teacher acknowledged that, “My view of education has definitely been affected by this ordeal.” Although another “rehired” teacher declared that, “Sutter is now making a name for itself, which personally makes me look good;” however, one other “rehired” teacher explained that “This was not a good year personally, and professionally (it was) even tougher.” When the question was asked to the “not-rehired” teachers, the researcher was expecting to be inundated with very negative remarks, when in turned out to be quite the opposite. In fact, one “not-rehired” teacher stated that, “I am not angry or upset;” another remarked, “I have just moved on;” and finally, one “not-rehired” teacher made a statement that was
quite philosophical and even prophetic when she said, “Whoever walks into that school has got to be worth their salt because Sutter is one tough school.”

When the question was addressed to the “other” group of participants, the responses tended to be varied. One “other” participant stated that, “It has reaffirmed my vision to turn this school around, it is all about the people, and not the programs.” While another “other” participant added that, “It has given me a lot of satisfaction and interest in the future.” However, one “other” respondent proclaimed that, “I am worried about the impact on other schools that this process has caused.”

**Perception Of The School’s Climate Since The Beginning Of The Year**

The restructured Sutter Middle School was about to close for the 2008-2009 school year, and, in order to paint a thick description of how the climate of the school had changed, the participants were asked the following questions:

1. How has the climate of the school changed since the beginning of the school year in regards to administrative responsiveness to teacher needs?
2. How has the climate of the school changed since the beginning of the school year in regards to attitudes of the teachers?
3. How has the climate of the school changed since the beginning of the school year in regards to attitudes of the students?
4. How has the climate of the school changed since the beginning of the school year in regards to attitudes of the community?

**How Has The Climate Of The School Changed Since The Beginning Of The School Year In Regards To Administrative Responsiveness To Teacher Needs?**

In order to determine how the climate has truly changed over the year, several different areas were investigated. In response to the first question pertaining to the administrations responsiveness to teacher needs, there was a litany of responses.
For clarification of the study, when “not-rehired” teachers were asked these questions, they were asked to share what they have heard (e.g., hearsay) since they had not been on campus all year. That being said, one “not-rehired” teacher relayed that, “The climate is a little bit better. Some of the new teachers feel supported, while other teachers are looking to leave Sutter Middle School because they don’t like the program.” Another “not-rehired” teacher exclaimed longingly, “I just wish that the administration would have supported us with discipline, etc., when I was there.”

However, the “new” teachers described the year a little differently. According to one “new” teacher, “There is a little climate change. The administration just picked really good department chairs;” while another “new” teacher stated, “I think the comfort level has definitely increased as the administration has become more responsive to the teachers.”

On the other hand, the “rehired” teachers’ responses were more varied, but also more valid because they had been employed by the school for those two school years; they were therefore able to make a better comparison. One “rehired” teacher claimed that, “I don’t think there is a huge difference. Everyone is on board; it’s just not there yet. It’s hard to tell if it is superficial or not.” One other “rehired” teacher was more ambivalent, stating that, “It definitely has changed this year; some things are better, some are not.” In addition, one “rehired” teacher remarked that, “It has been like a rollercoaster this year;” although another “rehired” teacher expressed things more positively, but still guardedly that, “I think it is good. I think it is better than it has been for a few years.”
As for the “other” group, responses were very similar. One “other” participant stated that, “I see a lot of positive. I think the climate has seemed calmer. It has been a real positive and supportive school climate.” Another “other” respondent added that, “There was frustration with technology issues and the school not being in a place with protocols, but as we forged through and kept our focus on the kids, the climate continues to grow and get better”. Hoerr (2005) remarked that, “The job of the principal is to create a school culture that transcends personality, even their own. A strong culture offers a clear sense of expectations to everyone about what is important. This includes how to teach students, as well as how to interact with other adults” (p. 33).

**How Has The Climate Of The School Changed Since The Beginning Of The School Year In Regards To Attitudes Of The Teachers?**

In response to the second question regarding the climate of the school in relation to the attitudes of the teachers, the “rehired” teachers described the year in the following typical manner:

The year began and everyone was really gung-ho. There were a lot of superstar teachers that felt they had to prove to themselves and to everyone else that they belonged at Sutter Middle School. Then reality hit of what all it takes to be a teacher of an inner city middle school with a high Hispanic and low socio-economic population. From that point there were a lot of up and down highlights throughout the year. But as a whole, there was not a lot of negativity among the staff. Teachers were really happy with the decision that they had made to come to Sutter Middle School, and they were willing to give it one more year.
As for the “new” teachers, one depicted the year in this way: “Many of us are frustrated with just trying to learn all of the new things;” however, another “new” teacher explained that, “Although some of the teachers have had problems, most of us have had positive attitudes.” While one “not-rehired” teacher had heard that the new teachers “…feel overwhelmed; however, they get whatever they want over there and that makes an impact.” Even one of the “other” group participants stated that, “Initially the teachers came in with this great optimism, but the harsh reality of what this job entails caused a lot of frustrations.” According to Hoerr (2005), “a culture that is underground can foster misunderstandings, and will surely fail to move the institution forward” (p. 33).

**How Has The Climate Of The School Changed Since The Beginning Of The School Year In Regards To Attitudes Of The Students?**

In response to the third question pertaining to the attitudes of the students, both the “new” and “rehired” teachers were in agreement that the far more stringent discipline environment influenced the students’ behavior. According to both groups the students knew from day one that if they “mess up” or stepped out of line, there would be severe consequences, which could include being expelled from the school and relocated to an alternative facility. In fact, after the implementation of the new administration’s “zero tolerance” policy on discipline and the removal of approximately 30 of the school’s worst offenders, the teachers expressed their perception that the remaining students felt safer, which increased the student’s daily attendance, which then led to a more positive attitude for teachers and students alike. The “other” group concurred with the perceptions of the “new” and “rehired” teachers; in fact, one “other” participant confirmed that, “Student behavior, both in the classroom and out on the quad has shown a world of difference.”
Another “other” respondent confirmed this, and avowed that, “Discipline was an issue when I was there, a big issue, and the kids talk about how stringent it is now.”

When the “not-rehired” teachers shared what they had heard there appeared to be a reinforcement of these actions. According to one of the “not-rehired” teachers, “Last year the students ran the school. Serious offenses were just a slap on the hand, whereas this year they are cracking down on those students and it makes a difference. The kids feel safer.” One student told another “not-rehired” teacher that, “Sutter Middle School is a place of no tolerance; they are crazy over there; they won’t let us kids do anything.”

One rather profound statement also made by one of the “other” participants, confirmed the linkage between safe educational environments and student performance when he noted that, “The students have absolutely changed. Bottom line, they have finally begun to believe that they can be successful and that makes a difference.” According to Hoerr (2005), “…if a teacher has a good relationship with students, then students more readily accept the rules and procedures and the disciplinary actions that follow their violations. Without the foundation of a good relationship, students commonly resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions” (p. 41).

**How Has The Climate Of The School Changed Since The Beginning Of The School Year In Regards To Attitudes Of The Community?**

In response to the fourth question concerning the attitudes of the community, some “new” and “rehired” teachers, as well as some of the “other” participants perceived an increase in parent awareness and involvement with the school. More parents attended the monthly Parent Advisory Committee meetings and those parents were also expressing
how happy they were. On the other hand, other “new” and “rehired” teachers stated that
the community involvement was about the same and that the parents that get involved in
the school are also the same parents of students that will thrive, no matter who teaches
them. Due to the fact that the “not-rehired” teachers are no longer in the school’s
“community,” they did not have any relevant comments to add to this question.

In order to understand a culture, one must understand the demands of the cultural
setting. The demands of roles, responsibilities, acceptable behaviors and expectations of
a group define “what counts” (Green, 1993). It appears that many of the stakeholders at
Sutter Middle School were unable to truly figure out “what counts.” For example, the
reasons why Sutter Middle School was restructured, how was it to be implemented, and
who was to be responsible for all of the aspects of it were never clearly communicated to
the entire staff or the community during the 2007-2008 school year. On the other hand,
the new administration had figured out “what counts” for the students, teachers, and the
community, and it appeared that they were making every effort to correct that mistake.

**Perception Of The School Support Team Process (SST)**

In accordance with State law, any school that has been unable to make AYP under
NCLB for four consecutive years or more will have an SST assigned to work with that
school. The SST is made up of expert educators from outside the school to help identify
factors that are impediments to improvement and to assist, support and guide the school
toward meeting the yearly annual measurable objective by increasing student
achievement. Consequently, Sutter Middle School had been assigned a SST for the past
two years.
According to the Department of Education, the SST was to meet with the school on a monthly basis. They were supposed to schedule classroom observations, establish times to meet with the administration, and work directly with the school improvement team from the school. Therefore, in order to determine the teachers’ perceptions of the SST at Sutter Middle School, the interview participants were asked the following questions:

1. What is your impression of the SST process?
2. Did the SST play a significant role at Sutter Middle School?

**What Is Your Impression Of The SST Process?**

In response to the first question pertaining to the teachers’ impressions of the SST process, the contrast in the teachers’ responses was interesting. The “new” teachers had been introduced to the SST for the first time at Sutter Middle School; however, one “new” teacher made the remark that, “I have never seen or met the team; I think they primarily visit the English Language Arts (ELA) and math classes.” Another “new” teacher stated that, “I have no impression because I haven’t heard a thing, but I think they give support to the principal.” Levine & Moreland (1990) claim that, “Outside consultants can influence the team” (p. 590).

The “not-rehired” group of teachers had the most negative impression of the SST process. One “not-rehired” teacher stated that, “They told us a lot about what we were doing wrong, but they did not give us any suggestions on how to change things.” Another “not-rehired” teacher described the SST as a “…wrecking crew. They did not listen to us. There wasn’t any feedback. It wasn’t constructive, it was destructive.” The SST was also portrayed by another “not-rehired” teacher as, “They didn’t come in with a
positive mind; they came in to find out what was wrong without offering any kind of help or alternative.”

However, the “rehired” group of teachers had a different impression. Due to the fact that these teachers were on staff during the 2007-2008 school year, they had the opportunity to work with the first set of School Support Team Leaders (SSTLs) in addition to working with the SSTL for the current school year. The biggest difference was that during the current 2008-2009 school year the school was only working with the SSTL, not the entire school support team. This was due to scheduling issues and a shortage of qualified personnel to work with the SSTL at Sutter Middle School.

In summarizing these experiences, one “rehired” teacher said that, “It was fine. The SSTL gave us feedback on our School Improvement Plan (SIP).” Another “rehired” teacher declared that, “I don’t know much about this year other than some guy sat in the back of my class a couple of times,” while another “rehired” teacher stated that, “They haven’t seen him at all this year; however, last year, there was just a tremendous amount of criticism, not a lot of solutions or suggestions.” “Judgments were fairly harsh last year, but without any way to improve,” was how another “rehired” teacher described the SST process. While responses tended to vary, overall the teachers’ impression of the school support team assigned was neither positive nor supportive.

Similarly, the “other” participants tended to be just as negative about the SST process, citing, “It is not a very successful model.” One “other” participant declared that, “They did not play a significant role; instead, they were a distraction. They brought nothing to the table.” While the current research is not intended as an analysis of the State’s SST process, it appeared obvious that SSTs assigned to this particular school
failed to provide the support intended or required. Stoll & Fink (1996) inserted that, “External change agents have an important role to play in school improvement because they have an objective point of view and not a particular ‘axe to grind’” (p. 145). Hall & Hord (2006) agree, stating, “External change facilitators, as well as supports from other parts of the system, are necessary” (p. 12).

**Did The SST Play A Significant Role At Sutter Middle School?**

In response to the second question in which the participants were asked whether or not the SST played a significant role in the improvement of the school, understandably the responses tended to reinforce the prior responses as to the effectiveness of the SST process. In regard to this question, a unanimous “No” resonated toward the SST having a significant impact on the teachers or the students; however, the majority did express that they thought the most recent SSTL did have an impact on the administration in the form of a mentor and confidant. Or, in the words of one “rehired” teacher, “The SST may have had an impact on the administration, but it did not have an impact on me.” Hall & Hord (2006) assert that, “Change processes are easier and chances of sustained success are increased as the school staff understands more about how to use external resources and as those external to the school recognize the importance of their roles in facilitating each school in achieving change success” (p. 12). This has again led the researcher to question the direction of the SST process as being either a tool of the entire school staff or as one that provides insight only to the school administration.

**Perception Of The Professional Development School**

In order for the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the Professional Development School (PDS) model, the participants were asked the following questions:
1. What types of Professional Development have taken place since the school year began?

2. How has the university participated in the execution of the PDS concept?

3. In your opinion, has the PDS model been a success this year, why or why not?

**What Types Of Professional Development Have Taken Place Since The School Year Began?**

In response to the first question the researcher was seeking to find out what type of professional development was provided during the school year, and if any of it had to do with the prerequisite of becoming a PDS. The responses received by all groups basically listed such trainings as: Smartboard, High Quality Sheltered Instruction, also known as HQSI, writing proficiency strategies, including a published author to help expand the Writing Across the Curriculum framework, additional Algebraic Thinking strategies, Gradebook, Marzano, AIMSweb, and three days of Team Building activities that took place just before school started in August of 2008.

To summarize, none of the professional development trainings that the teachers described were unique to the PDS model or to a school that is undertaking the restructuring process. After receiving the responses from the participants, the researcher felt that it was even more important to ask the next two questions.

**How Has The University Participated In The Execution Of The PDS Concept?**

With respect to the second question, the participants were asked how the university participated in any of the professional development or in the execution of the PDS concept. One “new” teacher stated, “A lot of us wondered what the university’s part with anything was this year. We have had no direction other than student teachers on
“The ‘rehired’ teachers acknowledged that statement by stating, “The University has been invisible this year, except for the student teachers.” Another “new” teacher stated that, “I was not sure what the university does, although I had met “the lady” that was involved in the program, but still not sure even what she does.” Even the participants from the “other” group said that there was very little, if any, involvement from the university.

From what the “not-rehired” teachers have heard, basically it was affirmed that there wasn’t any involvement this year from the university. One “not-rehired” teacher told the researcher that when they were interviewing for their teaching position, they were informed by the administration that the university would be involved on campus, that they would receive professional development from the university starting at the beginning of the school year, and in addition they would have the option of taking classes on campus or at the university. When the researcher spoke with the principal of Sutter Middle School on this matter he admitted that he had given them that impression during the interview process only because that was what he was hoping would happen over the year. In fact, it wasn’t until March of 2009 that the school’s administrative team even knew for sure what a Professional Development School looked like.

In Your Opinion, Has The PDS Model Been A Success This Year, Why Or Why Not?

In response to the third question pertaining to whether or not the PDS model was a success during the 2008-2009 school year, one “rehired” teacher seemed to speak for all of the participants of the study when she responded:

“I would have to say, overall, no. But I think it is due to the fact that it took an entire year for them to figure out what we were supposed to be
doing; to get a goal. All year long, I kept asking myself, what is the goal of this program; where are we headed? Some say it was to pass the CRTs, but that is not a goal. I know a few teachers went to a conference in the spring and I thought there was a little more of a focus when they returned, but then it was all – next year – next year we will do this and we will be this and that makes sense. I am just curious to see if next year, now that we finally have a plan and a focus, if there are any more changes. Whereas this year felt like everyone was doing their own thing. This year was like a whole year without a focus; instead, a new name, new people, new faces” (Interview, 6/2/2009).

Perception Described As A Metaphor

The last question that the researcher requested from the interview participants was designed to help understand the perceptions of the restructuring undertakings of a school using the conceptual framework for this study. Therefore, the following section is the response to the final question and an analysis of the four frame conceptual framework developed by Bolman & Deal (2008).

Analysis of the Conceptual Framework

According to Bolman & Deal (2008) in order for an organization to be able to transform or reorganize itself the administration of the organization must first focus on all four frames of reframing organizations: structure, human resources, political and symbolic. Basically, the more frames (i.e., lens) an organization looks through the clearer the situation or goal becomes. “Multi-frame thinking requires moving beyond narrow, mechanical approaches for understanding organizations” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p.19). Before an organization can move beyond the narrow approach and start thinking about multi-frames, they must first consider one frame at a time to determine how that frame affects their organization. With that concept in mind, the participants were asked the following question: In your own words, please provide a one-word metaphor
describing Sutter Middle School in the following areas: Structure, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic.

In response to this multi-response question, the researcher compiled the answers into Table 3 to illustrate the views of the teachers following the restructuring or reconstitution of Sutter Middle School.

**TABLE 3. Views Of The Teachers Following Reconstitution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
<th>Not-REhired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Adaptable</td>
<td>Micro-managed</td>
<td>Chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Metaphor for Organization</em></td>
<td>Evolving</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Scatter-brained</td>
<td>Dysfunctional Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>Dictatorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Resource</strong></td>
<td>Perceptive</td>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Central Concepts</em></td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>Rollercoaster</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Superficial</td>
<td>Undermining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Party line</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Healing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>Territorial</td>
<td>Dictatorial</td>
<td>Power hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Image of Leadership</em></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Undermining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>Oblivious</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Mud</td>
<td>Ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Test-driven</td>
<td>Duplicitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic</strong></td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Basic Leadership Challenge</em></td>
<td>Faith-filled</td>
<td>Refreshing</td>
<td>Challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Diamond in the Rough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Tape Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was evident from even a cursory analysis of the responses shown in Table 3 that the starkest contrast of metaphors existed between the “new” hires and the “not-rehired” participants. The “new” hires appeared hopeful and supportive, and even optimistic at what was taking place at the school, while the “not-rehired” participants responded...
almost universally as critical, and even resentful. Perhaps of greatest concern was that even the “rehired” interview participants expressed guarded optimism for the future and remained especially critical of the political and human resources aspects of this school’s evolution. Table 4 illustrates the metaphors of the “other” group as it relates to the Four-Frame model developed by Bolman & Deal (2008).

Table 4. Views Of The Others Following Reconstitution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Metaphor for Organization</em></td>
<td>Arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Resource</strong></td>
<td>Dream Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Central Concepts</em></td>
<td>Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>Assassin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Image of Leadership</em></td>
<td>Racial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic</strong></td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Basic Leadership Challenge</em></td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When looking at the responses from the “other” sample group in Table 4, it becomes clear that each participant has a true personal perspective. The researcher was concerned to hear the remarks made regarding the Political frame, where one “other” participant described the political agenda as an “assassin,” and another participant felt that the political arena within the district was “racial.” However, while these metaphors were singular in their contrast to the other comments, they were more understandable, given the confidential sources and unique circumstances.
Bolman & Deal’s (2008) four frames give leadership of organizations the freedom to respond in different ways to organizational problems. The principal of a school must develop the ability to use these multiple frames of leadership to be effective in any given situation by rethinking each frame. The study began by looking at the structural frame.

The structural frame is essentially the blueprint or strategic plan of an organization. It examines the procedures and policies of the organization. In addition, it assigns leaders to fundamental roles of clarifying goals, attending to the relationship between structure and environment, and to develop a clearly defined map of what needs to be done. Without the plan, people become unsure about what they are supposed to be doing. The result is confusion, frustration, and conflict (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Schlechty (1990) affirms that to change an organization’s structure, one must attend not only to rules, roles, and relationships but to systems of beliefs, values, and knowledge as well. Structural change requires cultural change, which is too often overlooked in the restructuring of schools because an organization needs to be “re-cultured” before it can be restructured. This is apparent by reform efforts over the past three decades, as discussed in Chapter 2, in which efforts were concentrated on changing the school’s structure, but little had actually changed in the way the system functioned or in the way teachers and students behaved. Schlechty (1990) summed it up quite well when he said, “In the school business, as in other aspects of social life, it often seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same” (p. xvii).

In the structural frame, this school received a total makeover: new principal, new administrative team, new teachers, new support staff, new discipline policy and procedures. In fact, during the 2008-2009 school year, Sutter Middle School had also
begun the year with a new mission, a new vision, and even a new goal. In addition, the school year started with a leader that was on a quest, a quest for success. His objective was to invigorate his school by setting a zero tolerance policy for discipline, as well as implementing a professional development school on his campus in conjunction with the local research university. Once the school year began, he shared his goal with his staff and invited buy-in and cooperation from all of them. He informed the students, the parents, the community and even his SSTL of his vision and his plan.

According to Bolman & Deal (2008), the structural frame examines the procedures and policies of the organization. If the structure of an organization is overlooked, the organization often misdirects its energy and resources. Structural strategies are communicating, realigning, and renegotiating patterns and policies. Bolman & Deal (2008) also state that, “Structure confers clarity, predictability and security” (p. 311).

As positive as the Sutter Middle School restructuring plan may have seemed, it did not roll out without any hitches. In fact, the school was without several critical (or needed) policies, technology protocols and best practices when the school year began. Due to the short turnover from one school administration and staff to the next, which covered a mere three months, not enough support staff or time was made available to develop all of the procedures and guidelines that most schools already have in place by the start of the school year.
TABLE 5. Teacher Views Of The Structural Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
<th>Not-Rehired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor for Organization</td>
<td>Adaptable</td>
<td>Micro-managed</td>
<td>Chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evolving</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Scatter-brained</td>
<td>Dysfunctional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Dictatorial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the responses of the participants of the study, when viewing the structural frame it appears that the district and school administration did not clearly or fully communicate the plan by defining the task, facts, and logic behind the entire goal, therefore leading to some confusion and frustration among the teaching staff and students.

TABLE 6. Other Views Of The Structural Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>“Other”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor for Organization</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By reframing the situation, the district and school administration would have had the perfect opportunity during the team-building professional development period, which was required before school started, to meet with the entire staff to roll out their plan, share their goals and vision, confess their weaknesses, provide a timeline and ask for volunteers in particular areas. Once the staff observed the administration’s genuine passion for the plan, the students and the teachers would very likely have been much more willing to become part of the team. This is the “buy-in” necessary to ensure the ultimate success of any organizational plan. However, that form of honest
communication must be constant throughout the year, otherwise the structure will break down again.

The human resource frame depicts a leader that believes people are the center of any organization. It is built on a thoughtful and shared-beliefs method of managing people. When people feel that the administration is responsive to their needs and supportive of their goals and actions, they will become committed and loyal to the organization themselves (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In fact, human resource works to keep the right people, to invest in them, to empower them, and to reward them (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Maxwell, 2005, Watkins, 2003). According to Fullan (2006), this frame aligns with the belief that a strong relationship between the teachers and the principal is what brings a cultural change and ultimate improvement in student achievement.

Prior to the 2008-2009 school year, the staff at Sutter Middle School did not feel that the district or the school’s administration was supportive of their needs. According to interview responses by “rehired” or “not-rehired” participants in particular, teachers were seeking support from the administration in dealing with discipline issues, others were pleading for instructional assistance in order to improve their own teaching abilities, as well as seeking a better understanding as to why Sutter Middle School was failing and needed to be restructured by implementing a Professional Development School model.

In Table 7 below, the research illustrates that teachers from all three groups have felt at one time or another that the district and school administration did not demonstrate a persistent responsiveness to the needs or desires of the teachers at Sutter Middle School.
TABLE 7. Teacher Views Of The Human Resource Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
<th>Not-Rehired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource</td>
<td>Perceptive</td>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Concepts</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>Rollercoaster</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Superficial</td>
<td>Undermining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Party line</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Healing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 points out the views of the “other” group’s views of the Human Resource frame.

TABLE 8. Other Views Of The Human Resource Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource</td>
<td>Dream Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Concepts</td>
<td>Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed in Table 7, the current school administration is attempting to reframe the human resource frame by dealing with student discipline issues immediately and consistently. Teachers expressed during the study interviews that the environment or climate of the school now is significantly more conducive to learning. Students are no longer in the driver’s seat; instead there is a call for high expectations and respect from teachers and students at Sutter Middle School. In addition, the administration has made it a priority to be visible and accessible to students, teachers and parents. The administrative team is also present during all passing periods, lunch hours, as well as before and after school, whereas in previous years the administration was frequently found sitting in the main office and seemed to be detached from the needs of the teachers and the students.
When looking through the political frame, politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This frame puts politics at the heart of the decision-making process. It views the organization as an arena that hosts a complex web of individual interests. A subset of the political frame is the issue of power. Pfeffer (1992) defines power as “the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they would rather not otherwise do” (p. 30).

The political frame also views authority as one form of power. Power in an organization is the capacity to get things done. It distinguishes the importance of individual and group needs, but also recognizes that minimal resources and irreconcilable differences are causes for a destructive environment, such as what happened at Sutter Middle School. Table 9 illustrates the image of leadership held by the teachers in all three groups. Based on the interview responses, the “rehired” and “not-rehired” teachers specifically view the leadership of both the school and the district in an extremely negative light.

**TABLE 9. Teacher Views Of The Political Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
<th>Not-Rehired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Territorial</td>
<td>Dictatorial</td>
<td>Power hungry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Image of Leadership</em></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Undermining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>Oblivious</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Mud</td>
<td>Ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Test-driven</td>
<td>Duplicitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, as Pfeffer (1992) stated earlier, power has the potential ability to influence behavior and, in the case of Sutter Middle School, the actions taken by the leadership to restructure the school and require teachers to reapply for their teaching
positions did not bode well with anyone on staff; in fact it created a very hostile and negative environment. Pfeffer also stated that power has the ability to change the course of events. This was evident when the district personnel came into the school to deliver their new restructuring plan to the staff and at that exact same time they effectively changed the culture of the school.

**TABLE 10. Other Views Of The Political Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Political</em></td>
<td>Assassin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Image of Leadership</em></td>
<td>Racial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 depicts the views of the other group of participants in relation to the political frame. Although this group of individuals’ responses was quite varied, they were also very personal and as noted previously, reflected a unique situation and circumstances of the individuals being interviewed. Because the political frame is about power, conflict is not seen as something that should be taken care of or eliminated right away. It is the leader’s responsibility to ensure that the power is with the right person(s) (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The district must have felt like they had put the right person in for the position to work with Sutter Middle School.

The decision to transform the school into a PDS was decided by the district administration without any form of discussion with or consideration of the school staff, the students, or community stakeholders. Consequently, the district’s actions effectively destroyed the school’s culture and any new process would have to be renewed with an entirely new staff and the building of a new culture.
Power was also described as having the ability to overcome resistance. However, there were several teachers on staff who were resistant to the changes being implemented by the school administration. According to school and district administration, it was time to make a drastic change because of the resistance that teachers on staff were demonstrating. Therefore, the decision to restructure truly eliminated that resistant behavior, while at the same time establishing a dangerous cultural paradigm based on shock, uncertainty, and fear.

Power had also been defined by Pfeffer as the ability to get people to do things they would rather not otherwise do. According to some of the interview participants of the study, there were teachers on staff at Sutter Middle School that were considered ineffective as teachers and needed to be either removed from their teaching position or provided professional development in order to improve their instructional methods in the classroom. By restructuring the school, the teachers that may not have considered transferring to another school, or retiring from the teaching profession or seeking assistance to improve their skills, found that decision determined for them by the political decision that the district had made.

In a study of the political landscape of an organization, Krackhardt (1990) stated that, “Knowing who the central, and powerful, actors are in the organization is essential political knowledge” (p. 343). This knowledge can be helpful in identifying where the subunits, interest groups or coalitions are within an organization; knowing where the coalitions are, how large they are, and where their support comes from gives one an edge in anticipating resistance and in mobilizing support for action or change. Having this form of political knowledge was crucial for the new administration at Sutter Middle
School so that they could be able to ward off any resistance or non-support with the new programs being put in place.

Pfeffer (1992) believed that, “If everyone has the same goals and shares the same assumptions about how to achieve those goals, there will be a minimum of conflict” (p. 42). Therefore, with consensus about what to do and how to do it, there is no conflict and no need to exercise influence or demonstrate the power to affect others.

The final frame or lens that Bolman & Deal define is the symbolic frame. According to Bolman & Deal (2008) the symbolic frame “centers on complexity and ambiguity, and emphasizes the idea that symbols mediate the meaning of work and anchor culture” (p. 277). The “culture” of a school is not only hard to define, but it is also difficult to identify, and even harder to change. Deal & Kennedy (1983) define culture “as the way we do things around here” (p. 4). Whereas according to Kilmann, Saxton & Seipa (1985), “culture can be defined as the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that knit a community together” (p. 5).

Prior to the 2007-2008 school year, the culture of Sutter Middle School had been described as one of “family,” according to the participants of the study. The teachers felt that they were part of the community and that they had built strong relationships and developed trust among the students and their families. In fact, many of the participants regarded their role as teacher to be “kid-serving.” One participating teacher that was “not-rehired” spoke from her new middle school: “The teachers were there for a long time. We ranged from ten years and more because we loved the school; we loved the idea of
teaching those children. We were there because we wanted to be there, not because of prestige, but because we wanted to work with that kind of student.”

During the interview process, each participant was given the definition and an example of the symbolic frame as defined by Bolman & Deal. The metaphors that are provided by the participants are their perception and description of Sutter Middle School after the restructuring process that took place during the 2008-2009 school year. The perceptions of the teachers regarding the culture of Sutter Middle School can be observed in Table 11.

**TABLE 11. Teacher Views Of The Symbolic Frame**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Rehired</th>
<th>Not-Rehired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Leadership</td>
<td>Faith-filled</td>
<td>Refreshing</td>
<td>Challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Diamond-in-the-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Soul</td>
<td>Rough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transitional</td>
<td>Tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inspiring</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the new leadership came on board, they instantly began to initiate a new mission and vision for the school. The staff was informed of the new direction that the school would take, implemented a zero-tolerance behavior program, and in collaboration with the local research university brought in nine student teachers to work with staff in all subjects and at different grade levels. Atwater & Bass (1994) stated that, “The culture of an organization can help identify the purpose of its members and reinforce the alignment around a central mission or vision” (p. 49).
TABLE 12. Other Views Of The Symbolic Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Phoenix</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic Leadership Challenge</td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
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<td>Caring</td>
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The symbolic frame of an organization is inspiration. Symbolic leaders have the ability to create a vision and then somehow persuade others to accept it. An effective leader builds a culture that positively influences teachers who, in turn, positively influence students (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). As observed by the responses from the “other” group, they, too, sensed that Sutter Middle School had a special place in the hearts of those who traveled its hallways and occupied its classrooms.

Summary

Through a process of triangulation of observations, interviews, and document collection, it became evident to the researcher that while Sutter Middle School most certainly has made progress over the last year in a number of substantive areas, we should also be mindful of the severe costs involved. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned as a result of this long and agonizing process was that basics do count. Whereas the district administration exercised its power and went to considerable lengths to restructure and reconstitute this school, underpinnings pertaining to the critical importance of leadership, enforcing more stringent discipline, and imposing greater accountability on administrators, teachers and students alike were apparently never tried prior to turning this school inside out. As a result, extreme dislocations resulted, which displaced and alienated a significant portion of the school’s former teaching staff, and to
what end? The students made AYP with the former teachers, but then failed to make AYP with the new teachers, although admittedly some special circumstances did apply.

Krackhardt (1990) noted that, “While academics may quibble over the definition of power, those actually experiencing the effects of power in the real world seem to exhibit a consensus as to who has it” (p. 343). Even so, based on the final outcome and results, one could question whether the powers exercised by the district administration in its restructuring of Sutter Middle School were judiciously administered, or whether it needed to be administered at all?

This researcher’s intent in looking at the restructuring process of a middle school was to learn from the perspectives of those who experienced first hand the restructuring process, including the positive and negative elements of the process that enhance student achievement and the unique aspects of the restructuring process that detract from the teaching profession. After observing the teachers and administrators on campus and speaking with participants through the interview process, I have been able to develop a thick description about the restructuring process at one particular middle school. The last chapter of this document will form a conclusion and offer recommendations for schools and districts when considering restructuring based on the findings from the research undertaken at Sutter Middle School.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Winston Churchill once said: “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts”.

The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2002 mandates that by the completion of the 2013-2014 school year every child, irrespective of disability, ethnicity, sex, or socio-economic status, is to be proficient and on grade level on English, reading, and mathematics academic assessments. Should a school or district unsuccessfully meet the adequate yearly progress (AYP) target as determined by standardized test scores, that school or district is considered inadequate and deemed “In Need of Improvement” with state-directed consequences and sanctions awaiting them for every year that they are so designated.

With the NCLB mandate to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students, the annual targets continue to ratchet upward and the threat of a school “on the cusp” having to be restructured becomes increasingly probable. As the possibility for school restructuring increases, so, too, do the fears, concerns, and frustrations of a school and its community stakeholders. Therefore, as more and more schools across the country are entering their fifth, sixth and beyond years of unsuccessfully meeting the school improvement requirements proposed by federal and state governments, it is imperative that educational leaders make informed decisions about the efficacy of various options existing under the NCLB guidelines.

School restructuring is a complex and all too frequently convoluted and intertwined mixture of specialized knowledge about teaching and learning, organizational structure, administrative organization, and political decisions. This tends to leave
educational leaders with the question, “How does one restructure a school while simultaneously providing maximum benefits for all stakeholders without causing fear and anxiety across the teaching profession?”

In order to answer that question, this inquiry studied four principal research questions that dealt with the restructuring of one middle school in particular. The questions were derived as a result of the case study described in Chapter 4. The research questions directed the data collection and reporting of the findings. The four relevant research questions are listed below:

1. What decisions were required, and by whom, for the planning and implementation of restructuring a middle school?
2. What is the relationship between teachers and administrators at the school due to the restructuring process?
3. What are the perceptions of the teachers and administrators in regards to the restructuring process?
4. What role did leadership play in the school being restructured?

The conclusions and interpretation of these questions typically demonstrates the complexity of the restructuring process, particularly as viewed from the perspectives of the 19 participants that were interviewed for this study.

**Execution of the Restructuring Process**

The first research question used to guide this study was: **What decisions were required, and by whom, for the planning and implementation of restructuring a middle school?**

Entering into the 2007-2008 school year, Sutter Middle School had not made AYP for four consecutive years. Based on inadequate test scores, the school was
designated as Year 3 of “In Need of Improvement” and placed in “corrective action.” As mandated by state law, the school was assigned a School Support Team (SST). However, ignoring both federal and state guidelines as to timeframes, the district administration chose to restructure the school and implement a Professional Development School (PDS) on the campus of Sutter Middle School.

Under NCLB, restructuring is not required until a school fails to make AYP for five consecutive years. During the fifth consecutive year of being deemed “In Need of Improvement” the district and the school, in collaboration, are required to develop a plan for restructuring (See Appendix A for a visual representation of this process). If the school falls short of their state’s academic targets again, that is, in the fifth consecutive year, they must implement the restructuring plan the following year (i.e., sixth year of “In Need of Improvement”).

NCLB offers districts five options for school restructuring (Refer to Chapter Two for full details of these options):

1. Reopen the school as a public charter school;
2. Replace all or most of the school staff;
3. Contract with an outside entity;
4. Turn the operation of the school over to the State educational agency; or
5. “Other” (e.g., engage in another form of major restructuring). (No Child Left Behind, Sec. 1116, 20, U.S.C.A. § 6301-6578; 2002.)

In the Sutter Middle School case study, the school district chose to implement the second option (replacement of staff) for Sutter Middle School under the NCLB guidelines. However, Sutter Middle School was not scheduled to begin the planning for restructuring until the following school year should they not make AYP during the
current school year. In other words, Sutter Middle School was restructured two years earlier than mandated by NCLB requirements. In fact, the district had several other options to choose from before making the decision. For example, the district could have provided professional development to help the teachers improve their classroom management and teaching strategies; the district could have provided additional resources to assist the school in increasing student achievement; and the district could have let the school support team (SST) monitor and assist the teachers in order to increase student achievement. Instead, the district made the decision to replace the entire administration and teaching staff, and concurrently develop a PDS model on the campus of Sutter Middle School.

Clearly the district’s premature decision to restructure the school even before the 2007-2008 test results (i.e., data) were available begs questioning. One would reasonably assume that the agents of change would hold back on undertaking the more drastic course of restructuring a school until the school had been persistently unsuccessful at making AYP for the required consecutive years and all other options had been exhausted. Sutter Middle School had just entered into its first year of “corrective action.” The school had been assigned an SST to help try to improve student achievement. The school administration had implemented three major changes (seven-period school day, two thematic communities, and mandatory technology requirements) during the 2007-2008 school year. In addition, a new, highly motivated and competent principal was assigned. And still, the district persisted in school upheaval and effectively undermined the progress that had been attained and clearly proven by test scores.
According to both rehired and not-rehired participants, the district’s objection appeared undermining. One interview respondent noted that the former principal was brought in briefly, quickly installed questionable and destabilizing administrative and academic policies, and was then allowed to transfer out just as quickly. Then a new principal arrived, highly motivated and supportive, and one month later the district announced their restructuring move. If the district was trying to “right” this wayward school, their efforts certainly appeared counterproductive.

Through interviews and observations at the school site, the first, and arguably the most powerful and pervasive theme that emerged was that of structural change and political power. The district had set its goal on changing the structure of Sutter Middle School by way of its political clout, seemingly irrespective of the potential damage to teachers, students, and academic results. The district administration had admitted that the reconstitution of the school’s staff was to be a crucial part of the restructuring effort when they noted that there were too many “negative” teachers on the school’s staff and an “attitude adjustment” was needed. As it turned out, it was these same negative teachers that earned the school a brief reprieve to the AYP clock for the 2007-2008 school year. Under the new reconstituted teaching staff, this would not be repeated in the following year. Invaluable time had now been lost indoctrinating a new teaching cadre as to new policies, objectives, and culture.

As a result, the decision that the district administration made caused confusion, fear, anxiety, and eventually resentment among stakeholders. More importantly, it caused the school to lose its new-found momentum. On August 1, 2008, Sutter Middle School and the district office were informed that Sutter Middle School had made AYP for
the 2007-2008 school year and was placed in “Year 3-Hold.” This meant that if Sutter Middle School were successful in the following school year, they would no longer be deemed “In Need of Improvement” and the NCLB clock would be reset altogether. Unfortunately, while some improvements were made in the ensuing 2008-2009 school year, the NCLB bar had been raised again, and the school found itself left behind once again.

Additionally under NCLB guidelines, when a school reaches the period when they are required to plan for restructuring (i.e., the fifth consecutive year of not making AYP), the district and school are required to seek teacher, parent, and community input and assistance with the development of the plan. Had the district withheld its decision to turn the school upside down two years early and instead completed this required communication and collaboration obligation, then very possibly a very different outcome may have resulted. As a consequence, the district created a troubling paradigm of restructuring with haste and precipitous action that left in its wake frustration, confusion, and hostility. Even rehired teachers recognized the harm that had been done, not only to those quality teachers that chose not to return to the school, but to themselves who were selected to stay and try to piece their school back together.

It is evident that it was the district that was solely responsible for the decision to restructure Sutter Middle School. While it may be true that input was provided by the former principal as to certain teachers’ reluctance to change as being a contributing factor in failure to make AYP, no data was ever provided to support this. Further, and perhaps of critical importance, restructuring could have been achieved without ever resorting to the reconstitution of the staff. It appeared that the reason for one pursuit (restructuring)
became the excuse to undertake another (reconstitution). Also, at no time did the district consult stakeholders. Furthermore, the district’s board of trustees and the state department of education were never forewarned or consulted of the district’s intended actions. The state department’s own SSTLs on site at the school were also completely caught off guard, and were equally stunned and dismayed at that April 2008 meeting when the district made its momentous announcement.

As a result, the district’s decision to restructure Sutter Middle School by replacing the administration and its staff turned out to be not only premature, but very likely jeopardized the school’s ability to maintain continuity and thereby achieve AYP in the following and most critical school year. This supports the premise that had the district chosen to only change the administration at Sutter Middle School and had then worked with the existing teachers that had been responsible for the academic achievement shown in the prior year, Sutter Middle School could very possibly now be free and clear from the required NCLB mandates.

Ironically, due to the fact that Sutter Middle School did not make AYP during the 2008-2009 school year with its newly reconstituted staff and, academic model yet to be implemented, the decision to restructure Sutter Middle School early has left the district in an awkward and embarrassing position. Since the school has now been deemed “In Need of Improvement” Year 4, NCLB guidelines mandate that the school and district spend the 2009-2010 school year planning for restructuring all over again.
Relationships of the Restructuring Process

The second research question asks: What is the relationship between teachers and administrators at the school due to the restructuring process?

The district administration made a precipitous decision on April 1, 2008 that they were convinced needed to be made in order for student achievement to improve at Sutter Middle School. The data presented to them by the school leadership identified all of the areas that were considered weak: (1) mediocre teaching was going on in the classes; (2) math was the one particular subject that students were having the most difficulty in grasping; (3) the fact that a number of teachers were still resentful about the newly implemented seven-period day; and (4) many teachers did not feel supported by the school administration.

According to both rehired and not-rehired interview participants, subsequent to the restructuring announcement, teachers were in shock, unable to stay focused, some had become physically ill, while others remained even more angry and resistant to the new structure of the school. As the shock and awe were relived during the interview process, the key elements that were conveyed over and over again were the lack of trust, the lack of support, the lack of effective communication, and the destruction of the Sutter Middle School “family” and culture.

Teachers were no longer able to trust the administration of the school, the SST, or each other. Secrets were being passed among the staff and the administration as to what might happen in the year to come, as well as who would get to stay and who would have to go, all of which exacerbated the pain, anxiety, and anticipation of both teachers and students. The cohesive structure of grade level teams that had once existed was in
turmoil. Consequently, teachers began teaching in isolation, behind closed doors, without collaboration, and were unable to trust even their fellow teammate. For some, it was just best not to say anything to anyone.

Throughout this trek toward restructuring, students and their families were also kept in the dark and were now being exposed to what appeared to be more like a daytime soap opera than the serious business of education. Rumors were spreading like wildfires. Students, exposed to the worst of the spreading rumors, were probably even more confused and anxious than the teachers because no one had taken the time to explain to them what the new vision for Sutter Middle School was. Instead, they were hearing everything second- and third-hand, and were even creating their own versions. Therefore, as evident from the interview process, trust and communication (or lack thereof) emerged as underpinning themes.

During the 2008-2009 restructured school year at Sutter Middle School, however, and with the installation of the new principal, the relationship between the teachers and the administration was much more open and positive. Even with 78 percent of the teaching staff new to the school, the new administration was striving to rebuild a professional, collaborative and cohesive relationship with and among the teachers. What was the difference between the two years? The basic difference was that during the 2007-2008 school year the school district did everything it could to flex its authority in order to demonstrate its power and control over everything at Sutter Middle School. This power was manifested, for example, by bringing in the former principal to begin the reorganization of the school, the push to manipulate, and when that did not work, to discredit and remove the state-appointed SSTLs, the momentous announcement made to
the staff as to their requirement to be “re-hired”, bringing in a new principal to complete the restructuring of the school, replacing virtually all of the core teaching staff, and finally, the implementation of an untried and undefined PDS model. All of this appeared to have been mapped out approximately two years in advance, without a word of it being mentioned to any of the stakeholders that would be affected the most.

Essentially two phases associated with the relationships emerged during the restructuring process at Sutter Middle School. The first phase began with the start up of the 2007-2008 school year. The school and district administration were enforcing new policies and protocols without a clear explanation as to why or without having a complete buy-in from the staff. The State Department was on campus with a newly assigned SST and SSTLs making evaluative remarks that were considered very negative by the staff, and as each day went by, the climate and culture of the school continued to deteriorate, resulting in a lack of communication and zero support when requested. The administration was basically absent from all teacher and student involvement, which created poor morale among all and even greater mistrust. The relationship between administration and staff had become “toxic.”

The second phase began with the hiring of the new administration. Virtually overnight, the district infused a new mandate for higher expectations for both teachers and students. Communication with all stakeholders was open, honest and continuous. The culture and climate of the school began to portray a safe learning environment that welcomed everyone who walked through its gate. With the new climate, high expectations and open communication, the relationship between administration and staff began to flourish one day at a time.
Importantly, this new and invigorating environment, with its profound extensive and pervasive beneficial effects, came solely from the installation of the new administration; it was not the result of restructuring. Arguably, this single administrative charge alone would have been sufficient to have righted Sutter Middle School and put it back on track towards academic success. It was, however, also one of the options overlooked in the “pre-restructuring” list of things to be considered first.

**Perceptions of the Restructuring Process**

The third research question asks: *What are the perceptions of the teachers and administrators in regards to the restructuring process?*

The perceptions of the teachers and administrators have been discussed in great detail in Chapter 5 through an analysis of participants’ interviews. Summarizing, the emerging themes that appeared during the interview process with participants was the importance of a strong, supportive administration and the need for a safe learning environment.

Clearly, the most important factor that supported the transformation at Sutter Middle School, once the restructuring was implemented, was the innovative and inspirational leadership exhibited by the new principal. The principal was the agent of change and its key promoter. He encouraged and supported the change process throughout the school year. Initially, he organized the development of the school mission and vision that were the foundation for all subsequent changes made. His student-centered philosophy was the basis for decision-making at the school, which in turn led to
the high expectations, zero-tolerance, and a safe learning environment for students and teachers alike.

In addition, the school principal served as a strong role model for leadership and change. The new principal gave his teachers the freedom to explore new ideas and to experiment with new strategies. Likewise, the principal made every effort to be as visible as possible on campus to give both students and teachers the comfort of knowing that he was there to support, assist, and provide them a safe learning environment throughout the school day. After his arrival, the new principal was not only the embodiment of change; he was the visible symbol of change.

The principal saw himself as a catalyst for change. He encouraged teachers to consider the idea that they could also be leaders and catalysts of change at the school via their involvement within the individual grade level teams, through their involvement with the school improvement plan (SIP), as department chairpersons and by working with student teachers in the development of the professional development school model. Interestingly, due to the prospect of the implementation of the new PDS model, teachers chose to come to Sutter Middle School because they anticipated that they would be able to try new things, to experiment, and to be creative. They wanted to work in a positive environment oriented toward supporting students. Even though some of the teachers were overwhelmed at times due to the new interactions with inner-city and low socio-economic students, attempting to implement the PDS, and the scope of the changes being implemented, they still wanted to continue working at Sutter Middle School because it was much better than any other school they had worked in and they were genuinely happy to be there.
From the very first day of school, the principal was very direct and forceful when he informed the faculty and students that he and his administrative team would not stand for inappropriate gang-related behavior, graffiti on the walls, or disrespect from either students or teachers at his school. Due to the school administration’s high visibility on campus and in classrooms, the once ubiquitous graffiti that had appeared throughout the campus virtually disappeared overnight due to a fresh coat of paint. The worst of the disciplinary problems were sent to alternative schools, and other offenders were put on stern notice. Students and teachers were beginning to take pride in their school, which provided an even safer learning environment.

One of the major problems with the restructuring of Sutter Middle School was that the district had not discussed any of their concerns or dissatisfactions with anyone other than the leadership team from the school. Withholding such valuable information could, and did seriously and adversely affect the school’s climate and culture. With respect to the restructuring process and the involvement of the district administration, even the re-hired teachers could not withhold their general condemnation. While the district was certainly the initiator of change, the process was so mishandled that it was only because the district by chance found a gifted school administrator that some semblance of order out of chaos finally emerged. A new school policy of respect for the rights and needs of the teachers was in stark contrast to the indifference and disdain evidenced by the district administration. The zero-tolerance policy set forth by the school administration was found to be highly effective in creating a safe and respectful environment in and out of the classroom.
Certainly the restructuring process evoked mixed feelings among teachers and administrators. The district administration felt restructuring was essential, and efforts at communication, data analysis, teacher support and training, and providing for a safe school environment would be wasted. Realistically, however, it appeared that what the district sought was reconstitution under the guise of restructuring.

On the other hand, teachers appeared more cautious towards restructuring. They mostly recognized that changes were needed. They generally felt, however, that change would come from within, not so dramatically from without. The surprise notification meeting in April 2008, the lack of communication as to specific reasons, the lack of any effort to isolate problem areas or specific teachers who needed additional support, and a general lack of respect for the teacher needs for training and security were viewed as the worst that restructuring curtailed. The lack of any real semblance of a PDS only added to the mistrust. Clearly, from teacher comments, it was a sweep of staff that was sought and not a rehabilitation of existing teachers on the imposition of a new school structure.

**Leadership of the Restructuring Process**

The final research question asks: **What role did leadership play in the school being restructured?**

In summary, the Gold County School District had orchestrated several seminal decisions regarding Sutter Middle School over the past two years:

**Decision One:** The district originally chose to bring in the former principal (Mr. Walker) to begin the reorganization of Sutter Middle School during the 2006-2007 school year. Without prior communication with the teachers, he initiated a seven-period
day, creating a longer school day; he created two thematic communities within the school for sixth-grade students only; and he initiated a push for technology implementation that was required use by all staff members, irrespective of individual needs. During the year-and-a-half that Mr. Walker was the school’s principal, all of these strategies and action steps were put into place, but not without considerable teacher resistance. Unknown to the staff, students, the school support team or community stakeholders, however, was that these action steps were intended to be part of a preamble to a major school reorganization and restructuring.

**Decision Two:** The former principal accepted a new position, and a new principal was assigned. Upon the departure of the former principal, the district administration gave the new principal the mandate to rid the school of a cadre of teachers who had been reluctant to support the new technology. These individuals were believed to be one of the fundamental reasons for Sutter Middle School’s failure to make AYP. The entire restructuring process was achieved by the new principal through the observation of classroom teaching methods, making evaluative decisions, hiring a whole new administrative team, including, counselors, custodial staff, secretarial assignments, and, most of all, installing an entirely new staff of teachers, with the exception of 10 mostly non-core teachers who were eventually rehired. This entire process, from the appointment of the new principal to the first day of the 2008-2009 school year, was accomplished in a period of only six months.

**Decision Three:** The new principal, with the assistance of his new staff and administrative team, was challenged to implement a new PDS in conjunction with the local research university. Due to the lack of knowledge and guidance from the
university, and the infancy of the program, the first year consisted of only nine student
teachers on campus with the promise from the university that there would be more to
come in the future for Sutter Middle School. As for the district’s decision to implement
the PDS, it too was made without any input or comment from the school, district board of
trustees, state department of education, or community stakeholders.

In fact, at the time of this study, the school district already had two elementary
professional development schools up and running. One of the elementary schools is
located on the campus of the local research university with which Sutter Middle School
would be working. According to the region superintendent at the time of the study and
under which the restructuring of Sutter Middle School took place, the collaboration with
the local university was depicted as a “once in a lifetime opportunity.”

According to the region superintendent, the concept of restructuring a district
middle school had come up in a chance conversation with the local university’s dean of
education. Therefore, it appears that the decision to restructure the school was based
more on the novelty of university collaboration rather than the needs of teachers and
students and the prospects of actually improving student performance. According to the
region’s superintendent, the decision to restructure was made in December of 2007;
however, the teachers were not informed until April 2008, and were only told that they
would have to reapply for their jobs. This tends to indicate that neither teacher needs nor
student welfare were of paramount importance in the district’s decision. The complete
and utter breakdown in district administration communication and planning were of
particular note.
The final restructuring process only achieved some semblance of success, while still failing to make AYP, by the determined and highly effective efforts of the school’s new administrative team. While irreparable harm had been done to both rehired and not-rehired teachers, the new administration at least made significant inroads to rectify the district’s utter failure to address lingering issues of failure to plan, communicate, execute, support the teaching staff, and ensure a safe teaching and learning environment.

With respect to the district’s alleged efforts to create a PDS model on the Sutter Middle School campus, a bit of cursory research on this concept showed the district’s lack of planning and commitment. Specifically, the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Executive Council and Board of Directors, in collaboration with twenty-two educators, developed nine essentials that need to be present for a school-university relationship to be called a Professional Development School (listed in Appendix G).

During this research, it became clearly evident that the nine essentials that are required for a school to be considered a PDS were not present at Sutter Middle School during the restructured year. In fact, the school was not even aware of the nine essentials that are required to be a PDS until the school administration and leadership team attended the National Professional Development Conference in Florida in late March of 2009, at least eight months into the “restructured” school year. It was also evident that the district was not aware of the PDS model requirement or otherwise they would have been conveyed to school administration in one form or another. Apparently, the PDS pursuit was an interesting concept to district administration, but little was done towards its understanding or implementation.
In conclusion, leadership was obviously of paramount importance in the restructuring of Sutter Middle School and its aftermath. But it was critical to differentiate its results. Leadership at the district level was focused on the exercise of power through an arguably unnecessary restructuring process without regard to assessment, analysis, planning, collaboration, communication or execution. Leadership at the school, however, attempted to rectify these grievous errors and omissions and put the school back on course, admittedly after having lost some academic ground, and to instill fundamentals of planning, communication, collaboration, respect and support.

Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions toward restructuring held by teachers, administration, SSTLs, and the professional development faculty in a middle school as the school was restructured and identified as a professional development school. The study at Sutter Middle School began as an investigation into the perceptions of the teachers and administrators at that school and the effect of those perceptions on the restructuring process. In order to understand how the teachers and administration responded to the restructuring, it was necessary to understand their attitudes. In order to understand their attitudes, it was necessary to understand the environment and circumstances under which those attitudes were formed. Only through a wider lens did an understanding of how the restructuring of Sutter Middle School worked – and did not work – emerge.

The significance of the findings in this study, for the professional community of educators, as well as state departments of education, centers on the stages of restructuring
and the ramification of its action on the teachers and students in our schools. The middle school in this study demonstrated what could go wrong during a school restructuring if it is not efficiently conducted. The perspectives shared by the participants of this study in Chapter Five concur that the following actions are necessary in order for a district or school to be restructured effectively: analysis, planning, collaboration, communication and support. In addition, the perspectives provided recommendations toward other options that can be considered before restructuring is necessary at all.

As a result of these findings, I recommend that if district and school administrators are considering reconstituting their staff and are given the autonomy to hire highly qualified teachers, they may want to ponder another avenue. Through classroom observations, administrators should have the skills necessary to know which teachers are exceptional; which teachers are having difficulties, but that with a little assistance and support they, too, could be highly qualified; and which teachers may need a nudge to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, instead of ridding their school of all teachers, administrators not only need to have options, but also need the responsibility of providing teachers with professional development in the areas where they appear to be having the most difficulty (i.e., instructional strategies or classroom management).

As for the second finding of this study, I recommend that if district and school administrators demand high expectations from both students and teachers, a culture and climate will prosper. When high expectations are present, teachers and students strive to do their best. Students and teachers alike feel comfortable enough to ask for help, to question the unknown, and to share their knowledge with others.
As for the third finding of this study, I recommend that if district or school administrators develop a plan or strategy, it must be well communicated, and input must be sought from all stakeholders. A well-developed plan is one in which everyone can take ownership and no teacher is left behind. The goal should be that everyone involved knows the plan thoroughly and changes may be made along the way, thereby allowing the plan to become a living document that is shared by all stakeholders.

For the last finding of this study, I recommend that if administrators create a safe learning environment, students will be able to learn, teachers will be able to teach, and the community will feel more welcome, thereby leading to more involvement in their child’s education.

Summary

Sutter Middle School proved to be an excellent example of why studies of restructuring must encompass far more than the reconstitution of the staff. At Sutter Middle School, the restructuring process was poorly executed. Confusion and lack of communication surrounded the process, creating a negative and hostile environment. Teachers, students, and the community were kept in the dark as to why the school really needed to be restructured. Highly qualified teachers were allowed to transfer to other schools within the district, or were not asked to return to Sutter Middle School before any type of true evaluation was conducted at the school to determine if it really needed to be restructured or just tuned up. Instead, the district administration made a decision based on a former administrator’s subjective evaluation and infrequent classroom observations and evaluations. From the data emerged issues with discipline, communication,
leadership and culture. The need for clarification of purpose, high expectations and consequences for student behavior, and strong instructional leadership became evident. The literature has well documented how schools have struggled to reshape their traditional practices into successful schools and the difficulty with which schools have addressed organizational change. Sutter Middle School’s experience was enlightening, but probably not unexpected, given the district’s failures in the areas of comprehensive analysis, assessments, communication, and the follow-through on the PDS concept school. Given these failures and the need now to restructure this same school once again, perhaps these lessons have now been learned.

Further Research

From the findings presented in this study, it is hoped that the school restructuring research might examine how schools can improve instructional leadership skills, build communication and trust, and reshape practices in order to move effectively and permanently from persistently failing challenged schools to annually successful schools, and very possibly how these might be attained without restructuring or reconstitution.

Moreover, it is imperative that change at the district level needs to have a wider lens to include other players: the school community, consisting of the teachers, the students and their parents, as well as the board of trustees and the state department of education. In addition, it would be beneficial to look at the role of the district office and how it can support the restructuring process before and after the decision to mandate restructuring has been made.
In conclusion, as part of an effective and dynamic educational process, we need to better understand and empathize with the process by which NCLB recommends and implements necessary changes, how it affects those who are required to make the changes, and what the results have been based on the approaches being used. We also need to better understand the psychological dimensions and organizational issues of the constituents involved in, and affected by, a district’s decision to restructure a school.
APPENDIX A

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND CONSEQUENCE FLOW CHART
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) CONSEQUENCE FLOW CHART

**FIRST YEAR**

Does Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

**STATUS:** "Watch List"

**Action Steps:**
- None

**SECOND YEAR**

Makes AYP in all indicators

**STATUS:** None
- Action Steps:
  - None

**ACTION STEPS:**
- [1] School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- [2] Notification to Parents
- [4] School Choice
- [5] Title I Funds for Professional Development
- [6] Supplemental Educational Services
- [8] Prepare Restructuring Plan
- [9] Implement One of Several Options:
  - (a) Any other major restructuring of the school's governance
  - (b) Operation by outside organization
  - (c) Reopen as charter school
  - (d) Turn over to State
  - (e) Replace staff

**THIRD YEAR**

Makes AYP in all indicators

**STATUS:** School Improvement Year 1 "Hold"
- Action Steps:
  - Same as School Improvement Year 1

**FOURTH YEAR**

Makes AYP in all indicators

**STATUS:** Out of School Improvement
- Action Steps:
  - None

**FIFTH YEAR**

Does Not Make AYP in the same indicator

**STATUS:** Corrective Action (School Improvement Year 3)
- Action Steps 1-7

**SIXTH YEAR**

Does Not Make AYP in the same indicator

**STATUS:** Restructuring Plan Implementation (School Improvement Year 5)
- Action Steps 1-6 plus 2

**NOTE:**
The NCLB Act of 2001 mandates that Title I schools failing to make AYP for 2 consecutive years in the same indicator must be identified for federal school improvement (Year 1).

Title I schools identified for federal school improvement that make AYP in the same indicator are "frozen" in their current status.

Title I schools identified for federal school improvement must make AYP for 2 consecutive years in the same indicator in order to be removed from such status.

Created by Susan A. Moolden
Doctoral Candidate, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2008
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Purpose of the Study
You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore first-hand knowledge, perceptions and insights into the strategies and methods that went into implementing a major restructuring plan on the campus of one middle school in Southern Nevada. The study will address detailed planning efforts, replacement of administration and staff, implementation of a Professional Development School, and final outcomes as a result of the restructuring process.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an adult that has either worked or is currently working at Fremont Middle School, or you are currently working with the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and are affiliated with the Professional Development School at Fremont Middle School.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:
You will be interviewed two times by myself, Susan Moulden, the investigator of the study, over a twenty-week period from February 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009. The interviews will be conducted at a place of convenience and privacy based upon your preference and at times that are most convenient for you.
Each interview will be conducted with the distinct purpose of informing the theory. Both interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. The proposal of the study will be given to you in writing, as well as read to you by myself. At that time, you will be asked to fill out a participant profile, create a pseudonym for yourself, and provide some demographic data.

The interviews will take place over a twenty-week period to provide enough interaction to adequately discuss your perception of your experience at Fremont Middle School before and after the restructuring process. Each interview will last approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be audio taped to ensure that information obtained is accurately reported.

During the first interview, you will be asked questions regarding your perception of your experience at Fremont; your perception of the impact that restructuring has had on the school and stakeholders; and your perception of the restructuring process. An example of a question that may be asked is, “Has the climate of the school changed since the restructuring took place at Fremont? If so, how has it changed?” The investigator will ask you approximately 7 questions per interview. At the completion of the first interview, you will be asked to keep the experience confidential and reminded that there will be a follow-up interview in approximately 2 months time. A transcript of the first interview will be mailed to you so that you can see what was said prior to the second interview.
The second interview will be scheduled 2 months later, after the researcher has reviewed the data in more detail. This will also allow you time for reflection on your experience with the restructuring process and for the researcher to collect more data. It is anticipated that the second interview will take no more than 1 hour. The possible questions for the second interview will vary based upon the first interview. It is expected that some of the questions might be:

1. Have you experienced any stress due to the restructuring process? If so, how?
2. Has your self-esteem or self-concept changed due to the restructuring process? If so, how?
3. How has your teaching or administrative duties been affected due to the change at Fremont?

Should you begin to show signs of emotion during the interview process, the researcher will provide time and opportunity for participants to discuss their feelings.

In addition to the interviews, you will be asked to meet with the researcher approximately 2 weeks after the last interview. During that meeting, the investigator will provide you with an update regarding the status of the study and plans for data analysis. All participants will be given the opportunity to review all transcripts of the interviews and will have the option of deleting any portion of the transcripts that they are not comfortable having printed in the study. The participation of the entire study will be approximately 3 hours total.
**Benefits of Participation**

There may not be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, I hope that exploration of perceptions may provide both a description and understanding of your experience while going through the restructuring process. Results may open the door to further research that may improve the quality of restructuring practices in the future.

**Risks of Participation**

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. During this study, you may experience strong emotions as a result of topics discussed during the interviews, which will include your perceptions of your quality of teaching and the impact of restructuring on your life. The investigator will be sensitive to those responses and will be prepared to provide you with the time and opportunity to discuss your responses. In addition, if you desire, you will be provided with a list of counselors in the community as a resource for addressing concerns.

The investigator of this study has a unique perspective because of her position within the Nevada Department of Education. Although she interacts frequently with teachers and administrators, she does not evaluate the teachers in any manner. Your decision to participate in this study will have absolutely no consequences that will be detrimental to your employment. In addition, if you choose to participate in this study, all statements made during the aforementioned interviews will be maintained separately from the school district or University records.
Cost/Compensation

There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 3 hours of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Gene Hall, Principal Investigator, at (702) 895-3441, or Susan Moulden, Investigator, at (775) 741-6867. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (702) 895-2794.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.
Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

____________________________________  ____________________
Signature of Participant        Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Audio Taping:
“I agree to be audio taped for the purpose of this research study.”

____________________________________  ____________________
Signature of Participant        Date

Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approval Stamp is missing or is expired.
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT LETTER
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPATION LETTER

Date:
To:
Re: Participation in Educational Leadership Research Project at UNLV

My name is Sue Moulden and I am conducting a research study about the restructuring process that has taken place at Fremont Middle School. More specifically, I am interested in how you perceive the events that took place before and after the restructuring took place, in addition, how the Professional Development School is being implemented.

As an administrator at Fremont Middle School, you could be contributing significantly to the study by your participation by assisting in learning how the process impacted you, as well as other stakeholders.

I will be planning to do research during the month of February and again in June 2009. Your time commitment will be approximately a maximum of two hours. There will be two separate interviews, which will be audio-recorded, and transcribed, and shared with you for your records.

I will be happy to meet with you at a place and time of convenience; in addition, I will keep your information and name in confidence. No one will see the data except for my Committee Chair and me.

Please let me know if you are willing to be interviewed, or have more specific questions. You can reach me via email at sue.moulden@gmail.com.

While there is no compensation offered in cash for your participation, you will be contributing to the body of knowledge about the restructuring process and the Professional Development School. Therefore, upon completion of the research, I will be pleased to share the results with anyone, individually, or as a group, who is interested in my results.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sue Moulden, (775) 741-6867 (cell phone)
APPENDIX D

PARTIPANT PROFILE FORM
APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT PROFILE FORM

Participant Profile

Your Pseudonym (or fictitious name) for use in this study in order to keep your data confidential:

Your gender (please circle): M F

Your age (please circle):
- 20-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 61-65
- 66 or over

Geographic place of birth:

Educational background - highest level (please circle):
- High School
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree

Current Profession (general):

Current Job Title:

Past Professional Experience:

(Please turn paper over to give me your real name)
Actual Participant Name:
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS #1
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS #1

1. Can you tell me some interesting things about yourself related to your career in education? (e.g., your career moves or changes, time teaching for the Clark County School District, time teaching in this particular school) How about your education? Length of time in position?

2. One of the words that are becoming very common in education and related to the NCLB AYP requirements is the phrase “restructured schools.” What is your perception of a restructured school? What do you think should happen to schools before they are required to be restructured? Is there a good side to restructuring and if so, what is it? What do you believe are the detrimental aspects to school restructuring?

3. Another term used in education is “reconstituted”? What do you think is the difference between “restructured” and “reconstituted”? What is your perception of a reconstituted school? What do you think should happen to a school before it is reconstituted? Is there a good side to school reconstitution and if so, what is it? What do you believe are the detrimental aspects to school reconstituting?

4. You are in a school that has been restructured. How would you describe the climate of the school? In your opinion, what are the feelings and attitudes of the teachers with respect to the school’s restructuring? What are your perceived feelings of the students? Compare these insights to other schools in which you have worked.

5. Have district or school administration clearly explained to you the reasons why this school was restructured? Did they explain why the school was restructured? Have they also explained the concept of a Professional Development School and why it would be beneficial to student needs?

6. In your opinion, what skills does it take to be an administrator of a restructured school? Of a reconstituted school? Of a Professional Development School?

7. In your opinion, what skills does it take to be a teacher of a restructured school? Of a reconstituted school? Of a Professional Development School?
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS #2
APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS #2

1. Now that it is known that Fremont has significantly improved in academic performance [and made AYP], in your opinion, do you feel that this was primarily due to:
   - A new administrator;
   - A new staff;
   - Involvement of UNLV and the creation of a PDS; or the
   - Implementation of a more stringent disciplinary environment?

2. In terms of how this process has evolved and the fact that the school has improved academically [and made AYP], how has this affected you personally or professionally, or both?

3. Based on your experience or from what you have heard, due to the fact that the school has improved, how has the climate of the school changed since the beginning of the school year in regards to the:
   - Administrative responsiveness to teacher needs;
   - Attitudes of the teachers;
   - Attitudes of the students; and
   - Attitudes of the community?

4. Based upon your involvement before, continuing, or new at Fremont PDS, and considering the academic improvement attained by the school this year, what is your impression of the School Support Team process? Do you think that the school could have made these changes on its own, or did the SST process play a significant role in these achievements?

5. If you thought that the SST process was effective, what was the single most important element that assured the school’s success, e.g., strong SSTL, principal involvement, cooperation by all members, commitment by all members?

6. What types of Professional Development have taken place at Fremont since the school year began? How has UNLV participated in the execution of this Professional Development School concept? In your opinion has the PDS model been a success this year and why or why not?

7. In your own words, please give me a metaphor for Fremont in the following areas:
   - **Structure**: architect of the organization, rules, roles, goals, policies (e.g., structured, autocratic, dictatorial, consensual, professional, chaotic, etc);
- **Human Resource**: understanding people, their strengths, weaknesses, reason, emotion, desires, fears (e.g., supportive, cooperative, understanding, indifferent, undermining, cruel, etc.);

- **Political**: competitive arenas, competing interests, struggles for power & advantage (e.g. power, democratic, autocratic, duplicitous, undermining, etc.);

- **Symbolic**: meaning and faith, ritual, ceremony, story, play, culture (e.g., refreshing, rewarding, inspirational, challenging, etc.).
APPENDIX G

NINE ESSENTIALS REQUIRED TO BE A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL (PDS)
APPENDIX G

NINE ESSENTIALS REQUIRED TO BE A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL (PDS)

(1) A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;

(2) A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators and that embraces their active engagement in the school community;

(3) Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;

(4) A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;

(5) Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;

(6) An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;

(7) A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;

(8) Work by college/university faculty and P-12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and

(9) Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures (NAPDS, 2008).
## APPENDIX H

### ACADEMIC ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Average Daily Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIR</td>
<td>American Institute for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMO</td>
<td>Annual Measurable Objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>AYP</td>
<td>Adequate Yearly Progress</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEP</td>
<td>Center on Education Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Criterion-Referenced Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESEA</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRL</td>
<td>Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQSI</td>
<td>High Quality Sheltered Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSPE</td>
<td>High School Proficiency Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualized Education Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Agency (e.g., a school district)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>Limited English Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPDS</td>
<td>National Association of Professional Development Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASSP</td>
<td>National Association of Secondary School Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCES</td>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind (Act)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Professional Development School</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>State Education Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Supplemental Education Services</td>
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<td>SIP</td>
<td>School Improvement Plan</td>
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<td>SST</td>
<td>School Support Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSTL</td>
<td>School Support Team Leader</td>
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<td>SWP</td>
<td>School-Wide Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Targeted-Assistance School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL IRB-EXPEDITED REVIEW APPROVAL NOTICE
APPENDIX I

UNLV
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:
Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation, suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: December 24, 2008
TO: Dr. Gene Hall, Educational Leadership
FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Paul Jones, Co-Chair
Protocol Title: The Restructuring of a Middle School in Southern Nevada: A Naturalistic Inquiry
Protocol #: 0811-2921

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is December 3, 2009. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:
Attached to this approval notice is the official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be any change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a Modification Form through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond December 3, 2009, it would be necessary to submit a Continuing Review Request Form 60 days before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Murphy, J. (1994). Redefining the Principalship in Restructuring Schools. National


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Bachelor of Arts, Physical Education, 1981
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Phi Kappa Phi, 2009

Dissertation Title:
A Naturalistic Inquiry of the Restructuring of a Middle School: An NCLB Mandate

Dissertation Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Gene E. Hall, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Robert Ackerman, Ph. D.
Committee Member, James Hager, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, LeAnn Putney, Ed. D.