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The Adoption Of A Whole School Reform Model: The Influences On Teacher Consensus

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The Adoption of a Whole School Reform Model:
The Influences on Teacher Consensus

By

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Doctor of Education

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Landmark personal accomplishments are very seldom completed just through one's personal commitment and tenacity. Although those traits are important, the support of other people is usually the difference in being able to "get over the top."

Pushing me to higher levels, always when I needed it, were my loving mother and father. There were times when it was debatable as to whether I would graduate from high school. Through their pushing, while at the same time supporting, caused me to keep going even when things were tough. Eventually, I learned to value that persistence.

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I would like also to thank my daughter Meredith and my son Matthew. They were always there cheering me on.

Finally, my sincerest thanks to the four members of my committee. I could not have had four people who were more encouraging, wise and supportive. Dr. Elaine Walker, my mentor, helped me navigate the morass of the dissertation process in the land of Academia. Dr. Soundaram Ramaswami, my critical friend, dedicated hours to teach me about quality research. Dr. John Collins, my supporter, guided me through the rapids of technology. And finally, Dr. Lew Smith, my friend and colleague, always teaches me more about school change each time we get together. Thank you all!
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

When the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a new layer of importance was placed onto the work of American schools for reasons that had not been prevalent in the public light:

We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (p. 1)

This federal report clearly sounded the alarm to provide a new beginning and context for focussed and concerted efforts for school reform. Through the recommendations of this report, all Americans including parents, teachers and public officials were urged to participate together to bring about school reform.

The recommendations were very clear as to what needed to be done. The report stated that changes needed to be made not only immediately, but must be continued, in order to ensure continuing improvement. Its recommendations included:

1. Student Content Coursework (to include required studies in English, mathematics, science, social studies and computer science as well as the *New Basics* to include requirements in a foreign language as well as the Arts).
2. Renewed Standards and Expectations to adopt more rigorous and measurable standards (to increase college entry).

3. Increase the School Day/Year (to expose students to extended instructional time including the possibility of a 200 – 220 day school year, 7 hour school days, as well as more stringent requirements for student behavior, attendance, and homework).

4. Increased standards and requirements for teacher preparation with rewards through increased teacher salaries; the establishment of eleven month contracts; initiation of an alternate route system of certification to secure people from high need fields into teaching.

5. States, school districts along with politicians, from governors to school board members, needed to assume the primary responsibility for not only the governing and leadership to implement the report’s recommendations, but to establish fiscal planning and distribution that would support this implementation for all students, regardless of race, socioeconomic background, or special educational need.

Although the Elementary and Secondary Education Act - Title I had initiated some actions to address the war on poverty in the mid 1960’s to assist and improve the teaching and learning in schools that served low income and low achieving populations, *A Nation at Risk* sounded an alarm that was to be heard across the country regardless of socioeconomic background.

This report opened the gates to a number of subsequent reports throughout the remainder of the 1980’s that focussed largely on poor curriculum and low student expectations as the predominant reasons for underdeveloped knowledge and low skill levels (Clements, 2000). Yet these reports had little real impact. Firestone, Rosenblum and Bader (1992) examined government- initiated school reforms across six states from 1983 – 1990. They found that
typical policy implementation usually resulted in one agency having greater influence over other agencies directly below them, “that is, from federal and state governments to districts, schools, and ultimately classrooms. The best that can usually be expected of efforts to get districts to implement state and federal policy is mutual adaptation through which central expectations adapt to local preferences at least as much as the opposite occurs. High quality implementation is the exception” (p. 256). They found that authoritative direction followed by responsive compliance seldom occurred. Effective implementation was even more of an exception.

_A Nation at Risk_ (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) marked the beginning of a formal involvement of government into the oversight and the building of accountability systems into education. From this report, school districts reacted in a variety of ways to implement programs to address this political reaction to the perceived low American standing among the other global industrialized societies. Because this federal initiative applied pressure to local education agencies without providing assistance and support, it actually provided more harm than good to further real educational change and improvement. School systems in attempts to react, adopted a variety of programs to respond to the recommendations made in these reports. The effect in many cases lead to creating overload and fragmentation of system personnel and financial resources (Fullan, 2001).

The only real impact that government can have is to assert the adoption of specified structural changes. Elmore, as summarized in Fullan (2001), posits that such changes typically have little impact on the activity of an organization and address neither content nor the quality of instruction in schools. Firestone, Goertz and Natriello (1997) concur with this line of thought with limits that are possible through state directives for funding allocations, “decisions about what to teach and how are likely to be the missing factors that determine how well teachers and
administrators contribute to student learning, and these decisions are operationalized in large measure through the provision of materials and professional development” (p. 13). Numerous states have had attempts at such interventions but with minimal success. Linda Darling-Hammond, from the research conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, points out that only two states (Connecticut and North Carolina) undertook substantial and systemic investments in teaching during the 1980’s. Over time, both have become among the states reporting the highest levels of student achievement even with significant high poverty student populations.

Fullan (2001) summarizes the impact of state-mandated reforms that are based purely on compliance, “in complex systems heavy-handed accountability schemes can never work because they cannot cause the beliefs and behaviors necessary for success” (p. 222). Experiences documented in a case study analysis by Susan Lusi (1997) of the State Departments of Education in Kentucky and Vermont, validate this conclusion. She asserts that imposing accountability-based reforms cannot be successful due to a lack of direct control as well as the physical distance between the government agency and the school practitioners.

The State of New Jersey Context

As part of ongoing legal actions that began in 1981 between the State of New Jersey and the Education Law Center representing some 20 children attending school in four urban school districts (Camden, East Orange, Irvington and Jersey City) to gain their constitutional right to a “thorough and efficient” education, the Abbott v. Burke decisions have been rendered. Program mandates from the New Jersey Supreme Court have addressed educational funding parity solutions that include: full-day kindergarten; half-day preschool for all 3 and 4 year olds; standards-based reform; on-site health and social service referrals; security programs, basic
technology programs; school to career programs with dropout prevention and alternative education programs; after-school, summer, and enriched nutrition programs; adequate school facilities; school-based management and budgeting; and whole school reform (Education Law Center, 1998).

It is specifically this mandating of whole school reform upon which this study is based. As indicated through references earlier in this chapter, mandating change, particularly where that involves school reform has generally not had a very positive history. As indicated in the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future reference, some states have begun over time to show some progress where there has been a commitment to build capacity. In a personal conversation with Michael Fullan (personal communication, March 9, 2001), he reflected, “some states are beginning to understand what role it can take to initiate and support change. Through the directions being taken here, it is apparent that New Jersey is not one of them.”

Through the Abbott v. Burke V decision in 1998, the court mandated that the some 450 schools in the 30 Abbott Districts adopt a comprehensive school reform model. The array of models from which schools had opportunity to adopt were cited in the federal Comprehensive School Reform Development program of 1998 as specified in the Obey-Porter Amendments to the 1998 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Act. Additional federal funding would be provided to local education agencies where there was a school student population that reported 50% or more free and reduced lunch services. From the New Jersey court, schools were directed to a “presumptive model,” that being Success for All as developed by Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden of Johns Hopkins University. Schools were encouraged by the New Jersey State Department of Education in the first 2 years to adopt one of four other reform models which included Accelerated Schools, Comer School Development Program, Community for Learning,
or Modern Red Schoolhouse. In the third year of implementation (2000 - 2001), schools moved increasingly toward adopting a wider range of models from the 17 that were listed in the 1998 Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program. As schools moved toward the adoption of these other models, the New Jersey Department of Education required the elementary schools to justify why the presumptive model was not appropriate for their school population. The process of model selection and commencement of implementation was to be under way for all schools within the 3-year time frame from 1998 to 2001.

For each of the school reform models, their developers had built in a process of compulsory agreement among school faculty members indicating what they believed to be a common and shared vision. The actual statistical requirements varied from model to model. In the case of Success for All, teachers in any given school had to participate in a secret ballot vote that was sent to the Success for All Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland for counting. Eighty percent approval is required to be considered eligible for participation in the model. Other model implementation requirements vary from the presumptive model. Modern Red Schoolhouse also requires an 80% secret ballot approval. Accelerated Schools requires an approval vote of 90% from the teaching faculty along with community representatives. While these models require a minimum vote, the Comer School Development Program and Community for Learning each require a statement of consensus and commitment for their models. Additionally, a district commitment of support must be made through the establishment of a district steering committee and a district leadership team with a project director, respectively.

The notion of vision is intended to inspire team members through providing the conditions enabling participants to meet psychological and emotional needs. Additionally an effective vision can also direct decision-making and provides purpose for all members of an
organization. Bennis and Nanus (1985) surmise that the lack of such vision contributed to the declining effectiveness of many organizations during the 1970s and 1980s.

In the study of effective organizations, it has become clear that one of the central traits of that effectiveness, results from having all members of that organization sharing a clear sense of what is to be accomplished (Peters & Waterman, 1982). In the last 20 years or so, this focus has been translated to the establishment of vision through the organizational adoption of strategic planning. The field of education later followed this corporate trend.

The mere establishment of a vision however, is not enough to guide employees' work and ensure that individual needs are being met. Getting staff to commit to a defined vision is essential if there is to be a spirit of energy, excitement and passion. Senge (1990) suggests that commitment is a state that most organizations are unable to attain. He posits that what passes for commitment 90 per cent of the time is actually compliance.

Compliance can result in people going along with a vision but seldom causes them to give of themselves to the point of "giving whatever it takes" or "going the extra mile."

Compliance, according to Senge, can be broken down into 3 levels or degrees:

1. Genuine Compliance: where one sees benefit to the vision and does everything expected of them and more,

2. Formal Compliance: where one can see benefit to the vision and does what is expected, but nothing more,

3. Grudging Compliance: where one does not see benefits of the vision but does enough of what is expected to retain one's job.
A clear distinction is made between compliance and commitment. When one is committed, they "truly want the vision" (p. 221). When one is in a state of compliance, the vision is merely accepted.

In envisioning the possibilities for a shared vision in the realm of school reform, Senge et al. (2000) remind us that bodies of authority cannot dictate that people will become inspired or engaged in improving schools. At best the only outcome will be to drive people to a level of compliance, rather than building either individual or shared commitment. Fullan (1993) reinforces this thinking: "you can’t mandate what matters" (p. 22). He posits that the only changes that can be mandated are those that do not require thinking or skill, and those that can be easily monitored and observed. In educational reform however, changes require new skills, behaviors, beliefs and/or understandings. To attain the complex goals that are required to reform schools, new skills, creative thinking and committed actions are all essential if the identified changes are to actually occur (McLaughlin, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, the study was to analyze the considerations and decision-making processes used by urban New Jersey teachers in selected schools to adopt a particular model of whole-school reform. These models from which teachers and schools could select, were possibilities made available by the New Jersey Department of Education in response to the New Jersey Supreme Court’s decision (Abbott v. Burke V) to mandate whole school reform. In order that a school was able to proceed with the adoption and implementation of a selected whole school reform model, an indication of consensus had to be completed. As required by the model developers and the State of New Jersey, a vote involving the teaching staff
from each school had to be taken to demonstrate this consensus. The outcome of such a vote needed to indicate 80% or more (depending upon the reform model) of the faculty was in favor of adopting a specific model. The second purpose of this study was to determine if consensus was reflected by a voting process that yielded an 80%+ affirmative vote.

Although there has been increasing amounts of research conducted on the implementation and effectiveness of whole school reform and the specific models, there has been very little on the model selection process and in particular the consensus or buy-in by teaching staff members.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What was the extent of teacher involvement in the whole school reform model selection process?

2. What were the personal and organizational forces that influenced teachers to vote for the adoption of a specific whole school reform model?

3. What role was played by the principal in reaching a consensus vote to adopt a particular model?

4. To what extent did teachers feel that they had enough information to make an informed decision about selecting their whole school reform model?

5. What was the level of satisfaction of both the teachers and principals in the whole school reform model that was ultimately selected?

6. What would teachers and principals recommend be done differently, given their experiences, in the selection and adoption of a whole school reform model?
Definitions

Whole school reform. Whole school reform was defined as “a comprehensive approach that not only alters the way in which decisions about education are made, but also affects the culture of the entire school, including instruction, curriculum and assessment” (Abbott V, 153 N.J. at 494). The “whole school” aspect is addressed specifically, “driven by student and school needs, and assured by school-based management, all programs are integrated throughout the school as a total institution, instead of adding reforms and programs piecemeal” (Abbott V, 153 N.J. at 494).

The term ‘whole school reform’ appears in the literature and in this study and is used synonymously with school-wide reform, comprehensive school reform and design-based reform.

Developer. Developer refers to the originator(s) of each of the whole school reform designs and the support staff within their respective organizations to support the work of schools in their implementation of these models. Berends, Bodilly and Kirby (2002) describe the mission of these developers in the reform of schools. “The unique aspect of design-based assistance is the commitment of the designs to provide ongoing assistance to provide a variety of services to further implementation and the transformation of the whole school – its organization, curriculum, instruction, and professional development of staff” (p. 13).

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study included a relatively small sample of the Abbott District schools that were mandated to select and adopt a whole school reform model. This study
engaged 10 out of the 434 Abbott District schools. Further, these 10 schools were located in five different districts. There are a total of 30 Abbott Districts in the State of New Jersey.

Permission to access schools in each of the districts was requested through the respective Superintendents. Each Superintendent determined the schools from his/her district in which the study could take place, rather than through a random selection process.

Although all of the teachers and principals who were interviewed for this study had been actively engaged in the information gathering about the reform models, and then ultimately voted to adopt their chosen model, each had to recall the circumstances and conditions that were prevalent at that time. Depending upon the cohort in which a school selected their model and began implementation, the timeframe varied: Cohort I schools began in 1998 – 1999; Cohort II began in 1999 – 2000 and Cohort III began in 2000 – 2001. These differing starting points for participants may have had an impact on their ability to accurately recollect details. This could be more true in the case of principals since they engaged in a one-on-one interview. Since the teachers participated in a group interview, there was a tendency for them to correct colleagues’ inaccuracies and supplement details for each other’s recollections.
Chapter II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of literature for this research is developed within the context of three interdependent areas of study: the initiation of improvement through whole school reform models; a historical perspective of urban school legislation in New Jersey leading to mandated whole school reform policy; and the processes of teacher decision-making within a context of school reform. The focus of this research examines the engagement of all teachers to not only participate, but to commit to specific practices of a school reform design or model. This concept of an approach that involves the whole school has been popularized over the last decade. Such inclusionary thinking evolved from approaches to school reform that engaged factions of school faculties or interested participants. Generally from such reform initiatives, outcomes were not only inconsistent, but in some settings actually caused some fragmentation and dissention within the school’s culture.

The second section of this literature review examines the evolution of how the State of New Jersey, in its pursuit of a formula for equitable funding for special needs school districts, came to mandate whole school reform for 30 school districts. Using incentive funding from the U.S. Department of Education, New Jersey is the first state to impose school reform models as an intervention to improve outcomes in low achieving districts. These 30 districts generally are urban, have the lowest socioeconomic levels in the State and as districts, and yield the lowest levels of student achievement. These districts have been collectively embroiled in litigation with the state of New Jersey since 1990 in the school finance reform case ofAbbott v. Burke, 1990.
Section three of the review examines the role of teachers in the process of change and the adoption of school reform initiatives. Through a focus upon teacher values, attitudes, and beliefs insights into the process of teacher decision-making can be acquired in an environment of mandated change. The effectiveness of any school reform initiative to positively impact student achievement is contingent upon the broad support and commitment of teachers to implement an innovation that has through research, shown to be effective. It is for this reason that the attainment of this broad support is built in to all of the mandated whole school reform models by their developers. Such support is secured through engaging teachers in a process of voting in the hopes of getting an indication of individual personal ‘commitment.’ This research analyzes and examines the strength of that ‘commitment.’

Improvement Through Whole School Reform

"Whether we like it or not, we are beginning to see that we are pitted against the world in a gigantic battle of brains and skill, with the markets of the world, work for our people, and internal peace and contentment as the prizes at stake" (Cubberly, 1909, p. 78). From Cubberly’s perspective from some 92 years ago, the success of schools would have deep-rooted implications into this country’s economic success. In attempts to maximize the economic impacts of schooling, there have been ongoing attempts to improve and reform this institution by government, the public and internally by the educators themselves.

School reform has generally been initiated as “planned efforts to change schools in order to correct perceived social and educational problems” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 4). Periods of school reform have largely been motivated by moral or economic concerns about society. The
National Commission on Excellence in Education’s *A Nation at Risk* (1983) is the most recent example of a wide-ranging national impetus for school reform resulting from such a societal concern. Due to a slowing U.S. economy and increasing levels of foreign economic competition, *A Nation at Risk* attempted to set conditions to enable America to regain its competitiveness:

> Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technology innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. (p. 5)

The policy-makers have dominated school reform initiatives since 1960. The federal government has intervened in the practices of schools by means of a “reform through policy” approach. These policies are driven by two basic assumptions: firstly, there are some basic defects in the overall system of education that can be corrected by implementing some specific policies, and secondly, better classroom practices will result and greater levels of national uniformity will be attained with increasing support by administrators and organizational structures (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988).

The initiation of whole-school reform as an educational trend dates back to April 1991 when President George H. Bush announced the establishment of a new private sector corporation to redefine schooling. This entity, The New American Schools Development Corporation, was charged with the revision of how this country had traditionally organized its schools. The president announced:

> The architects of the New American Schools should break the mold. Build for the next century. Reinvent-literally start from scratch and reinvent the American school. No question should be off limits, no answers automatically assumed. We’re not after one single solution for every school. We’re interested in finding every way to make schools better. (U.S. Department of Education, 1991, pp. 54-55)
Such redesign of schools is not new. Plato spoke about the "ideal school" and continuously since then, variations have been proposed and attempted. In this last decade, the concept of establishing a model that shows success for students in a given environment (i.e. urban), can then have its components quantified in order to replicate it elsewhere.

The New American Schools Design Corporation offered requests for proposals (RFP's) to identify new models for schooling that would accomplish three goals: first: should enable all students to achieve world-class standards in core academic subjects; second, must operate within existing school budgets after start-up costs; and third, must be comprehensive across a school's systemic organization (Traub, 1999, p. 6). The RFP stated that the corporation was looking for designs that defined a new kind of American school where:

1. Assumptions about how students learn and what students should know and be able to do, are completely reexamined;

2. Visions of the nature and locations of schools are reconsidered; and

3. The manner in which communities create, govern, and hold their schools accountable is redesigned (New American Schools Design Corporation [NASDC], 1991, p. 9).

The RFP also called for designs that were to integrate all elements of a school's life; they were to be for whole schools, not just a single grade or program within a school. They were to be "benchmarked" against demanding goals and achievement standards; and the designs were to be for all students, not merely for those who were most likely to succeed (NASDC, 1991, pp. 20-21).

The organization received almost 700 proposals. From those submissions, eleven were awarded funding for development and testing in June 1992. Of the original 11 models, seven were able to function productively. They included Co-Nect Schools; America's Choice School
Design; Urban Learning Centers; Roots and Wings; ATLAS Communities and Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (New American Schools Corporation). These models received additional funding to increase their capacity to engage with some 1500 schools and to broaden their focus from not only individual school-based models, but to entire school systems.

The trend of whole school reform was based on the premise that through rebuilding a school from the ground up creates schools that are purposeful and focussed. This broad scale rebuilding in itself is intended to establish both a culture of rejuvenation and a sense of common purpose (Traub, 1999).

In the Cincinnati, San Antonio and Memphis school districts, most of the schools began implementation of one of these models. The New American Schools involved the RAND Corporation to assess the effectiveness of the designs along with providing implementation assistance.

Although this attempt by New American Schools to create “break the mold” schools was having an impact across the country in the mid 1990’s, other models were being devised and implemented at the same time that were not part of this organization’s initiative. Models such as Core Knowledge, Direct Instruction, and the Edison Project were being implemented. A major contribution of the New American Schools was that schools could be reformed through a complete reorganization and restructuring process. Publicity was being generated through the initiation of these new models that began to change the thinking about school reform and improvement. Paul T. Hill (1997) in a New American Schools Study “How to Create Incentives for Design-Based Schools” states:

It is an architecture that helps guide the efforts of individual teachers so that they reinforce and complement each other and shape the work of the school as a whole to
ensure that students learn what they must know. A school design is much more than a theory, although theory is often involved. It is also a practical hands-on guide outlining what should be learned, how it should be learned and how instruction should be delivered. (p. 2)

In examining the theories upon which whole school reform models are based, it is difficult to fathom how they could all be successful when the theories varied to such a great extent. As will be described later in more detail, Success for All is a very structured program that dictates what children read; the length of time activities should occur, and a script that guides teacher direction and intervention. On the other hand, Hopfenberg and Levin (1993) describe the Accelerated Schools model as principled on establishing a common vision through “unity of purpose” (p. 21); engaging all of the educational stakeholders in making decisions about education through “empowerment coupled with responsibility” (p. 24); and engaging all those stakeholders in using all of the available human capital and available talent to maximize the quality of education through “building on strengths” (p. 26). All of these central principles are integrated throughout the adoption and implementation processes without specific or rigid guidelines.

Even with individually different approaches, the power is drawn from the fact that there is an actual model or design. A model provides a formal structure in an environment that has traditionally been left to its inhabitants to invent over time. Thomas Glennan in his 1998 RAND report of the New American Schools describes this phenomenon:

Most schools today appear to lack a design. Rather, they are homes for a collection of activities and programs of varied origins. They typically have some guidance concerning their curriculum, either from their district or from the state. The individual activities of
individual teachers are shaped by their training and experience but are most often carried out in isolation from most of their colleague. (p. 11)

Glennan goes on to describe that schools have been expected to be agents to address many broader social issues ranging from student drug use to assisting unwed student mothers to raise their children. As a result, schools have become fragmented in their focus and can become merely “collections of programs driven by internal and external imperatives” (p. 12).

The concept defined by the New American Schools is that all schools need a design to formalize the articulation of the school’s vision, mission and goals; frames the instructional program; establishes parameters for the recruitment and socialization of faculty; outlines what students, teachers, and parents should know and do; and identifies the criteria for ongoing reflection and formative evaluation that must occur to ensure an continuously improving organization (Glennan, 1998).

The mandatory implementation of whole-school reform in New Jersey was a decision to push school districts to address changed practice to improve student achievement, in addition to the funding concessions that came out of the Abbott IV (1997) decision. Nationally, this was the first time that selection of prescribed school reform models was compulsory. Hendrie (1999) indicates that educators from around the country are watching New Jersey to see what happens. Hendrie stated:

When the New Jersey Supreme Court handed down a ruling last spring requiring hundreds of urban schools to implement wholesale, school-wide change by no later than next year, heads turned in the nation’s education community. (p. 1)
To further the involvement of state governments into the realm of whole-school reform, a $150 million grant program was devised to advance this comprehensive change (Viadero 1999) by the federal government. Democratic Representative David Obey from Wisconsin and John Edward Porter, a Republican from Illinois sponsored the legislation. What has become known as the Comprehensive School Reform Development (CSRD) project or the Obey-Porter legislation, set out to improve student performance in school districts that serve large numbers of poor students and help failing schools (ECS, 1998; Viadero 1999). Traditionally federal support had been directed through discipline-specific programs. This has included mathematics programs, literacy initiatives or programs focused on high poverty areas (ECS, 1998). The CRSD was stating through its direction that add-on programs do not have the impact to influence whole-school vision that is needed to promote effective reform. Through naming specific school reform models that have demonstrated success nationally and have had their success validated by research were listed as the “acceptable” models. In the U.S. House of Representatives Conference Report of November, 1997 (105-390), it is stated: “the gains in student performance in a number of schools across the country that are using new comprehensive models for school-wide change covering virtually all aspects of school operations, rather than a piecemeal, fragmented approach to reform” (p.97). This program that targeted the use of specific improvement models, the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program was passed in 1997. Typically educational bills would establish an overarching design and then provide choice to local jurisdictions for selection and implementation (Viadero 1999). This comprehensive reform legislation named 17 different reform models that could be funded by the grants. They include: Accelerated Schools (K-8), America’s Choice School Design (K-12), ATLAS Communities (preK-12), Audrey Cohen College (K-12), The Coalition of Essential Schools (K-
12), Community for Learning (K-12), Co-NECT Schools (K-12), Direct Instruction (K-6), Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (K-12), High Schools that Work (9-12), Modern Red Schoolhouse (K-12), Paideia (K-12), Roots and Wings (preK-6), The School Development Program (K-12), Success for All (preK-6), Talent Development High School (9-12) and Urban Learning Centers (preK-12) (Viadero 1999).

Each of the models designated had to incorporate eight elements or comprehensive approaches to school reform. These included:

1. Effective research-based methods and strategies. Use the research and findings of best practices to assist schools in realigning schedules, staff and resources to support more effective instruction so that every school does not have to reinvent new processes and procedures.

2. Comprehensive design with aligned components. Incorporate all core academic disciplines across all grade levels with an integrated allocation of time, personnel and resources.

3. Professional development. Apply research-based professional development practices that are planned and implemented based on a student achievement focus contributing to developing new professional skills.

4. Measurable goals and benchmarks. Engage both internal and external evaluations that are ongoing to ensure improving strategy implementation and student results.

5. High standards for all students. Exert a pursuit that works to improve programs for all students, rather than sub-groups such as “at-risk” or “gifted” students.

6. Common focus by all. Establish a common vision and goals that are shared by all school community stakeholders that cements a firm direction that is understood by all thus ensuring stability, even in the event of leadership and personnel turnover.
7. Parental and community involvement. Pursue methods to engage parents and community to meet students academic and nonacademic needs.

8. Aligned support. Initiate a system of on-going support of the teaching and learning process that focuses technical, financial and human resources in reorganizing school structures and systems (ECS, 1998).

The concept of the school-wide approach to school reform got its start from the Title I school-wide approach. In 1994 the Title I law enabled any school with 50% or more of its students who live at the poverty level to be eligible as a school-wide Title I project (Fashola and Slavin 1998). This approach to providing interventions for economically deprived students produced greater success than the isolated program approach. A U.S. Department of Education study entitled Special Strategies for Educating Disadvantaged Children found that the implementation of several school-wide programs, namely The School Development Program and Success for All yielded favorable levels of success (Stringfield, Millsap & Herman 1997). These school-wide approaches have then been incorporated into the notion of comprehensive school reform. A definition that incorporates this concept is succinctly stated in Blueprints for School Success: A Guide to New American Schools Designs (1998):

Comprehensive school reform focuses on reorganizing and revitalizing the entire school rather than on isolated piecemeal reform. It provides teachers with the training, materials and support they need to help students reach challenging academic standards. In comprehensive school reform, a design becomes the basis for all operations, activities, efforts, engage teachers in their work, and build strong parent and community support. (p. 7)
The movement to the concept of whole-school reform models is described logically by Fashola and Slavin (1998):

The advantage of adopting these “off the shelf” instructional models are clear. School staffs need not reinvent the wheel. Organizations behind each of these school-wide models provide professional development, materials, and networks of fellow users. These reform organizations bring to a school broad experience working with high-poverty schools in many contexts. Unlike district or state staff development offices, external reform networks are invited in only if they are felt to meet a need, and they can be invited back out again if they fail to deliver. Their services can be expensive, but the costs are typically well within the Title I resources available to high-poverty schoolwide projects. (p. 371)

This notion of the “off the shelf” models was the approach adopted by the courts in New Jersey to implement the Abbott v. Burke 1998 court decision. The legislation directed schools in the 28 “Abbott Districts” to adopt a model of whole-school reform by the 2000 - 2001 school year. The presumptive model is to be Success for All - Roots and Wings. Permission to select other reform models may be granted by the Department of Education where the choice of such a model is justified (New Jersey Administrative Code, Title 6, Education 1998-1999, 6:19A-3.1a). Additionally, each school must vote or reach consensus on the adoption of the whole-school reform model. (6:19A-3.1b1). The Commissioner of Education recommended to the State Board of Education an expanded list of available models for schools. From the “Obey-Porter” list cited earlier in this review, elementary schools were now directed to select and implement one of the
following five models: Accelerated Schools, Community for Learning, Modern Red Schoolhouse, The School Development Program and Success for All-Roots and Wings.

Literature Pertaining to Urban School Legislation in New Jersey

In the early 1970’s, both federal and state governments were becoming involved with interventions to rectify inequitable educational funding. Defense of such constitutional rights began in California in 1971 with Serranno v. Priest in a case that found unequal funding of school districts in California was unconstitutional (Trachtenberg, 1974, p. 312). This decision was later overturned through the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1973, San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez. It was stated in this decision that education was not a fundamental right under the U.S Constitution and that school finance laws, based on a range of taxation capacities, were not unconstitutional and it did not constitute a fundamental right that that must be provided equally to all students (Trachtenberg, 1974, p. 313).

Also in 1973, the first case in New Jersey about the constitutionality of public school funding was being compromised since the disparity did not fulfill the state constitution for a “thorough and efficient education” (New Jersey Constitution, article VIII, section 4, paragraph 1). This case of Robinson v. Cahill (1972) resulted in decisions over the next 3 years that included requirement of local governments to provide a thorough and efficient education and where that local government was unwilling or unable to make such provisions, “the state government must compel it to act, and if the local government cannot carry the burden, the State must itself meet its continuing obligation” (Robinson v. Cahill, 1973, 513). A subsequent decision stated “each pupil shall be offered an equal opportunity to receive an education of such
excellence as will meet the constitutional standard” (Robinson v. Cahill 1976, 459-60) further attempted to initiate action for funding equality.

In 1990, the Supreme Court ruled in *Abbott v. Burke*, that students in economically deprived urban districts should be entitled to the same opportunities as those in wealthier suburban settings. This would be accomplished through state supplement of the local district tax base and additionally providing funds to meet the extraordinary educational needs of these urban students. (*Abbott v Burke* 1990, 288). The New Jersey legislature passed the Quality Education Act (QEA) that made provision to increase both property and sales taxes to fund education equity measures (Ayon, 1997, p. 142). This legislation proposed the doubling of the highest income tax rate, increasing the state sales tax and expand upon those goods and services that were eligible to be taxed. The intent of the QEA was to increase educational aid by $1.15 billion. Political reaction to this initial legislation resulted in the passing of QEA II in 1991. This revised legislation ensured that no school district would receive less aid than the previous year. As a result of QEA II, the 30 special needs Abbott districts received $653 million between 1990 and 1994 (Firestone, Goertz & Natriello).

Although some additional funding had reached the 30 poorest urban districts through the Quality Education Act and the Quality Education Act II only minor and moderate supplements were made toward funding equity. In 1994, following a return to the courts in the Abbott III decision, the court stated “It is the state and only the state that is responsible for the present educational disparity, and only the state can correct it” (*Abbott v. Burke* 1994, 15). This decision declared the Quality Education Act unconstitutional. It was as a result of the Abbott III decision that in 1996, the state enacted the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA) of 1996. This act made provisions for not only increased funding for the special needs
districts through additional state aid [Statewide average equalized school tax rate], but also required the development of Core Curriculum Content Standards to which all New Jersey students would have to demonstrate proficiency through assessments at grades 4, 8 and 11.

In the Abbott IV (1997) decision, the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act was found to be unconstitutional because the regular funding requirements of the act were not tied to the implementation of the Core Curriculum Content Standards (Erlichson, Goertz & Turnbull, 1999). These researchers cite the court’s position:

Children in the special needs districts have been waiting more than two decades for a constitutionally sufficient educational opportunity. We are unwilling, therefore, to putative expert opinion that does not disclose the reasons or bases for its conclusions. We have ordered the State to study the special educational needs of students in the Special Needs Districts. That has not been done. We have also ordered the State to determine the costs associated with implementing the needed programs. Those studies have not occurred. (p. 4).

Subsequently, to implement the court decision of Abbott V (1998), the court directed the State to implement a wide range of entitlements for the students of the special needs districts including: full-day kindergarten, preschool programs for 3 and 4 year olds, a governance structure of school management teams, supplemental programs for all secondary schools [health and social services, school security, alternative education, school to work/college transition programs, technology integration and ongoing professional development for all building staff], a plan for facilities management, school-based zero-based budgeting and adoption of whole-school reform. Additionally through Abbott V, the state was directed to fund other supplemental programs including health and social services, increased security, technology, alternative
education, school-to-work programs along with after-school and summer programs. As well as
the implementation of these programs, the state was directed to pay, so that the regular education
was not impacted negatively while these new programs were put into place.

Whole-school reform (also known as comprehensive school reform in the literature) is
generally characterized by the attainment of broad goals through the changing of a school’s
organization and management structures. Changes may include a combination of scheduling
changes, curricular modifications, and possibly collaborative organizations such as small
learning communities. Also commonly included in the reform models being recommended to
New Jersey schools is the integration of parental and community support/involvement, the re-
establishment of a strong school vision to increase student learning through research-based
practices and to improve school and classroom culture and climate.

The adoption of whole-school reform in New Jersey was to begin in the 1998-99 school
year. The state structured three different cohort groups to ensure that all 319 elementary schools
would begin the process of reform and adhere to the court decision of implementation by all
schools not later than the 2000 - 2001 school year. David Sciarra of the Education Law Center
(as cited by Hendrie, 1999) a Newark, New Jersey legal aid agency that brought the lawsuit to
the courts, states:

This is the first judicially enforced whole-school reform program in the
country. That creates the opportunity to not only reform but to sustain it
with adequate funding for years to come. (p.13)

Models are to be adopted by 50 elementary schools in the first cohort [1998-99], 100 in
the second [1999-2000], and 169 in the third [2000-2001]. Teachers will be expected to
participate in training that is prescribed by each of the respective models and their developers.
As described in the accountability section of the New Jersey Administrative Code, Title VI, Education (1998):

1. The school principal and staff must make an informed choice to use the whole-school reform model. Voting or consensus procedures required by the developer of the model must be followed;

2. The district administration and school staff must agree to fully implement the model within three years and maintain implementation of the model after the initial three years;

3. All requirements of the developer must be addressed. An agreement must be signed by the district, the school and the developer to implement the model in accordance with the developer’s and the Department’s requirements;

4. There must be a clear commitment by the district administration, school staff, parents and community to faithful replication of the model selected;

5. Extensive professional development must be implemented according to the requirements of the developer and the Department;

6. The district must allocate the necessary resources to implement the model, and the school must use the allocated resources for this purpose;

7. The school must integrate all local, State and Federal resources into the funding of one whole-school reform implementation plan;

8. The school must restructure all existing programs to focus on the whole-school reform model being implemented; and
9. A plan must be in place to continue to reduce class size to 1:21 for grades one through three and 1:23 for grades four through six. (6:19A-3.1e9f)

A program that involves mandatory reform of this nature must result in a variety of changed practices for school districts, administrators and teachers.

To provide a perspective of the requirements, the following outlines the essence and primary characteristics of each of the five designs adopted by the New Jersey elementary schools engaged in this study: (a) Accelerated Schools, (b) Community for Learning, (c) Coalition of Essential Schools, (d) Co-NECT, and (c) Success for All.

Accelerated Schools was introduced in 1986 as a design that implements instructional strategies usually implemented in classrooms for gifted and talented students (powerful learning). This philosophy is based on John Dewey’s notion that an effective education extends faith that children can understand and shape their world, given the appropriate opportunities to learn. Rather than using traditional methods of remediation, at-risk students need to be recognized as having curiosity, a desire to learn, imagination, a need for love, support and affirmation. The model was devised by Henry Levin at Stanford University and began with two pilot schools in 1986-87 in the San Francisco Bay area (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993). Today the model is being implemented in over 1,000 schools (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999).

Accelerated Schools is not a packaged program but rather a process. It is based on three foundational principles: (a) unity of purpose, (b) empowerment with responsibility, and (c) building on strengths. Unity of purpose refers to the importance of having common goals for all constituents and stakeholders. Empowerment with responsibility refers to the ability of all
stakeholders to make important educational decisions, share responsibility for implementing those decisions and share in the responsibilities for making those decisions. Building on strengths refers to sharing of the resources of all constituents to accomplish the shared goals for students (Hopfenberg & Levin, 1993, pp. 21-27). Organizational implications for faculty include collaborative decision-making by staff, addition of an inside coach to facilitate process and provide turn-key professional development and to add new skills to the instructional repertoire that would include higher order thinking, problem-solving and language development across the curriculum. The process begins with the faculty taking stock which is the establishing of a shared vision for the school which usually begins early in the school year. Ninety percent of the full time faculty and community representatives must endorse the decision to become an Accelerated School (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999, pp. 16).

Community for Learning was established by Margaret Wang, Director of the Center for Research in Human Development and Education at Temple University in 1990. This model was premised upon maximizing the given resources of a community coordinated with classroom instruction (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999, p.p. 43). Community resources include learning environments such as libraries, and museums along with business and workplace environments where students experience and learn from community people in the respective vocations.

This model recognizes that each child has a different knowledge and skill base thus necessitates a program of individualized instruction. This concept is supported by research by Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1990) in their review and analysis of 179 handbook chapters and reviews, surveying 61 educational researchers, and compiling 91 research syntheses resulting in
11,000 statistical findings. Results showed that direct influences (amount of time a teacher spends on a topic and the quality of social interaction a teacher have with their students) have a greater impact on learning than indirect influences (policies adopted by schools, districts & states and organizational structures such as school-based management). Out of this same research, the five strongest influences on learning of the 28 identified included: classroom management, metacognitive processes (students ability to plan, monitor and re-plan), cognitive processes (prior knowledge, competency in reading and mathematics and verbal knowledge), home environment/parental support, and student/teacher social interactions. The Community For Learning model is manifested in the classroom setting through what developers refer to as the Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM). Each student has a personalized learning plan that that s/he engages each day either in individual, or in flexible grouping scenarios. The program encourages the use of grouping strategies to better direct prescriptive instruction. Much of the classroom student engagement occurs in learning centers. At each center, appropriate materials are available to enable students to carry out the required personalized tasks. Posted are cumulative records indicating task accomplishments and indicators of progress.

ALEM uses existing school curricula. The developer attempts to align these materials with state standards and assessments. Students receive individualized learning plans that are created based on skills and abilities as determined through criterion-referenced tests (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999, p.p. 45). This approach is patterned after the special education approach to Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). Organizational modifications in schools embarking into this model require a full-time facilitator. Site-based teams include a School Council Leadership Team along with an instructional team. Representatives from the model provide an assessment of each prospective school. Professional
development is then structured to meet those identified needs. Ongoing training throughout the school year takes place along with regular implementation checks by the developer. As of the fall of 1999, there are 92 schools who are implementing Community for Learning.

The school faculty must reach consensus with expression to adopt this reform model. (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999, p.p. 46). A full-time on-site facilitator is required at each school along with a project coordinator at the district level. This individual serves as a liaison with district personnel and services as well as assisting with implementation activity.

Staff engages in 4 days of pre-implementation training. This includes provision of model awareness and then assessment of resources and expertise available at schools to support implementation. An additional 8 to 10 days of curriculum planning, professional development, and technical assistance are then provided. The CFL model is committed to meeting state and district standards as well as incorporating district and school strategic pursuits. Developers of this model opt to work in districts where clusters of schools or the entire district chooses adoption of this model.

The Coalition of Essential Schools is a reform model based on conceptual principles. The interpretation of those Ten Common Principles formulates the essence of reform for the implementing school. This model, developed by Theodore Sizer, while a professor at Brown University in 1984, attempted to make recommendations to American high schools that would result in higher student expectations, stronger interpersonal relationships between teachers and students and increased engagement of students in the processes of learning. These principles that were developed seemed to be a reaction to the dire descriptions of a typical high school that Sizer pictured through the eyes of Horace Smith, a 53 year old English teacher in his 1984
publication, *Horace’s compromise: The dilemma of the American high school*. These Ten
Common Principles as described in the American Institutes for Research - Educational Research
Service’s *An educators’ guide to schoolwide reform* (1999) are:

1. The school should focus on helping children to use their minds well.

2. The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of
   essential skills and areas of knowledge.

3. The school’s goals should apply to all students.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent.

5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, teacher-
   as-coach.

6. The diploma should be awarded upon demonstration of mastery of the central skills
   and knowledge of the school’s program.

7. The tone of the school should stress unanxious expectation, trust and decency.

8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first and
   specialists second.

9. Teacher loads should be 80 or fewer pupils, and per-pupil cost should not exceed
   traditional school costs by more than 10 percent.

10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices
    and pedagogies. (p. 38)

Since these principles are the framework for the design, there are no recommended
curricula, instructional strategies, or templates for redesign of scheduling and organization. This
lack of prescription was intentional. Having stated that schools are not directed to adopt specific
interventions, change typically does occur in the schools’ attempts to engage the common
principles. An example would be that including the principle “helping children use their minds well” would inherently lead to both curricular and instructional reform as the school pursues greater rigor and student engagement in learning. Another example is implementing the principle, “teacher loads should be 80 or fewer pupils” might lead to changes in school organization. Traub (1999) describes the model as “Change Without a Blueprint.” (p. 24)

Services provided by the model developer come through a regional center as a provider of resources and professional development. Since the principles being undertaken by any given school will differ to meet the needs and priorities of a school at a given time, the professional development services will vary in response to those needs.

The Co-NECT design of school reform is based on three elements: the focus of a faculty on high standards and challenging work for student; groups of teachers working with a defined group of students so that strong interpersonal relationships can be built with both the students and their families; and the provision of opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to solving real-world problems. Like Coalition of Essential Schools, Co-NECT is sufficiently open-ended that schools are encouraged to work in attaining their shared visions and building their unique school cultures.

Co-NECT, a New American Schools design, was developed in 1992 by members of the Educational Technology Group of the BBN Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts. For schools that were considering selecting and implementing this model, a vote of 75% support was required. A Co-NECT school involves the following components:

1. Project-based learning that involves the development of reading, writing and mathematics skills along with the integration of technology as students explore and research engaging topics. An emphasis on developing a deep knowledge base with higher-order thinking
skills will together yield quality work that is presented and shared with other students, parents and community members.

2. **Standards-based assessment** that tracks learning goals, student progress and reporting the results using multiple measures and techniques including standardized testing, performance assessments and the maintaining of student portfolios. The goal is to build a dynamic learning community that is continuously improving.

3. **Cluster-based organizational structure** that organizes teachers and student into small learning communities within a school. The continuity of long-term teacher-student relationships is maintained through teacher looping to ensure a consistent learning environment.

4. **Technology-supported learning community** is built through implementing a modern computer-based infrastructure. The use of the internet is an important resource for the model as well as the integration of interdisciplinary and technology-based learning. Student access to audio, video, and networked computers with a range of software is necessary.

The model claims that improved student achievement results will be evident before the end of the third year, where effective implementation has been conducted. Additionally the development of citizenship and work-place skills are intended outcomes of this reform design.

Contracted services provided by the developer staff include: faculty professional development, the engagement of schools into local and national Critical Friends networks where schools can share best practices and technical assistance which includes the use of the Co-NECT Exchange (the internet-based information and communications resource), and providing annual implementation progress reviews. These reviews assess progress towards high expectations for all students, application of knowledge to real-world problems, student achievement, the development of small learning communities, and the maximization of technology integration.
Success for All was developed by Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden of Johns Hopkins University in 1987 (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999). The program was designed at the request of the City of Baltimore Public Schools to address the problems of low achieving urban students. Its design was primarily based on ensuring success in reading. The program is driven by the use of cooperative learning strategies and specific sequential reading materials. Specific elements that result in changed teacher practice involve assessments that are administered every 8 weeks to discern regular student reading levels; the grouping of students in grades 1 through 5 across age lines for 90 minutes each day to ensure instruction in any given class will be at a common level; the use of highly structured, phonetically regular storybooks to build phonemic awareness, auditory discrimination and sound blending in addition to meaning, context and self-monitoring strategies; the use of reading tutors to assist students one-on-one who are unable to keep up with other members of their reading groups; the involvement of a family support team who works with parents to coordinate resources; parental involvement; and to provide additional assistance to students needing additional assistance and the development of faculty teams to support one another through coaching partnerships and collaborative learning. A Success for All Facilitator is hired to coordinate learning materials, assessments and provide ongoing faculty support. Additional staff usually have to be added to the faculty that fulfill positions of reading tutors, facilitator and parent liaison. Training for all staff involves 3 days before school begins, with additional in-service required for the principal and facilitator. A secret ballot must be taken, in which at least 80% of the school staff vote to adopt the model (American Institutes for Research - Educational Research Service, 1999, pp.119).

The concluding statement for each of these eligible whole-school reform models
indicates at the very least, consensus approval to adopt the model ranging from a consensus vote to a 90% majority. Teacher support is one of the critical prerequisites of effective implementation of actual school reform:

Although it seems like an obvious strategy, many administrators, policymakers and others advocating reform fail to include their strongest allies from the very start of the decision-making process – namely, teachers. Teachers are more likely to back an effort if they have been involved from the beginning. This means inviting teachers to help set goals, study models, interview developers and select the model. (ECS, 2000, p. 16)

Affirmation to adopt one of these models must result in both organizational and personal change if school reform is to indeed occur.

Literature Pertaining to Mandated Reform and Teacher Choice

"Whoever said the only things constant in life are death and taxes might add public school reform to the list" (Seay Young, 1997). Approaches to initiating such reform could be characterized by the conflicting notions of top down and bottom up. That is to say that organizations may impose reform onto people in schools through mandates and enabling tactics at a state, district or school level. Contrary to such an approach is what may be considered a grass roots movement by teachers to push for a reform to occur with later organizational or administrative buy-in.

The use of mandates to initiate and motivate teacher change in schools has been widely used, and with some success. Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, enacted in 1975 resulted in a number of changes for school districts across this country.
Curriculum, instruction, values and finances were all affected positively leading to greater equality for all children as a result of this governmental policy. Also in 1975, Title IX forced organizations to address the discrimination against women in the workplace and schools. Through the creation of equal opportunity, there were curricula changes, reallocation of resources and initiatives toward equitable participation in academic, recreational and athletic pursuits. These examples of federal government mandates illustrate a clear connection between a means and an end. Government has rationalized that a mandate was essential to attain a specific identified goal. Wise (1979) from an analysis of policy-making by federal, state and executive branches of government along with the courts suggests, "...we are witnessing the phenomenon of hyperrationalization – that is, an effort to rationalize beyond the boundaries of knowledge (p. 65). In a follow-up analysis, Wise (1988) noted that states continued to use rationalizations widely to attain greater controls over schools. Larson (1992) observes that such mandates "...often leads to outcomes such as excessive prescriptions, procedural complexity, and the application of inappropriate solutions to problems" (p. 20).

Enabling tactics to initiate change are usually implemented through the provision of additional funding opportunities. For schools and school systems, such incentives can be provided through any of the governmental levels as well as through private interests. Corporate foundations have provided millions of dollars to initiate specific programs and innovations. The results of implementing such initiatives successfully will be determined by a variety of complex organizational and cultural variables. The field of educational and organizational research continues to pursue the identification of what conditions are required that will result in enabling change. Impact results span a wide continuum. Examples such as the federal government’s ‘Rural Experimental Schools Program’ are not uncommon. This initiative offered school
districts funding for 5 years to institute innovative programs to result in school improvement.

The program was established to bring about and sustain comprehensive change at all levels.

Typically the innovations included community involvement, curricula development, services for special needs students and programs to initiate individualized instruction. Follow-up research of this program demonstrated that not only were there few positive changes, but the program caused internal disruption in the participating districts (Herriott & Gross, 1979).

Attempts at initiating, implementing, and institutionalizing change from entities external to a school or district in too many cases view change as a simple issue of program adoption. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1997) describes change efforts as generally being far more complex. She outlines three levels of such efforts:

1. Change Projects: These are generally a defined course of action that address a specific problem or need. Often they are results-oriented to attain a desired solution. Where they may appear as independent or stand-alone initiatives, they are usually short lived and fade away.

2. Change Programs: The attainment of broad organizational impact is the intent of change programs. The success of such programs will be dependent upon their ability to become interdependent with existing organizational structures. Failure of these programs can be usually attributed to a lack of congruency with major organizational purposes, too many project components and/or implementation by only a few people within the organization making the program perceived as an elite entity.

3. Change Adept Organizations: The building of such organizations focuses on the attainment of internally desired change as part of a commitment to continuous building of innovation and improvement. Addressing issues and challenges internally typically precede external
interventions. Success will be dependent upon the organization’s environment to enable the change to occur continuously and within a culture where the change can unfold so that it feels natural. (p. 4)

The implementation of change projects and programs has dominated attempts at school change rather than efforts to build “change-adept organizations.” Philip Schlechty (2001) describes:

The primary reason this is so, I believe, is that change leaders, funding agencies, and policy makers too often overlook or look past creating in school systems conditions that are supportive of change and instead fasten on programs and projects that promise to have immediate results. In a word, efforts to improve schools usually attend more to the introduction of projects and programs than to the systems in which these projects and programs are to be implemented. (p. 41)

Schlechty (2001) describes a school considered to be a change-adept organization will have at its very foundation specific cultural qualities defining the role of its teachers. Included are a heavy investment in professional development and personal support; incentives that encourage risk-taking and innovation; teacher empowerment with opportunities to share in leadership roles; and a clear alignment of the school’s beliefs and vision so that all teachers have a common understanding and commitment to ensure the success of students. (p. 51-52)

Where a state Department of Education attempts to impose change, as Schlechty (2001) alludes, it is to accomplish immediate change. Through the mandating of projects, and in the case of the New Jersey Abbott districts described earlier in this literature review the mandating of programs, little attention or acknowledgement can be given to the qualities of the learning-adept organization.
This lack of attention to the cultural conditions of an organization was documented by Huberman and Miles in their 1984 field research of the National Diffusion Network. This network provided an array of programs that were developed in the field by practitioners. There were some 400 of these tested innovations available to schools through this federally funded and supported clearinghouse. Local districts and schools were discouraged from tinkering with or modifying these opportunities for fear of reducing their effectiveness. Huberman and Miles found from their study of 12 schools that even within a given environment that there was a significant difference in the way these Diffusion Network initiatives were viewed by school administrators as compared to teachers. They found that generally administrators viewed the innovations as clear, straightforward to use and would likely have a positive impact on their organization as a result of their implementation. Teachers on the other hand viewed the innovations as complex, ambiguous, difficult to use and doubted that implementing the innovation(s) would result in real change. This then brings us to the issue of teacher response to the stimulus of change.

Lortie’s (1975) classic study of the teaching profession identifies the “conservatism” of teachers as a dominant trait. He describes that the teaching profession structurally supports individuals with this predisposed conservative mode of operation from recruitment through to late career. Individuals are generally recognized for maintaining the status quo and/or the hierarchy. This conservatism has major implications for organizational change, school reform and/or restructuring. Contrary to fields such as science, Lortie posits:

Science, for example, would probably not change too much even if it recruited more conservative persons; once engaged in scientific work, scientists participate in a reward system which generates and reinforces novel ideas and proofs. (p. 81)
The conservative outlook of teachers additionally is a major driving force in personal change. In his study, Lortie found that there was a clear congruence between teacher preference and their conservative outlook:

What teachers consider desirable change can be summed up as “more of the same”; they believe that the best program of improvement removes obstacles and provides for more teaching with better support. They want arrangements to “unleash” their capacities. Their approach is implicitly conservative; in assuming that current instructional tactics are adequate if properly supported, the blame for deficiencies is laid upon the environment. Remedies lie in the changing the environment, not in finding more efficacious ways to instruct. (p. 209)

Psychologist Robert Evans (1996) reinforces this conservative stance as a natural reaction to change. Everything from small obstructions to our daily routines to major restructuring to our workplace environment are neither welcomed nor easily endured. There is an inherent need to maintain a level of stability and consistency. “...we cling reflexively to and tenaciously to things as they are” (p. 25).

Sources for educational initiatives to change or restructure the work of schools in America were very limited until midway through the twentieth century. Periodically a book would be published that may shed a new perspective on the process of teaching but there existed no formal structure to develop, test, and then disseminate what were to be found effective practices. The work of universities to train teachers varied little from the nineteenth through this time in the twentieth century. It has only been since the mid-1950s when a national program was instituted to upgrade the quality of public education. Since then, numerous influences to change schools have come from governments at all levels. Additionally the work of universities are not only changing how teachers are prepared, but are also deeply involved in research on
school reformation. Change agencies from both individuals as well as corporate entities have become involved in attempts to provide incentives directly to schools to implement specific practices as well as to universities to establish partnerships to implement specific restructuring or reform-based initiatives. These influences weigh heavily on teachers. Lortie (1970) asserts that the very presence of pedagogical alternatives has an influence on the culture of schools. The decision of teachers to do what he described as “more of the same,” is clearly a choice.

That choice has continued to be a strong factor in attempts to bring about significant changes in teaching practice. Lortie (1975) in lamenting on the work of earlier research on the evolution of teaching practices:

...those making serious reports on schools, starting out with hopes of finding fresh, new approaches to teaching, have almost invariably been disappointed. If there has been a revolution, I suspect it has been in people’s expectations for schools, not in practice; the gap between the possible and the actual has become an issue. (p. 218)

Throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s the external influences to change schools and teacher behaviors have continued to increase. The nature of these changes from the outside continued to be based on recreating policy to reform curriculum content, reorganize schools, improve the quality of teaching and/or raising standards for student performance. This influx of reform possibilities did not however, address the culture of schools and the nature of teachers within those schools. Therefore reform initiatives had little chance of success (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Evans, 2001; Sarason, 1990). Sarason elaborates on this reality:

Educational reformers have trouble understanding that change by legislative fiat or policy pronouncements from on high is only the first and easiest step in the change process, a step that sets in motion the dynamic of problem creation through problem solution.
Content to remain on that first step, assuming as they do that the goals of change can be achieved by a process that could be called human mechanical engineering, insensitive as they are as to what the change will activate in the phenomenology of individuals and their institutional relationships, they confuse change in policy with change in practice. And they also assume that change is achieved through learning and applying new or good ideas. They seem unable to understand what is involved in unlearning what custom, tradition, and even research have told educational personnel is right, natural, and proper. (p. 101)

Evans (1996) describes from a psychological frame that this conservatism is not unusual at all but rather a natural and normal stance for healthy and effectively functioning human beings. Individuals seek predictable patterns. Where there is the potential to break such patterns, ensuing resistance can be anticipated. Evans posits:

Change of any kind—not just unwanted, negative change but also apparently positive events such as getting a raise in salary, getting married, or having a baby-upsets the pattern we are accustomed to and thrusts us into new roles, new relationships, and new perceptions, challenging the way we cope with life. (p. 27)

This sense of conservatism can be perceived as a negative and resistant demeanor that is problematic in organizations that are engaged in change initiatives. However, if in schools teachers changed at the suggestion of each new theory or pedagogical study, the actual reform initiatives that are being focussed upon in this study would be a passing whim along an unending continuum of externally recommended change pursuits.

What then are teachers’ motives for change? Larson (1992) in a study that engaged teachers from two schools in Vermont interviewed 80 teachers to determine their stimulus for
change. In his research, he found that motivation for change came from a variety of sources within the school environment. The stimuli for teacher change are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

*Stimulus for Teacher Change* (Larson, 1992)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per Cent of Teachers</th>
<th>Stimulus for Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Student interest or dissatisfaction (e.g. students not electing elective courses, failing grades, or acting up out of boredom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Teacher ego, interest or experience (e.g. the poor image of a course, special affinity for a pet subject, or new information from a graduate course (taken by the teacher))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Laws, regulation and accreditation visits (e.g. Title IX, PL 94-142, or accreditation team suggesting a new course)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Teacher observation (e.g. students needing first-aid instruction for farm work, students needing sex education not available through a community agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Teacher dissatisfaction (e.g. “I had to do something with this material. It was driving me crazy.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Journals and newsletters (e.g. a death and dying unit from the English Journal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Administrative direction (This category, although low in number, is not an accurate portrait of the principals’ roles. It encompasses several changes through principal direction such as “bundle” of course innovations in a department.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>School structure (e.g. a new study hall structure that affected “time on task,” an open area that facilitated teaming in math)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5%</td>
<td>Included the stimuli of budget additions or cuts, culture change, local public opinions/concerns and peer suggestion. (p. 55)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the context of New Jersey where schools were mandated to select one of the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) project models, Walker (2000) identifies the following three factors, as identified by school management teams, as having the greatest impact on the selection of a whole school reform models: (a) congruency of model to school needs (67%), (b) information provided on model (61%), and (c) model’s flexibility (57%)

Each of these studies, although there is a significant disparity in the strength of the highest impetus for change priority, both Larson (1992) and Walker (2000) observe from their
studies that school/student need is most prominent in opting for change. Their findings are consistent with the intent of the New American Schools designs. That is, meaningful school reform must emanate from the difference between the vision for student achievement and what actual achievement is being attained.

These studies reflect congruency with the intent of virtually all of the whole school reform designs regarding the selection and implementation of whole school reform designs. In the New American Schools report, “Working Towards Excellence: Examining the Effectiveness of New American Schools Designs,” (author, 1998), the following challenges are identified resulting from interviews with teachers and principals:

1. “Schools need to decide. Forced matches rarely succeed; they make an already challenging situation more difficult by breeding resentment from the start.” (p. 13) This posit necessitates an accurate awareness by all staff as to not only the basic premises of the model being considered, but also that its implications for teachers and students are accurate and complete. This concept is consistent with Michael Fullan’s (1993) tenet that you can’t mandate what matters. “Mandates are not sufficient and the more you try to specify them, the more narrow the goals and means become.” (p. 22)

2. “Schools need time to make good choices.” (p. 13) This New American Schools report indicates that schools need roughly six months to make an informed choice.

3. “The entire faculty needs to buy-in.” (p. 13) Developers generally require an approximate 80% buy-in from school faculty and there is a clear resentment in situations where teachers feel as if they have been coerced or pushed into voting for a particular design.

4. “Design teams need to communicate the designs clearly.” (p. 14) While the model developer staff (design teams) can provide an overview to teams/teachers with the hope of selection by
schools, these design teams must provide the coinciding implications of what additional implementation requirements may be involved (i.e. additional planning, time, changes of practice and materials, as well as additional/alternate implementation factors.

Stringfield and colleagues in the U.S. Department of Education Special Strategies Study (1997) found that the quality of implementation of reform was enhanced when school staff had both the time and resources to explore numerous options to determine which model best met the needs of their local environment.

This same intent is clearly articulated in New Jersey's readopted Administrative Code: The school shall demonstrate that the school staff is committed to the design. Additionally, the school staff shall have a meaningful involvement in decision-making, development and implementation of the design. The school shall provide evidence that support is based on consensus or on an 80% approval vote by school staff. (N.J.A.C. 6A: 24 - 4.2 c. 6)

The selection of a whole school reform model by a significant critical mass of school faculty through a formal vote is important and necessary. However, there are a number of other factors and influences at work that may undermine the actual consensus vote and resulting quality of implementation.

Ross et al. (1997) in a study of Memphis City Schools found that even where a vote of 80% or more had been attained to adopt a given model, through follow-up interviews with teachers, staff from some of the schools felt that their choice was not an informed one. There was a degree of frustration by some of the teachers that there was not more information on more models. Similar results were documented in a RAND Corporation (Bodilly et al, 1998) national study of the New American Schools scale up process. Teachers participating in the first year of
implementation felt rushed and confused resulting in lower levels of implementation.

Datnow (1999) also conducting research with Memphis City Schools administered surveys and interviews with teachers from six second cohort schools selecting whole school reform designs. She hypothesized that the second cohort schools would have greater levels of readiness, information and thus greater potential impact for the models as a result of delaying the adoption decision by a year. Datnow found that the schools participating in her study did not make prudent decisions about adopting a whole school reform model, even though they had the opportunity to benefit from others who had gone before them along with the luxury of the additional time. In most schools, the organizational behavior concept of “bounded rationality” was a strong influence. That is, school community staff examined only one or two models that they believed would result in a “tolerable course of action” (p. 15). In these schools, teachers generally settled upon a decision for the adoption of a model that required only a modification of their current practice, rather than engaging in a more broad school restructuring. “Some educators chose reforms that appeared easiest to implement in terms of ceremony, allowing them to display structural elements that conform to district policies and, at the same time, preserve the status quo in school” (p. 15). This decision making process described through this research was driven by the need for legitimacy, or in other words, giving the school district what was asked for. This conclusion is consistent with Weiss’ research (1995) involving shared decision making in high schools: “a lack of extensive information coalesced with self-interest in the status quo and was reinforced by selective attention to those elements in their value system that stressed continuation of present practice” (p. 588).

When decisions are made with limited amounts of information, the quality of teacher decisions will always be compromised. Datnow (1999) concludes from her research that schools
need to carefully examine their existing conditions before making a choice. The gathering of information through interactions with developers/design teams, visitation(s) to implementing schools, and acquiring district support for the necessary time and assistance to select a model that addresses the school community needs is essential.
Chapter III
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

This study identified those factors that impacted and influenced teacher decision-making and the eventual teacher vote to adopt a specific whole school reform design in schools under the mandate of the Urban Education Reform Regulations in the Abbott Districts (N.J.A.C. 6A:24-4.1 et seq.) of the New Jersey Department of Education. Schools governed by this State administrative code had a 3-year time frame (1998 – 2001) to select and adopt a school reform design. The developers and administrators of the available school reform designs each established the prerequisite of teacher consensus to adopt such models. In each case, the teachers were required to demonstrate this consensus through a formal voting process.

As Datnow (1999) discovered through study of Memphis school adoption of whole school reform models, there were cultural and structural factors that did exist to influence the vote of teachers to adopt reform models. One factor that was not addressed directly was the influence of the principal upon teachers’ decision to adopt a specific model. Her research indicated that teacher decisions were strongly impacted by a need for legitimacy. She concluded that this need to be compliant in the eyes of the district was a primary factor underlying the vote to adopt a reform design.

Methodology

The primary objective of this research was to identify influences acting upon teachers’ eventual decision to adopt a whole school reform design; the specific roles played by the
building principal in the exploration and selection of school reform models; and determination of the satisfaction levels as perceived by teachers and principals from their eventual selection of a whole school reform design. This study was designed to analyze those factors leading to a school reform adoption vote. Through the use of a qualitative sample survey research approach, the following methodologies were used to collect data: (a) focus group or focused group depth interviews (Rea and Parker, 1997) that involved teacher groups in a face-to-face, tape recorded semistructured format (see Appendices A through E), and (b) a semistructured interview that involves individual principals from those same schools in face-to-face, tape-recorded survey interviews (see Appendices A through E).

The benefit of this qualitative research approach with purposefully selected participants was best characterized by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) to: "learn about the range of behavior related to the research focus; in order to gain understanding of the complex phenomenon in question" (p. 26). The use of this qualitative design was most appropriate for this study in that it required inductive reasoning to draw conclusion(s) and build theory from the data provided by the participants. Theory, as Langenbach, Vaughn, and Aagaard (1994) posit, "is no more than a summarizing statement about specific, concrete observations" (p. 128). Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996) contend theory is "an explanation of the commonalties and the relationships among observed phenomena in terms of the causal structures and processes that are presumed to underlie them" (p. 773).

Krathwohl (1998) elaborates, "Qualitative research methods are particularly useful in understanding how individuals understand their world, in showing how individuals' perceptions and intentions in situations determine their behavior, in exploring phenomena to find explanations, and in providing concrete and detailed illustrations of that phenomena" (p. 225).
In seeking those factors that influenced, or were perceived to influence, teachers’ own voting to adopt a given whole school reform model, pursuit of such explanation was sought through grounded theory research.

Leedy (1997) describes, “Grounded theorists start with broad research questions that provide the freedom and flexibility to explore a phenomenon in depth. The theory is ‘grounded’ in that it is developed from the data, as opposed to being suggested by the literature; that is, theory is an expected outcome from, rather than a starting point for, the study” (p. 163).

Participant Selection

The population for this study consisted of sample groups of 4-8 teachers along with their principal from 10 elementary schools. All of the participating teachers and principal must have been on staff at that school during the time of reform model exploration and the vote to select their respective model. Each school was located in one of five different New Jersey Abbott Districts; 2 schools from each district. Due to the necessity to engage this specialized population, a convenience sample was implemented. Rea and Parker (1997) define a “convenience sample” as a, “Type of nonprobability sample in which interviewees are selected according to their presumed resemblance to the working population and their ready availability” (p. 233). Additionally, school samples were considered only if the group of teachers and the principal from the same Abbott District school agreed to participate. Both teachers and principals participated voluntarily in this research at the invitation of their district Superintendent.
Of the 30 Abbott Districts in the State (see Appendix K), the 10 schools from five districts were selected to maximize the diversity of this convenience sample. This diversity included schools from: (a) districts implementing a variety of whole school reform models (b) north, central and southern New Jersey, and (c) large districts (over 18,000 students); middle districts (2,001 – 17,999 students); and small districts (less than 2,000 students).

Further, schools across these New Jersey districts were selected to further ensure diversity through selecting schools that vary in the selected whole school reform model (see Table 3.1) and cohort (year in which the model was adopted: 1998-1999; 1999-2000 or 2000-2001, see Table 3.1).

In order to protect the anonymity of the participating schools, each was identified using a school number ranging from 1 through 10. School districts were labeled A through E. The participating schools in this study included:

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>COHORT</th>
<th>WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM MODEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District A</td>
<td>School #1</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District A</td>
<td>School #2</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District B</td>
<td>School #3</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Coalition of Essential Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District B</td>
<td>School #4</td>
<td>*One</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District C</td>
<td>School #5</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District C</td>
<td>School #6</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District D</td>
<td>School #7</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District D</td>
<td>School #8</td>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District E</td>
<td>School #9</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Community for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District E</td>
<td>School #10</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *School #4 in this study initially adopted Success for All in 1993.
The maximized diversity of this convenience sample was intended to limit the influence of demographic factors to maintain homogeneity to focus upon the factors and influences that led to the teacher selection of a whole school reform model.

Although student achievement levels were not considered in sample selection, these data were influential in the decision-making process for both teachers and principals. The adoption of a whole school reform model tended to be focused solely on improving student achievement scores when a school’s achievement results on the State fourth grade assessment were below the State average in all areas. Higher achieving schools generally involved a different set of issues when achievement results were at, or higher than State averages (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>State % Advanced Proficient + Proficient</th>
<th>Relationship of School to State Proficiency</th>
<th>State % Advanced Proficient + Proficient</th>
<th>Relationship of School to State Proficiency</th>
<th>School Ranking by Achievement **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Rank is indicated as the average total (Advanced Proficient + Proficient) in both Language Arts and Mathematics

Data Collection

In order to acquire insights into how teachers made decisions about selecting a whole school reform design, focused group depth interviews were implemented. Rea and Parker (1997) use this terminology to posit particularly important traits of a focus group. Focused implies that
the discussion is a limited one that deals with a small number of fixed issues. *Group* indicates that individual participants share an interest in the subject matter of the discussion and that they will interact with one another during the course of the session. *Depth* derives from the nature of the discussion, which is more penetrating and thorough than is possible in casual conversation or in the sample survey research process. *Interview* implies that a moderator directs and conducts the discussion and obtains information from the individuals in the group (p. 82).

The use of the focused group depth interview was selected as the data collection mode for this study due to its inherent structure to stimulate ideas and recollections from other members of the group. As participants interact with each other to the questions that are posed by the researcher, the various conditions that led to a formal vote to adopt a selected whole school reform model were exchanged.

A group of 4 – 8 teachers were invited to participate voluntarily in the focus group at either lunchtime or after school. Each teacher signed an Informed Consent Form that outlined the voluntary and confidential nature of the experience (see Appendix I.). The teachers convened in an area designated by the school principal that was both private and quiet. In most cases the school library, an empty classroom or a conference room was used to alleviate disruptions that might have occurred in a more public space such as a faculty lounge. The duration of the teacher focused group interview was 35 – 50 minutes.

**A List of Questions Posed**

The following questions were posed as the basis of the focus group data collection:

(Questions 1 through 7 were created and used in the research study Implementing Whole School Reform in New Jersey, Year Two; Model Selection [Erlichson & Goertz, 2001].)
1. What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

2. What do you think drove the selection of your particular model?

3. What other models did your school consider? Why were other models not chosen?

4. How would you describe the model selection process? Was it consensual?

5. Were there strong opinions one way or another?

6. Where did you get information about the models?

7. What percentage of the school staff and faculty do you think support the model?

8. To what extent did you feel that you had enough information to make an informed decision about selecting a particular model?

9. What was the most important factor you considered in your vote to select your whole school reform model?

10. Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a specific model? What were they?

11. How did such influences impact upon you?

12. What role did your principal play in the selection process of a model?

13. Do you believe that your principal had an affinity to a particular model? What made you think that?

14. To what extent are you satisfied with the model that was ultimately selected? Why?

15. If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a whole school reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

At the outset of the focus group experience, participants were reminded that their responses would be held in the strictest confidence and shared with no one either at the District,
State or university levels. In the analysis of the participants' responses, the district and school would be assigned a letter and a number. No individuals would be identified.

The use of a partially structured interview with principals for this research applied the use of a set of predetermined questions, many of which were open-ended in nature, in an order that was determined by the interviewer to maintain a sense of "natural conversation." This concept described by Krathwohl (1998) establishes a smooth flow of information that is both open and spontaneous, "getting a response as close to natural conversation, unbiased by the fact that it is an interview, is critical" (p. 285). The interview questions with principals were similar to those posed in the teacher focused group depth interviews. This strategy was an intentional component of the design to assess consistency of responses between the school principal and the teacher participants from a common school for a single set of experiences. Each principal signed an Informed Consent Form that outlined the voluntary and confidential nature of the experience (see Appendix L).

The following questions were posed in the partially structured interview.

(Questions 1 through 7 were created and used in the research study Implementing Whole School Reform in New Jersey, Year Two; Model Selection [Erlichson & Goertz, 2001].)

1. What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?
2. What do you think drove the selection of your particular model?
3. What other models did your school consider? Why were other models not chosen?
4. How would you describe the model selection process? Was it consensual?
5. Were there strong opinions one way or another?
6. Where did you get information about the models?
7. What percentage of the school staff and faculty do you think support the model?
8. To what extent did you feel that teachers had enough information to make an informed
decision about selecting a particular model?

9. What was the most important factor teachers considered in their vote to select your whole
school reform model?

10. Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a
specific model? What were they?

11. What role did you play in the selection process of a model?

12. Did you have an affinity to a particular model? Why?

13. To what extent are you satisfied with the model that was ultimately selected? Why?

14. If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and
implementation of a whole school reform model, what would you recommend be done
differently?

Data Interpretation

The data of interviews are presented in the narrative form in response to the interview
questions, with verbatim narratives included in Appendices A through E. The narratives were
interpreted and analyzed to determine similarity of experiences among teachers and principals,
while at the same time determining congruency of responses between the principal and the
teachers at each school.
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

From the inception of whole-school reform in New Jersey, its mandates emanated from the 1998 Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program at the federal government level. This federally funded grant program allocated an amount of not less than $50,000, renewable for three years for eligible schools. Each CSRD school was charged to improve its student achievement through establishing a focussed direction that would impact on all aspects of the school's work to include its curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, governance and parental and community involvement.

The CSRD Program identified nine key components of comprehensive reform. It was one of these components upon which this research is premised. That being, “support within the school from teachers, administrators and staff.” Compliance with the nine key components was a requirement for states, districts, and schools to access these CSRD grants from the U.S. Department of Education. The “school support” aspect was evident as one of the prerequisites of the varying comprehensive school reform models being endorsed by the federal government. It is uncertain as to whether the CSRD program adopted this requirement because the varying school reform models included the necessity for this consensus of support, or the models then reacted to this requirement because the CSRD program directed it.

The state of New Jersey, in complying with the Abbott decision, mandated schools to adopt whole school reform models and thus access the federal CSRD funding:

Each elementary school shall adopt a whole school reform (WSR) model by the 2000-2001 school year. (6:19A-3.1.a)
The CSRD requirement for “support within the school from teachers, administrators and staff” was also made a requirement for New Jersey schools. Once again stated through its Administrative Code:

New schools must vote or reach consensus on selection of the model in accordance with the developer’s requirements. (6.19A-3.1.a.1)

The school principal and staff must make an informed choice to use the WSR model. Voting or consensus procedures required by the developer must be followed (6.19A-3.1.f.1).

This study engaged five different Abbott School Districts. In each of those districts, two schools were identified to study the selection process of a comprehensive school reform model. Across those 10 schools, the following school reform models had been selected: Accelerated Schools, Coalition of Essential Schools, Community for Learning, Co-nect, and Success for All. For each of these models, there is a conditional “school support” prerequisite that is stated in order to adopt that particular model. That support is indicated through a voting process. The outcome of this vote is intended to indicate the level or degree of “school support.” Each of the schools in this study attained the required vote to adopt their respective reform model. This common requirement ranged from a minimum vote of 80% in favor for Success for All and Co-nect, to 90% in favor for Accelerated Schools. Other models including the Comer School Development Program and Community for Learning indicated that a consensus decision by the school faculty was required.

This study explored the levels of teacher involvement and support for the comprehensive reform model that was selected at each of the ten schools. Were there personal or structural factors at work to influence teachers to vote for the adoption of a specific whole school reform
model; the nature of the commitment and conviction to the consensus process; and the role played by the school principal in the selection of the school reform model?

Teacher Involvement in Model Selection

As earlier indicated, there were requirements by the CSRD program at the federal government level; the New Jersey Department of Education; and all of the whole school reform model developers that teachers indicate their “support within the school” through a formal vote. All ten of the schools in this study met that requirement. All of the teachers who participated in the group interviews taught in their respective schools through the model selection process and continue to do so currently in the varying stages of implementation. There were very diverse responses from the teachers when the question was posed: What was your involvement in the selection of the model?

In 5 out of the 10 schools, teachers described engagement in an exploratory process of the varying models leading up to the time at which a vote was to take place (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>SCHOOL REFORM MODEL</th>
<th>HAD OPPORTUNITY TO SELECT MODEL FROM AVAILABLE CHOICES</th>
<th>HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO SELECT MODEL FROM AVAILABLE CHOICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Coalition of Essential Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
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<td>School 5</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>Community for Learning</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 10</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(School Management Team choice- other teachers excluded)

(Restricted Choices)
A teacher reflected,

I was part of a group that went out researching different models. We visited different schools and we went as far as talking with different people from the models and then we brought all the information back to the faculty and gave our input and took a vote. Even prior to that we went on-line to get as much information as we could about the different models. (Teacher-School 10)

There was a predominance of this representative exploration of the models. The School Management Team as indicated typically undertook this responsibility,

I think our School Management Team was presented with the models and everyone was given literature on it to read and then as a school we came to consensus on it and then we actually had a vote on it. It also had to be approved by our School Management Team, the program we chose. (Teacher-School 1)

The representative team would go to the State presentations and then we brought back the information. We had faculty meetings so the entire faculty had everything up to date. (Teacher-School 7)

The role of the School Management Team was to field for the faculty. We have a large faculty... the way I understood, and I wasn't on the committee, is that there was a group of people (the School Management Team) that was doing the search/doing the discovery, and even at the teacher meetings we would bring back a report on that. (Teacher-School 3)

Teachers from School 3 who were not part of the School Management Team reported that they had minimal involvement in both the research process and access to information leading up to
the eventual vote. This principal however expressed belief that options were being provided to
the entire faculty through the School Management Team.

Only in isolated cases was it mentioned that the stakeholder group was expanded to
include parents or other stakeholders,

Several of us went to State meetings so we were thoroughly involved in that. The district
set up developers to come to the school. School Management Team members, teachers
and parents sat in on the different developers that came into the school. (Teachers-
School 7)

The issue of the school district changing timelines for selection was identified as an
element that had a restricting effect on the School Management Teams at several schools in their
ability to research thoroughly and then communicate their findings to the rest of the faculty.
This restriction of time was a condition that was created by one school district in particular.
Teachers from School District E recount,

I was on the School Management Team so we were apprised of the city going into whole
school reform models, and the different models they were going to choose from. The
pressure to be first cohort, to make the decision yesterday the School Management Team
gave us no review of 2 or 3 models. (Teacher-School 9)

I know one of them, it was either Comer or Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning
Environment Model were scheduled to come here on a Monday and inservice us. The
principal called central office and was told that the decision had to be made by Friday.
But we did have written material that the district provided. I don't honestly believe that
they were in-depth (Teacher-School 10).
The issue of having sufficient time for model selection is examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

Even though the one school (School 4) had been a site that adopted Success for All in 1993, the process was essentially democratic and very similar as those described earlier. One of that school’s teachers described,

We went to many meetings and were given outlines of four models: traditional, eclectic, Comer and Success for All. Four half-day meetings and then we were asked to choose a model. (Teachers-School 4)

The teachers in the other four schools had dramatically different experiences in terms of their involvement in model selection. Three of these schools adopted Success for All, two as Cohort I schools and one as a Cohort II school, and the fourth adopted Co-nect. Teachers from those schools describe their experiences of the model selection process when asked about the extent of their involvement in the selection of the WSR model,

We were presented with one option. We were only told about Success for All. We didn’t know about any other model. (Teacher-School 2)

Nothing, absolutely nothing. We were told to attend a meeting and vote. (Teacher-School 5)

We had to attend an inservice after school. A Success for All presentation kind of presented the program to us, but that was after our feeder school had had it. We were offered a list of choices of the models. But we only received a presentation on Success for All. (Teacher-School 6)
It was the 'powers that be' that wanted Co-nect. Information wasn't given when different people went to different things (models). That information wasn't given to the entire school. Only Co-nect information was given to everyone.

The (ballot) form that they gave out (to vote) had "Co-nect" and "Other." (Teacher-School 8)

When a teacher interview participant from School 2 responded to the question, "You knew there were other models out there?" She explained,

Actually we didn't at the time when we voted. We were presented with Success for All. We voted and were under the assumption that regardless of how we voted, that's what we were choosing. I didn't learn that there were other models until I spoke to teachers at other schools. (Teacher-School 2)

Similarly, the teachers of School 5 were asked the follow-up question, "And you had a single presentation?" The response was,

Yes, from Success for All. And we had to vote, what, the next day I think it was? Somebody came around...the secretary came around with an envelope. It was the next day. We were told we would do it or we could opt to go to another school. (Teacher-School 5)

Teachers from School 6 that also adopted Success for All and received students from School 5 responded,

I think that since our feeder school had already done it for one year, the presentation was more to reaffirm the program for the other schools. (Teacher-School 6)

The teachers from School 8 responded to the follow-up question, "Did you ever have a forum where people would come back and report on what they saw?"
Only with Co-nect.

When we brought that up, that we really didn’t hear much about Little Red Schoolhouse or Corner or any of them. We were told, yes you were. But in reality we weren’t.

(Teacher-School 8)

In pursuing elaboration from the principals in four of these five schools regarding their involvement in the selection of Success for All as the whole school reform model, each was very direct in their conviction to a clearly defined outcome. For these schools, teacher involvement was of little consideration to the principal in the model selection process. The principal of School 2 reflects upon the fact that they were considering Success for All as a program to be funded from Title I resources even before the mandated adoption of whole school reform,

We started talking to the staff about where we were going to go. We were looking at the fact that that we had extremely poor test scores. Our students were not doing very well at all we realized that we had to do something else. We were doing the same old thing and we were getting the same old dismal results. We decided to try something different and see what happens. We had already had an awareness visit from Success for All so when the State talked about that they were looking for cohort one schools, we were ahead of the process. (Principal-School 2)

When presented with the fact “... there was an array of models available. Did you look at any of the other models?” The response was,

Because we were already ahead of the curve, we didn’t want to muddle the process.

Since the State had decided that Success for All was going to be the presumptive model, let’s not go off on a tangent, this is where we are going. (Principal-School 2)
This same assertive desire to control and dictate the future direction was clearly apparent from the principal of School 5,

I want to bring about all the information and I would like to go with the presumptive model for several reasons, mainly because if the State has done their research, this looks like it would be the best. Then I did some of my own. I traveled and found out more about it and I liked it so I thought, let’s work with this. (Principal-School 5)

The School 6 principal had a similar line of thought that reflected confidence in the State and their judgement and their research with somewhat of a fatalistic perspective,

The program that the State was suggesting was Success for All because supposedly of the research and its track record and so forth. If you tried any of the other programs and they didn’t work, you were going to have to do Success for All anyway. So we decided to go with Success for All. (Principal-School 6)

The Principal of School 8 reflected upon decisions that were made prior to the engagement of teachers in model selection,

I think that what should be said is, early on all of the elementary schools agreed that if it were possible, we would all go with the same program. Since there was some mobility within the district, which is now really at a minimum, it would just make it so much easier for training. (Principal, School 8)

**The Driving Force Behind Model Selection**

To this point we have seen that having to act under State mandate to adopt one of the school reform designs, all 10 of the schools complied. The school faculties from all ten schools voted in sufficient numbers to satisfy the respective model developer vote requirement, even
though seven of the schools selected their model on their own, while the teachers of the other three schools were pressured to select Success for All.

In the report, *Better by Design? A Consumer’s Guide to Schoolwide Reform* (1999), its author James Traub expresses a tone of doubt about mandating the adoption of school reform models,

A number of states, including New Jersey, have recently compelled failing schools to select a comprehensive design, though it’s hardly clear that one can successfully force large scale change on reluctant teachers and administrators. (p. 6)

If Traub is correct, what then would cause teachers to vote overwhelmingly to select a particular school reform model? To begin to understand what lies beneath the apparent consensus vote, teachers in all ten schools were asked, “What do you think drove the ultimate selection of your whole school reform model?”

In examining the responses from the seven schools identified earlier where open choice of model selection had been provided, there were some striking similarities underlying teachers’ motivation to select a particular model. These commonalities existed across schools even though different reform models had been chosen. The first of these reasons was an aversion to the structured teaching process that was required by Success for All as represented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

*The Driving Force To Adopt a Whole School Reform Model: An Aversion to The Structure of Success for All*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools That Did Not Select Success for All</th>
<th>School Reform Model</th>
<th>Teacher(s) Expressed Aversion To Success for All Structure</th>
<th>Principal Expressed Aversion to Success for All Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Coalition of Essential Schools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In some cases the model was not directly named. Teachers from those schools reacted,

Some of the schools have a very dictated program where you have to use a specific book.
You have to do it at a specific time. You have to read specific directions immediately
from a manual which we thought was very intrusive... Another teacher and myself did go
to a school that had the scripted program and it wasn’t for us. There was no flexibility.
You had to read the directions exactly how it says in the book; don’t elaborate; don’t go
into an explanation; just read it and let the children do the work. (Teacher-School 1)
We didn’t want prescriptions. (Teacher-School 3)
It was heard repeatedly that we were in favor of that model (Accelerated Schools)
because it was the least restrictive. All of the others came with a packaged program,
prescriptive packaged program. (Teacher-School 10)

The principal of School 10 concurred with the teacher perspective,
Success for All, the focus was too regimented, they (the faculty) wanted to be more
independent. (Principal-School 10)
In other cases, there was an immediate recognition from the research that had been
conducted at the school that Success for All, the presumptive model, was not going to meet the
needs of teachers,
We wanted some structure but not that we had to do Success for All. This had to be
done, that had to be done... (Teacher-School 7)
We had eliminated some because in their dialogue, they were too didactic, too inflexible, so we were really going towards Community for Learning...Right away we pulled out Success for All. (Teacher-School 9)

Success for All, the focus was too regimented, they wanted to be more independent and have a little more leeway. (Teacher-School 10)

A second and even more pervasive motivation that drove the ultimate selection of their reform model was the desire to maintain the status quo (see Table 5). In a number of cases this was expressed as seeking a model that was “least intrusive.” It was realized that it would be much easier to be compliant with the mandate if no real changes to curriculum and instruction had to be made so that filter was used by teachers as they viewed prospective models and ultimately made their selection. Teachers describe this requisite,

Most teachers seemed pretty happy with the Accelerated program because they could make changes in their teaching and yet they could still use their way. Everybody has different teaching styles and we thought this could accommodate all the teaching styles. We just all had to make certain changes but everybody could bring out their own way of teaching and they all felt they wouldn’t have to be completely different in the classroom (Teacher-School 1)

We didn’t want to throw the baby out with the bath water. We wanted to keep the good stuff. (Teacher-School 3)

I think we all looked at it as we can draw a lot of parallels between Co-nect and what we were already doing in the school. The change was not going to be that big. We were doing many of the things they were proposing anyway. (Teacher-School 7)
Then there was a push for the most flexible and adaptive that would fit in with the program that was currently in progress. (Teacher-School 9)

Also upon investigation, we found out that this program was just what we were doing anyway. It involved everything that was being done in the classroom on a daily basis. It was us! (Teacher-School 10)

Table 4.3

The Driving Force To Adopt a Whole School Reform Model: A Desire To Maintain Existing Practices and Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools That Did Not Select Success for All</th>
<th>School Reform Model</th>
<th>Teacher(s) Expressed Desire To Maintain Status Quo</th>
<th>Principal Expressed Desire To Maintain Status Quo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Coalition of Essential Schools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>Community for Learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 10</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A teacher from the one school that adopted Success for All long before the Abbott decision led to the school reform mandates reported that they did so back in 1993 for similar reasons,

I know that I felt that it wouldn’t be a drastic change from what we were doing at that point. We had Basic Skills Instruction (BSI) where children were either pulled out or the BSI instructor would come into the room and this (Success for All) just seemed to fit into what we were doing without changing everything. (Teacher-School 4)

These teacher reactions and the pursuit of a model that would protect the status quo was universally endorsed by most of the principals of these same schools in their responses to the question “What do you think drove the selection of the model?”
So we were basically looking for something that we already had in existence. (Principal-School 1)

The ease of which we could adapt it to what we already have. (Principal-School 3)

For us it was what we were familiar with doing all the time here. (Principal-School 7)

I think it came out to be, well we have to do this. This is a necessary evil in the Abbott decision. This is going to have the least impact negatively on our program. (Principal-School 9)

One school expressed particular frustration due to having to comply with the mandated reform at all. This school had the highest achievement levels of all 10 schools that participated in this study (see Table 1). One teacher related,

We were told by every state person that came in here, you should be a model for the entire city and the state of New Jersey).

We were thinking, “Why do we have to do it? Why?” (Teacher-School 9)

That school’s principal validated those feelings,

The staff was, and continues to be skeptical about whole school reform in general and in the model. (Principal-School 9)

The experiences of the three schools in this study that adopted Success for All as a result of the Abbott-driven mandate were quite different from those schools that selected other models. When examining this same issue as to what drove the selection of the model, teacher responses included,

I just think that the first on board (to be a cohort one school) meant that you were first to get the funds. I think the choice was made upon money. (Teacher-School 2)
Money! They financed more of it (the adoption of a whole school reform model) if you took Success for All than if you went for another program, as we found out. (Teacher-School 5)

The fact that our feeder school had it. It was recommended by the State. The union was also backing it. (Teacher-School 6)

In a RAND report by Mark Berends and colleagues (2001), they describe,

... some schools are often targets for forced restructuring efforts, particularly those that exhibit chronic poor performance. (p. 17)

All three of these schools reflected low achievement levels (see Table 2). In each case, the teacher perceptions as evidenced by their quoted analyses, indicate that what drove the selection of their model was external to their locus of control. And yet one wonders, how could the vote have been 80% or higher in these schools to adopt the model if people felt that it was being imposed upon them at these three schools? To understand what motivated people to vote for Success for All, the teachers were asked, “What was the most important factor you considered in selecting Success for All?” Their responses projected a sense of hope even though they felt that their future work was being imposed upon them,

What is it going to do for our children as far as improvement? The program that we had before this was a total disaster, the whole language approach. Anything would be better than what we were doing. So I was just hoping we would see improvement with the kids in reading. (Teacher-School 2)

So we kind of went into it with a little bit of hope and thinking, well it sounds like it might be a good program and maybe we should try it. Maybe this will work. (Teacher-School 5)
Maybe because our feeder school was using it and it seemed to be working there for a year. I watched it in their classrooms and it seemed pretty good. The teachers said it was good. The students seemed to learn. (Teacher-School 6)

The principals at each of these schools were faced with the reality of particularly low student achievement. They were being held accountable by their districts' administration therefore there was a sense of urgency to become involved with the compliance of the mandate to adopt Success for All. Hope was based on the research that resulted in this school reform design being established as the presumptive model. Those principals described that optimism,

The district had just published information about the schools and where they were performing academically. In most cases we were at the bottom or near the bottom.

We need to take a chance. There's no place for us to go other than up (Principal-School 2).

There was pressure coming in from every direction, from the State primarily, the court and there was a need for change. The kids were not doing well. I don't know to what extent they (the teachers) knew that the kids were not doing well because we don't assess at the K-2 level with standardized tests, so they didn't feel that pressure. But some other things that happened afterwards reinforced the fact that the kids were not doing well.

(Principal-School 5)

To be honest, we did encourage the teachers to vote for it because the handwriting was on the wall in terms of the test scores; in terms of whole school reform (the mandate); and in terms of what would happen if you adopted something else and it didn’t work. (Principal-School 6)
The Role Played by the Principal in the Selection of the Model

Leadership style, school culture, pressures and influences acting upon that school site leader determined the role played by the principal in the selection of the whole school reform model. The principals of the 10 schools participating in this study all played a significant role and yet those roles were quite different. When both the teachers and the principal were asked about the role played by the principal, there was typically congruence in their responses and/or their perceptions about that role that was played.

As illustrated in Table 4.4, the principals in six of the schools played a role that could be termed as facilitative. They assisted the teachers by seeking out information on the available models and arranging for presentations on the varying models. In some cases they provided time for their school’s School Management Team or leadership team to attend presentations or visit schools where a model was being implemented. In other cases the principal provided substitute or in-school coverage to enable teachers to attend district meetings or visit implementing locations. Since the principal generally had a closer liaison with their central office staff, many of them participated in New Jersey Department of Education presentations that were provided for school administrators. Many shared that information in various forms as they received it. When these “facilitative principals” were asked, “What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?” interview responses reflected that involvement.

I guess it was 100% (involvement) because to begin with, the principals had to be involved. We had to make sure our staff was informed and exposed to the other WSR programs. (Principal-School 1)

Teachers from that school concurred,
I think no more than anyone else. Sometimes I think she facilitated some of the discussions by expressing her opinion about one program or another. Basically she expressed her opinions and said, "Ok, what do you think?" She always said, "Remember, you guys are the ones that have to deal with the program, not me." (Teacher-School 1)

In School 3, there was also congruency indicated by both the principal and the teachers regarding the facilitative role played by the principal,

We had a voice in it, but it was an equal voice. (Principal-School 3)

A teacher response elaborated on that role,

She was pretty involved. She came to some meetings with us. She turns a lot of it over to us. She knows what her teachers will and will not feel comfortable with and how we could adapt to this. If we needed time, she would pull you out of class, get a sub for you. (Teacher-School 3)

School 4, the legacy Success for All site that had selected and begun their implementation some 9 years earlier, teachers reported facilitative leadership when asked about the role of the principal in the selection process,

The same as everybody else, one vote.

...she gave us the time and made sure there were substitutes for the classrooms so that we were able to go and visit other schools. She would bring them back and have them get up and speak about what they had seen at the other schools. (Teacher-School 4)

The principal of School 4 had retired some years earlier so was unavailable to validate the teacher reflections regarding model selection and the role she played in that process.
The scenario in School 7 was also very facilitative regarding the role played by the principal. Both the teachers and the principal substantiated congruency regarding his leadership role.

He played the same role we did. He ultimately left the decision to us. I think he would have backed us no matter what we chose. I think he knew we were the ones that were actually going to make this work. (Teacher-School 7)

The principal described how he facilitated the final stages of teacher decision-making toward model selection,

What we did to finalize was to send teachers, actually three teachers to visit some of the whole school reform models out-of-state to get a different perspective. And the final thing that happened, I coordinated everybody with a team. We kind of narrowed it down from this, this, and this. OK, these are our choices and then we had a final vote.

(Principal-School 7)

The teachers in School 9 reported that the principal, although he was new, played largely a resource role in providing information as to what each model entailed,

He was the one who was really knowledgeable. He looked up and knew what was there. He was attentive in knowing what they were about. He actually researched the best that he could within the time limit and brought that information to us. Then we looked at it and made our decision. (Teacher-School 9)

Finally in School 10, there was a true appreciation for the empowerment provided to teachers in making this selection decision,

Our principal truly let us go about doing it the right way. He gave us every assistance he could. He gave us time. He was wonderful with that and he really stayed neutral. He
said I have my feelings. I may tell you about it afterwards but I'm not going to say anything because I don't want you to feel pressured. (Teacher-School 10)

These interview responses reflect that not only did the principal play a facilitative role in attempting to create an environment and conditions for teachers to make an informed decision but also that the principal was a participating colleague in the process of school reform model selection. These principals, since the State Department of Education invited them to participate in informational forums and had more effective access channels to information through their central office networks, typically collected and shared information with members of their school communities. The outcome of the selection process was left to the teachers and reflected by their ultimate vote for a particular model.

Table 4.4

*The Role Played by the Principal in the Research and Ultimate Selection of the Whole School Reform Model as Perceived by Teachers and Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>School Reform Model</th>
<th>Teacher Description of Principal Role in Model Selection</th>
<th>Principal Description of Their Own Role in Model Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Coalition of Essential Schools</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced/Facilitative**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>Co-nect</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
<td>Autocratic/Forced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>Community for Learning</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 10</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
<td>Facilitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Principal who led the selection of Success for All in 1993 had retired and was unavailable for interview.
The principal of School 5 reported involvement that was somewhat inconsistent to a particular leadership style,

    The research was done in the fall and in the spring, but once I decided on my end that this is what I wanted to do…

But then added,

    I didn’t impose it upon them. (Principal-School 5)

The other four schools however encountered a dramatically different experience. This is reflected by not only the role played by the principal in the selection process, but also the lack of congruency between these leaders’ responses and the perspective of their teachers.

School 2 was the first of these schools where Success for All was adopted where the decision was somewhat forced by the building principal. However, there was a perceived understanding of the principal’s motivation to move the staff to adopt Success for All. This is illustrated through a teacher response to the question, “What role did your principal play in the selection process of your whole school reform model?”

    90 (per cent), then whoever the facilitator was at that time, she was the other one.

I think it all goes back to the State dangles these lovely things at you. I’m not putting the blame on him because if I were looking at thousands and thousands of dollars coming to my building, I would jump on it too. Especially if you’re sitting in a school district where supplies are dwindling and the program that we’re doing is not working and test scores keep dipping down and down. I just feel that the process wasn’t done correctly towards the teachers. (Teacher-School 2)

The principal indicated that this school’s test scores were “at the bottom or near the bottom” so there was a sense of desperation to try something new,
That's what I said to the staff, we need to take a chance. There's no place for us to go other than up. What I said to the staff was, we need to do this. I think that was my role in the process. (Principal-School 2)

In School 5 when teachers were asked about the role played by the principal, the response was a simple,

She pushed it.

Further elaboration from the teachers yielded,

I think there were a few people who got together and looked at some of the models and they decided they were all pretty similar.

Were they classroom teachers?

No, I don't remember anyone being asked to look at anything.

None of us in this school were exposed to any other program.

I didn't even know there were other programs until the next year.

Another teacher from that school described the experience as an analogy,

It's like going into an ice cream store and they say, "OK, we have vanilla. Choose."

(Teacher-School 5)

In School 5, there was some incongruency between the teacher and the principal responses around this issue of the principal role. The principal reported,

The research was done in the fall and in the spring but once I decided on my end that this is what I wanted to do. I didn't impose it on them. I really told them, please research it. I didn't provide anything. I just thought I would leave it up to the staff. Everyone was looking at models.
I think what motivated them was because I wanted it, leadership. I wanted it and the Superintendent wanted it. (Principal-School 5)

Although this principal stated that there was no imposition, the teachers felt that sense of being forced. Success for All was the only model that was presented to faculty. The Superintendent visited staff to encourage teachers for their vote. A teacher reported,

We were told that we would do it or we could opt to go to another school.

(Teacher-School 5)

From both the teachers as well as the principal there was a similar sense of urgency to do something different to improve student achievement because what was currently being used (whole language as similar to School 2) wasn’t successful. This sentiment was expressed,

I feel too that we had to do something. The program that we had wasn’t working.

(Teacher-School 5)

There was a need for change. The kids were not doing well. (Principal-School 5)

Other than an awareness that the principal had attended State presentations on the various models, the teachers were unsure of the role played by the principal of School 6 in the selection of Success for All other than she sat in on the inservices with the teachers. Teachers reflected,

We don’t know any other role. That was it.

She let us go for visitations (to a neighboring feeder school) during our ‘specials’ (periods where students engaged in visual art, physical education, music, etc.).

(Teacher-School 6)

The principal described talking about the different reform models with district administration but then on a number of occasions described the emphasis to select Success for All,
To be honest, we did encourage the teachers to vote for it because the handwriting was on the wall in terms of test scores, in terms of whole school reform, in terms of what would happen if you adopted something else and it didn’t work.

When asked the question whether there were any strong opinions? The responses was,

No. They went along with it because they knew we wanted them to. They did recognize that we had to do something that we had to improve test scores. (Principal-School 6)

The onus upon the teachers to vote for Success for All in these final three schools seemed to originate from their common lack of student achievement as evidenced by State test scores.

The principal in each case, in collaboration with district administrators, very clearly pushed teachers to select this model. In each case the vote exceeded the 80% minimum requirement that was interpreted as having staff support.

When the teachers from School 8 were asked about the role of their principal, one teacher responded,

Our principal is our head honcho here. She is the boss. She makes the decisions and we followed through to keep her program going.

However, these teachers believed that she was being influenced by her superiors,

She never really said it. Something happened later. When we first started the process she must have gotten the impression from someone that this is where to go, and that your staff is expected too. (Teachers-School 8)

The principal from this school related that there were indeed some influences acting the school’s decisions,

Early on all the elementary schools agreed that if it were possible, we would all go with the same program. (Principal-School 8)
Teachers from School 9 praised the principal’s involvement in the model selection process,

He was the one who was really knowledgeable.

He actually researched the best he could within the time limit and brought that information to us. Then we looked at it and made our decision. (Teachers-School 9)

That principal, who had recently come out of the classroom teacher role, leading up to the selection process shared,

I had taught 5th grade SFA reading and found it to be very scripted and confining.

We were wooed by Temple University to come to another Abbott district to see how CFL was working. We liked the flexibility the model had to offer.

The push from the very beginning was to go with CFL. It wasn’t a push from central office. It was kind of a ground swell amongst principals and School Management Teams. (Principal-School 9)

The teachers of School 10 were also appreciative of the role played by their principal,

Our principal truly let us go about doing it the right way. He gave us every assistance he could. He gave us time. He was wonderful with that and he really stayed neutral.

He said, I have my feelings. I may tell you afterwards but I’m not going to say anything because I don’t want you to feel pressured. (Teachers-School 10)

This principal concurred and elaborated on the role described by the teachers,

We were asked to go out and investigate all of the models and we did. We invited people into our building. I can remember we had after-school conferences on Modern Red Schoolhouse and Coalition of Essential Schools. I was a facilitator. I was able to give teachers the time. I gave them the opportunity to go and investigate.
Beyond the principal, were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a particular model? The reactions to that question make up the next section.

Other Influences on Teachers to Select a Model

In addition to the principal in some schools applying their influence through their position of authority, as described in the last section, there were additional forces. According to teachers and principals both, some central office administrations attempted to exert influence to select a particular model. In School 9 that was the case,

It seemed that “downtown” wanted Success for All.

We know what these kids need. We know what these kids want. Maybe those outside influences don’t know what our children need. (Teacher-School 10)

The principal had to champion the cause for the teachers’ decision,

They (central office administration) gave it their best shot to convince me to go with another program. But these teachers, once this snowball started to go down this hill, am I going to go back now after someone suggests that we consider another model? I couldn’t do it and I explained that to the people who called me. It was absolutely the way the State intended it to be, with support from the district. Once they realized that the teachers wanted this program, they gave me support 100%. (Principal-School 10)

The teachers from School 1 perceived that the central office administration was influential in their decision based on economic reasons,

A key factor in our district is the money source. How much is it going to cost to run this program? We have to pay all this money to run this program (the contract with the
reform model developer). We're not going to the money for the materials we need to run
the program the way we need to. The district said we could not pick Success for All so
right away they were narrowing down the options. (Teacher-School 1)

The principal of this school did mention the funding issue as a factor. The role played by central
office was that of resource. When asking this principal about the role of central office, there was
no pressure? The response was,

No, it was up to the schools. (Principal-School 1)

The teachers of School 5 believed that their district had a need to be on the leading edge
of new innovations,

This school adopted Success for All and was made to vote for the model in a very short
period of time. The district has a way of wanting to be first. (Teacher-School 5)

The principal was influenced by the availability of resources and what that meant for that school.

When asked whether there were other influences at work, the response was,

I think the financial part. I think that the fact that we were to be given so much money. I
don't know if they (the teachers) were aware of it but it definitely influenced me. The
fact that we were going to get all the materials we wanted. We were going to get the
tutors and all the support and everything aligned to the model. That was important to me.
(Principal-School 5)

The teachers from School 6 concurred with the other school from their district (School 5),
I guess Success for All is the one they wanted us to choose because they didn't give us
presentations on the other ones.

When you say they, who is they?

From the top.
The Superintendent along with the principals. The administration. (Teacher-School 6) The principal did concur that the Superintendent played a role of influence,

We had a Superintendent who recognized from the get-go it wasn’t a good idea to try different models in one school district. Therefore our Superintendent did push us to choose Success for All and all the schools to do it together so that there could be a force, to be united, that could make sure it (implementation) happened. (Principal-School 6)

In those schools that were not cited in this section, it was perceived that there were no additional factors or influences that were acting upon the staff to select a particular model other than the anti-Success for All sentiments that were described earlier.

The exploration process prior to the actual vote to adopt a particular model varied greatly from school to school. In some schools that process was maximized by the principal and teachers through their commitment to the facilitation of information acquisition. In other schools the process was minimized because of the leadership’s singular agenda to adopt a specific model. This availability of information was just one factor that was reported when teachers and principals were asked, “To what extent do you feel you had enough information to make an informed decision to select a particular model?”

Enough Information to Make an Informed Decision?

Time was a factor that was identified as an issue in getting enough information to make that informed decision. The establishment of whether a school was going to be a Cohort I (1999-2000); Cohort II (2000-2001) or Cohort III (2001-2002) school had some impact on the perception of sufficient time. Teachers from School 1 recounted,
They gave us quite a bit of literature. They gave us the literature and they wanted us to make a decision. I would have appreciated more time to read over the literature that we were given. It would have been more beneficial if we had had a workshop. If we had someone come in from each program and discuss the pros and cons, we would have been able to select more objectively. We couldn’t go and visit other schools or anything like that. We weren’t given that option. (Teachers-School 1)

The principal concurred with the distribution of print material. There was clear disagreement however in the recollection of opportunities for visitation,

There were 2 or 3 other schools that had already started from the first cohort and I asked if they wanted to visit and some of them did visit another school to see their whole school reform program. So they were given the opportunity. (Principal-School 1)

Table 4.5

*The Perception of Teachers and Principals That Teachers Had Sufficient Information to Make An Informed Decision To Select Their Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>School Reform Model</th>
<th>Teacher Perception That They Had Sufficient Information to Make An Informed Model Selection</th>
<th>Principal Perception That Teachers Had Sufficient Information to Make An Informed Model Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Coalition of Essential Schools</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
<td>*N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>Co-nnect</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>Co-nnect</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>Community for Learning</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 10</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Not Sufficient Information</td>
<td>Sufficient Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Principal who led the selection of Success for All in 1993 had retired and was unavailable for interview.*
In School 2 where teachers believed that the Success for All model was imposed, there was clear inconsistency between the teachers and principal when asked whether there was enough information to make an informed choice to select a model.

None...except for Success for All. (Teacher-School 2)

The principal on the other hand related,

We heard that there were some schools that expressed later on that they didn’t have the opportunity to choose their model. We were not one of those schools that had that experience. I think it had to do with the fact that we were already in the pipeline and we just continued on. The vote said that 90% of the staff wants this so we were going to move on. (Principal-School 2)

It seems that this school was not restricted in its model selection by external forces such as the school district, but within the culture of that school, the teachers reported that they were very limited in their access to information.

The experience of School 3 illustrated a difference in the confidence level of having a representative group of colleagues research on behalf of the faculty and then report back or “turnkey” the information versus experiencing the research source first-hand to make an informed reform model decision. A teacher’s recollection indicated that perception,

I feel I did not have enough information so we went by the School Management Team committee. What they brought back, we trusted them.

Some people went and visited but most didn’t. We trusted their judgement and that’s how I voted. Some teachers were confused. (Teacher-School 3)

The principal perceived that the representative group research was sufficient to provide ample information to make an informed decision,
They were given every bit of information. If they asked a question or if they even showed an interest in a certain program, the research was done. So if it was asked, it was answered. Oh I definitely think they had enough information. (Principal-School 3)

The teachers from School 4, who selected and began implementation 9 years earlier, believed that they had enough information to make an informed decision,

I think we had enough discussion groups that we had a feel for what we were going into. We were given these half-day sessions and they were spaced far enough apart that we were able to discuss. Then we were given small group discussions at those meetings. (Teacher-School 4)

The principal from this school had retired some years earlier after the selection of their reform model.

A feeling of malcontent was evident in the reaction and comments of the teachers from School 5. Since they were only presented with Success for All, there was virtually no choice to make. Following up on that issue they were asked, “Do you feel you had enough information on that one model?” Responses included,

No, I would like to have gone to observe. And when you’re told to go to the Bronx or Brooklyn in June…

I don’t think Success for All ever told the State or anybody what was involved in this program. I feel Success for All hasn’t been very truthful about the whole thing. And you know if we had the opportunity to look at other programs, we might have (still) gone with Success for All. But we had nothing to base it on. We may have said this is the best for our children. (Teacher-School 5)
The principal of this school openly described a process that was autocratic tempered with descriptions of open opportunities for teachers to take initiative to conduct independent research. The research was done in the fall and in the spring, but once I decided on my end that this is what I wanted to do. I didn’t impose it on them. I really told them, please research it I didn’t provide anything. I just thought I would leave it up to my staff.

Later in the interview, the principal expressed contradictory reflections,

As a teacher you would have gotten handouts that told you what the different models were. I think people read short paragraphs better. At faculty meetings we discussed it a lot.

This same principal described visitations experienced by the administrative team,

Whenever we visited and saw models working, we saw nothing that came anywhere close to that kind (Success for All) of success.

When asked, “Did the teachers visit at all?” The response was,

Our facilitator went to another district in New Jersey, but the model wasn’t really being done right there. (Principal-School 5)

The teachers of School 6, also from District C, expressed lamentations to have been better informed and would have wanted to,

Know all the models. Be presented all the models to feel more comfortable. Be sent out to other school districts that have every type of model and see it in action.

I would have liked more information looking back over the other models we could have had. Maybe if they brought the other models to us to present, we could have compared them.
When asked, "What was the timeframe from when you had the Success for All presentation and then had to vote?" the response was,

Two days. I think we had two afternoons. Didn't it seem that we had to adopt it immediately? We didn't have any time at all. (Teachers-School 6)

This principal concurred with the teachers and elaborated on the administrative pressure being applied to teachers,

They didn't have extensive information but they had information. They had whatever we were able to pick up at State meetings.

We had people go to presentations, if they wanted to go, but we still pushed for Success for All and the staff did go along and vote for it. (Principal-School 6)

The teachers from School 7 described a sense that they had a depth of information that resulted in a sense of confidence that they were making an informed choice. It was the value of visiting other schools that provided that depth of knowledge as described by their teachers,

Personally, it was after I visited the one school and I saw it actually in operation, it became more clear what we would actually be involved in. Then when we visited the second school that was more like our school, it became even more clear. If they can make it work, we can make it work. (Teacher-School 7)

The principal of this school expressed a strong commitment to ensuring that everyone had the depth of information necessary to make an informed choice. That principal related,

We had to make everybody understand the ramifications of what we were endeavoring towards and how we now are going to use this as a tool to make ourselves better.

(Principal-School 7)
Teachers from School 8 expressed strong emotion about the fact one model was being exposed and emphasized for adoption while other models were addressed superficially. Even Co-nect, the model that was being imposed, was not depicted accurately according to the teachers,

Many people felt that they didn't know enough about any other one to make an honest choice.

Where Co-nect is the only one where we were all together, where we had a faculty meeting, where we actually knew what the program was supposed to involve. But on the others (other models) it was so shady and only some people knew, and how could anyone have really voted knowing we really didn't know?

We knew, just the fact that the district paid for people to go to Maryland (to see Co-nect), sleep in hotels, this was out of the ordinary for us. We knew. That was telling us right off the bat that this is the way that we would have to go.

It was the only one that we had enough information to say, I can work with this.

When asked if there were visitations to other models, the response was,

To somewhere and look? No.

The man that came in to present it (Co-nect) skimmed over it. He said it was just a little project, that's it, no big deal.

They left out exactly how much work was involved. (Teachers-School 8)

This principal believed that it was an issue of initiative and responsibility for the teachers to get the information they needed in order to be informed,

I think at the time of voting if they didn't feel comfortable making that decision, it was only because they, themselves didn't read through the materials or ask the right questions
because any questions that they had, the committee of people that were responsible gave them the information. (Principal-School 8)

The teachers from School 9, as cited earlier were somewhat indignant that they had to select a model at all. Their students were achieving at levels above the State average. They engaged in an exploratory process but from their perspective, the rules seemed to change based upon both State and district expectations,

Then there was a push for the most flexible and adaptive that would fit in with the program that was currently in progress. But what the State changed their mind on later totally threw me was that you could write your own model versus selecting one of the choices. As a faculty member, it was kind of like we’ve looked at what’s out there and if we have to pick one, this will probably be the best one for us. I think in all honesty if we had more time, we would have had trips and would have seen these programs. We were given a false impression that we were going to have more time. All of a sudden, the powers that be said, “make a decision now.” This has been typical in our district, “we’re thinking about doing this;” the next thing you know it is a reality. (Teachers-School 9)

The principal agreed with the teacher perspective about wanting and needing more time to gather information in order to make an informed decision,

The timeframe was very compressed. I don’t think all of us had enough time to really make the decision in the way we would have liked to. If you give someone 6 months to make a decision, it takes 6 months. I wish we had waited to go second cohort. I think it would have told us a lot. I don’t know that we would have done Community for Learning again. (Principal-School 9)
The issue of time was also a concern for the teachers of School 10 in the information-gathering process. They described,

Because there was a time restriction on us, we could have gotten more information. It was different when you had a chance to go and visit and you see first-hand, compared with having someone come in and give you a sales pitch. Success for All was one of the models we visited. Some people thought it was great (conceptually), but when we visited they didn’t think so. (Teachers-School 10)

The principal from this school felt most positive that enough information had been provided, or at the very least enough opportunity had been provided for model selection information to be acquired. Because of district imposed time constraints, this principal had only one regret,

We did have a deadline for a Friday afternoon, a district deadline. We were supposed to have Community for Learning come in that following Monday. That was the only regret that I had, that we couldn’t have the people come in from Community for Learning (or referenced as the Adaptive Learning Environment Model [Adaptive Learning Environment Model]). That was the only thing if we had another day or two. We would have had a live presentation for the whole faculty. (Principal-School 10)

The experience of those teachers who had to vote for a model through which reform was going to be pursued was varied. Their common experience however was that the teachers and principals alike were directed by the same mandate, to select one of the available packaged reform strategies. The final question to be addressed pursues the level of satisfaction with the model that was ultimately selected.
Satisfaction with the Adopted Model

The results of being directed by a State mandate had implications for one’s everyday routines, work focus and general sense of well being. Depending upon the magnitude of the changes that teachers opted to take on, or were coopted into taking on, the receptivity of those teachers to implement the change was affected. And yet, there generally a sense of satisfaction and/or accomplishment resulting in observable benefits for schools and students regardless of how democratic and participative the model selection process played out. This is illustrated through the responses of both teachers and principals when asked, “To what extent are you satisfied with the model you selected?”

Table 4.6

*The Perceived Level of Satisfaction of the Selected Whole School Reform Model by Teachers and Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>School Reform Model</th>
<th>Teacher Satisfaction of Selected Model</th>
<th>Principal Satisfaction of Selected Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Accelerated Schools</td>
<td>Generally Satisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
</tr>
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<td>School 2</td>
<td>Success for All</td>
<td>Generally Satisfied</td>
<td>Generally Satisfied</td>
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<td>Dissatisfied</td>
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</table>

* Principal who led the selection of Success for All in 1993 had retired and was unavailable for interview.
In School 1 where the selection process for Accelerated Schools was based on a perception of being able to largely maintain existing practices without the structure of Success for All, teachers reflected on the impact of their model adoption,

I can see some improvement in the children. It made me do more hands-on than the traditional teaching. We are working at a fast pace. Things we do in the Accelerated program are things that we had been doing anyway. But we do more of it, like hands-on, than we did. The writing has improved with the Accelerated program.

There were frustrations however, particularly related to issues of time,

The constant meetings running late into the evening, I’m sick of that. One of the teachers counted the number of meetings that we had at the end of a year and it was over 100. It’s ridiculous. These school programs are making education become your life.

Despite these feelings of being overwhelmed, teachers describe the impact on the culture of their school,

I think it brought us all closer together. We all have the same goals now. We probably did before but we never really discussed it. There’s just this unity now. We’re focused. We know what we’re doing and where we’re going. I think we would do that, but it is just so clear now. The children are working better in groups now, taking risks, and are just a little more comfortable with the whole thing. I see that the staff really works to enhance the curriculum from the board of education. (Teachers-School 1)

The principal who was very clearly being held accountable for State assessment scores was less complimentary about the model and had a sense of urgency that was not being shared by the Accelerated Schools staff. There was frustration that this process model was not addressing student assessment scores head on,
They weren’t really meeting my needs, in fact the question to them was, “How are you going to improve my test scores?” That’s the main purpose of the whole school reform program. I don’t have time for them to take me by the hand and slowly follow me, carry me through the process of succeeding academically.

Accelerated program is a tool that helps me run the school, just like this computer, it is a tool. I take little bits and pieces and I have them work for me. (Principal-School 1)

The teachers of School 2 had clearly and succinctly described having Success for All imposed upon them, “We were told, this is what we’re having.” Even through their feelings of being directed with minimal input into the selection process, the teachers described their satisfaction with the model,

I’m satisfied with the reading. The hard work I’ve put into it has a lot to do with it. As far as the math part, I’m not satisfied at all, in all aspects. In reading there’s a balance between cooperative learning and independent learning. I don’t see that balance in math. Our scores have improved. I have seen a big difference. When we looked at the kids who have started out in Success for All and have been with the program all the way through (factoring out mobile students), they have improved considerably. When we adopted the model they told us you don’t need anything else. That’s not true. (Teachers-School 2)

The principal of that school shared the feelings of satisfaction to the point of elation,

I am ecstatic. I am just as happy as can be. The results are we made minimal growth in the first year. In the second and the third year we just started taking off. The one thing is that we’re all on the same sheet of music and we all want the same things and we’re all working for the common goal. Success for All has been successful for us. Does it have
its limitations? Yes. We know that. This is our vehicle but we know that we have to supplement that. Right now we’re as happy as can be. (Principal-School 2)

Teachers from School 3 were also satisfied with their model, largely because it aligned with what they were already doing.

We were already doing a lot of the things that the program had ideas about. There’s a lot of room for creativity and not a lot of restrictions. We really didn’t have to shift our thinking a lot.

We didn’t have to make a lot of changes because were doing many of the things already. Although this brought this high level of satisfaction, there was a feeling of indignation because of the money being paid to the model developer for practices they believed they were already implementing. Teachers describe,

Why are we paying someone with a model we are already doing? They should be paying us. (Teachers-School 3)

The principal of School 3 echoes the teachers’ satisfaction,

Very, very satisfied. I like the fact that it’s a process, not a program. I like the fact that we can take what we do and fit it into their model. (Principal-School 3)

The teachers from School 4, the legacy Success for All site, were satisfied to some degree with the model but were somewhat frustrated with changes that had been made to the model over the 9 years since they had begun implementation. This group of teachers reflected,

It changes every year with new things being added to the program. It’s hard to get used to doing it one way because of its research, they’re revamping it. I know change is good, but there is too much change in the materials. They’re always being updated.
Other frustrations were as a result of school organizational decisions rather than issues with the model. The teachers reported to have compromised some of Success for All's unique elements,

The group sizes have changed. We no longer have small sizes. Smaller class size, that was the whole thing...no more than 20 in a classroom, no more than 15 in a reading group. The tutoring, a very important component, they are being pulled to do other things as well: sometimes class coverage; substituting; sometimes they're pulled out to go on a field trip. (Teachers-School 4)

School 5 where teachers felt that Success for All had been imposed on them reported very little in the way of satisfaction. The only positive aspect of the model identified was the structure that the program required,

For bilingual students, it provided structure for them. It provides a good structure and a foundation which a creative teacher can adapt it to your purposes.

The drawback of the model, as perceived by this school's teachers, is this very rigid and structured design,

See that's the problem. We've been told that we have to stay to the script. That is the problem, the lack of flexibility. And the lack of creativity. (Teachers-School 5)

The principal from School 5 was most satisfied with some of the outcomes of the model, I am very satisfied because I see the figures (test score results). It's working.

Beyond the impact on test scores however, this school leader had some reservations about some aspects of the model,

It says success for all, but it's not for all. I see that happening with special populations. We have to do more for special education, bilingual and gifted. But for other populations
it is working very well. The first thing that they thought was that it was a reading/writing program and it's not. It is only reading. They had to do extra writing and we didn't have that in place. In math there is no tutoring. There is no support. We realize that we need something more already. (Principal-School 5)

In School 6, the school that received students from School 5 in District C, the teachers were generally satisfied with Success for All. This level of satisfaction seemed to result from both a local decision where teachers were afforded greater levels of implementation flexibility as well as student contentment with aspects of the program. Teachers reflected,

When we first started, I felt it was very controlled but as the program progressed, it is a very highly structured program but we were allowed to change some of the activities that we do every day so that it did not become monotonous. We can change, for example, the Adventures in Writing. We can change the topic to make it more interesting. I think that the students enjoy reading to each other and they answer some treasure hunt questions together. I think they like Adventures in Writing because they discuss what they are going to write with their partner.

When asked if Success for All had made any difference in terms of student achievement, the response was,

Not as far as the ESPA [The State 4th grade assessment-Elementary Student Proficiency Assessment]. (Teachers-School 6)

The principal from this school had mixed feelings about the programs effectiveness, I was satisfied because it is a decent program that employs many good teaching strategies. I was pleased with the fact that the mediocre teacher could do a better job of teaching reading because of the program. I wished that I had the energy and
perseverance to write our own program to teach our children to read and write. I would have rather done our own program. They needed structure. They needed a whole school reform program. So we went along with it. (Principal-School 6)

The reflection of the School 7 teachers saw school culture changes as a result of the implementation of their whole school reform model. The engagement in the work of the model implementation and trust that their model would result in some level of success was expressed,

I think there is more collaboration among the teachers: the grade level meetings, the common prep time… I wondered I this was going to be an extra. Just one more thing we had to do. And I think 50 – 60% of the faculty felt the same way. Once we got started, we started to see changes. It (the whole school reform model Co-nect) was supposed to be woven into your curriculum already. We had a hard time understanding how to do that. This year we took a couple of the standards and we worked backwards. (Teachers-School 7)

Their principal had a high level of satisfaction because of the commitment that the Co-nect model required of teachers in looking at project-based teaching, as well as the increased engagement in learning that was designed for students,

One of the big things I like about this model is that it really makes you use the computer because you have the project web site that you touch in to. That’s the one thing I like about that because the kids really do learn better when there is active participation instead of sitting in rows or sitting in groups of 4 or 5 where we think they’re working in groups but all they are, are glorified rows. (Principal-School 7)
The teachers of School 8, also from District D implementing the Co-nect model, are don't believe that the quality of service being provided by the developer is helpful. These teachers related,

I was disappointed with it. I don't think they have a whole lot to offer. I think we do more of the programming for them and we supply them with more information and knowledge than they're giving us. Those of us who are classroom teachers, it is an overwhelming task. I would say the only new thing we've gotten out of it would be using rubrics which they didn't need to pay $65,000 for. We were already using the core standards. The workshops that they presented here were embarrassing and ineffective. They were unprepared. They were really poor. (Teachers-School 8)

The principal is generally satisfied and had a higher degree of satisfaction regarding the quality of service provided by the model developer, than did the teachers,

I'm satisfied with what the teachers are doing. But as far as what the teachers have learned and what benefits they have gained from all of this, it is something I would support. I believe in what we are doing. I have to say that we have learned a lot.

(Principal-School 8)

The teachers engaged in the group interview from School 9, the highest achieving school in this study, saw that their implementation of Community for Learning had benefits for student management processes as well as implications for their school culture. They shared,

I had used learning centers but I hadn't used their system of self-scheduling so you knew who was where. I have to say that I think it is an excellent model of classroom organization. The calling card too, instead of a student raising their hand, they put a card up. They can work in their folders until I can get to them. I thought it made my job as a
teacher easier because the kids were more independent. There is more conversation among teachers. Whether it has been positive or negative, it has brought teachers together. The key points that we like about Community for Learning we use, other aspect we don't. (Teachers-School 9)

The principal of School 9 was less satisfied and complimentary of the model than the teachers based on outcomes of the model, quality of the service provided by the developer, and Community for Learning’s support staff,

A lot of what I thought was going to happen early on did not take place. We really don't have any clearer picture of how we’re doing than we did when we first started.

Student performance data is lacking in the model and I'm not happy about that.

We're doing our best to work with the implementation Specialist who comes into the building, but he is not well respected. He is not well liked. I keep asking him to do demo lessons. So he comes in for 5 or 6 hours and we put up with him and we listen. It's unfortunate, I don't see a marked improvement. (Principal-School 9)

Finally, the teachers of School 10 describe a broad level of satisfaction with the philosophical underpinnings of the model and the impact those tenets have had. Yet they describe some discomfort with the lack of structure that exists with this process-based model of reform and particularly as it relates to low quality training by the Accelerated Schools staff,

The children are happy. The teachers are happy and it seems to be coming along.

Learning is as much the process as the end result. The program is not structured and in a sense that has created problems. As much as teachers said they did not want a prescriptive program, there have been times when they were waiting for me to hand them that book to do 1 through 10... and you will now be an Accelerated School.
The training leaves a lot to be desired. We really would be happy if the training were stronger. (Teachers-School 10)

There was great consistency with the impressions of the principal of this school and the teachers, particularly as it related to satisfaction with the model itself and the quality of the training by the Accelerated Schools staff,

The model itself is wonderful. No regrets about that at all. I have been a little disappointed in the training. A little disappointed in the cooperation they gave us through the budgetary process. There was inconsistency in the training. (Principal-School 10)

Teacher Recommendations for Future Model Selection

These expressions from all ten schools of their varying degrees of satisfaction with their selected reform models logically cause individuals to reflect upon how the selection process could have been improved if they had to do it all over again. In order to explore the lessons learned from the experiences of teachers and principals in this study, the question was posed, “If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a whole school reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?”

The responses in a number of cases from teachers are related to the thoroughness of the model exploration process, as well as how the time was used during that information-gathering phase. The teachers from School 1 were generally satisfied with the model that they selected, I think we also spent a great deal of time examining each program, determining which one was right for us. That’s why I think now that we are very satisfied with the program because we had a chance to choose it.
This school stood as an exception in that there was this expression of satisfaction with the Accelerated Schools model; teachers perceived their principal as facilitative in the selection process; one of the reasons they selected the model was to maintain the status quo and yet, they expressed a need for more information in order to make an informed decision of model choice. It was common, regardless of whether a school was a cohort I school that adopted their model in 1998-1999, a cohort II school adopting their model in 1999-2000, or a cohort III school that began implementation in 2000-2001, teachers wished that more time had been available. A teacher describes,

If anything, I would liked to have had a little more time to see some of the other programs. (Teachers-School 1)

From School 2, a cohort I school, also lamented about needing more information and time,

Spend a year learning about the model(s) and visit schools that had it. Also have people come in for presentations. Provide the training well before trying to use it with students. (Teachers-School 2)

The teachers from School 3 endorsed this same desire,

I know I would probably ask to go see different schools so that I could make a more educated choice. Even if we didn’t go, if we saw a videotape showing this is what a classroom that’s set up to have this implemented. (Teachers-School 3)

The School 4 teachers, the legacy site that had adopted Success for All some 9 years earlier, expressed no recommendations regarding the selection process if it was to be done again. Because the school had been working for some 5 years previous to the Abbott legislation that resulted in the directive to adopt a whole school reform model, a new vote could have taken
place. This vote could have been focused on the adoption a different model. Since there was a
general satisfaction for Success for All, the teachers reported that a revote was not required to
continue their work in implementing this model.

As in the case with School 2, the teachers of School 5 felt that Success for All had been
imposed on them. In their feelings for a need of choice they recommended,

Knowing what we know now, we should have demanded to be exposed to other models.
Not, why is this being put down our throat? It (Success for All) should have been
brought into us earlier in the year and we should have had the opportunity to go and
observe it. (Teachers-School 5)

Teachers from School 6 essentially concurred with their district counterparts in their
desire to have a greater awareness of the other models to be the basis of their school reform,

Know all the models. Be presented all the models to feel more comfortable. Be sent out
to other school districts that have every type of model and see it in action. (Teachers-
School 6)

The teachers from School 7 expressed satisfaction with how they had engaged in the
model selection process to the extent where there were no regrets nor recommendations as to
how they might have done things differently,

I think we did a great job. I think it’s a shame that more people didn’t go to visit the
model schools. We asked, we want to go and see this, and there was no problem with
central office. (Teachers-School 7)

As pleased as the teacher reaction was in School 7, School 8 which was also in District
D, recommended strongly that access to more information is necessary,
I think people should have been sent to see schools that were doing each and every model rather than just see one model. To discuss and talk and really be able to say what you thought without repercussions. I would like to see each whole school reform model come into the building and give a short program of what their work involves. (Teachers-School 8)

The teachers from School 9, the highest achieving school in this study, had regrets about not being able to write their own unique model for reform. The New Jersey Department of Education made this opportunity available for high achieving schools during the 1999-2000 school year. However, since School 9 was urged by their district to become a Cohort I (1998-1999) school, this option was not available when they were researching reform models for their school. These teachers lament,

I would want to write our own. If we could go back with the knowledge and knowing we were going to be able to write our own model a year later... The less Temple (the University from which Community for Learning works) is involved, the better.

(Teachers-School 9)

Finally, the teachers from School 10 were generally satisfied with the selection process in which they engaged. Their desire for more time was somewhat attributable to a lack of clarity as to the amount of time they had,

We thought we had time and then the deadline was moved up. Tell people at the outset how much time they have at the outset and then do all the research possible and come to a decision within that timeframe.

Even with their modified timeframe, this was the only issue that was recommended be changed. There was a belief that they had almost completed the process effectively,
I think a couple of more days would have helped. Too many days would not have been good either then you would have had too much information out there (Teachers-School 10).

Principal Recommendations for Future Model Selection

In the case of the principal reaction to what they would recommend be done differently about the selection of a whole school reform model, there was greater attention and suggestions for dealing with the shortcomings of the models. There was a clear understanding from their experiences that a reform model had to be differentiated and personalized to meet the needs of school communities. The principal of School 1 reflects,

You cannot depend on a whole school reform model to change your school. You have to use it as a tool. You can't depend on a model. They don't know my needs nor do they want to hear my needs. I need to do what I need to do. (Principal-School 1)

The principal of School 8 shared a similar perspective,

I don't think we learned enough about Co-nect as an organization before we committed ourselves. We didn't set up a list of demands and if they didn't meet those demands, providing us with alternatives as to how they could correct the things they didn't comply with. We were committed for $180,000 for 3 years. I think we should have handled it more as business people and held them to what we expected. We have no way of taking this anywhere. (Principal-School 8)

In this high achieving school, the principal of School 9 concurred with the teachers expressing regrets about not being able to develop their own unique reform model for their school. This
principal felt that if their school had been able to wait to be a later cohort, this opportunity would have been available to them,

I would have most certainly worked with the State to get some type of alternate model to use that money for staff development that would truly have invigorated the program.

We know that you have to differentiate and that’s what’s needed here. (Principal-School 9)

The principal from School 6 validated that their school needed some type of intervention to improve student achievement. Although it was admitted that Success for All in that building had made a difference, this principal also felt a preference to develop their own unique model. This school leader stated,

They needed structure. They needed a whole school reform program. So we went along with it. I know that this program is far better than what was going on in some areas. For our district, I know that we had a head start on reading and writing in different ways that would have eventually worked but we didn’t have a packaged program like Success for All that had everything thrown in it. I would have rather done our own program.

(Principal-School 6)

The principal from School 3, although generally satisfied with the model that they had selected (Coalition of Essential Schools), was the only principal (or teacher) that expressed any regret about not moving more quickly into the process,

Just do it sooner. Instead of wasting all that time and energy exploring...I guess you needed that to know about Coalition of Essential Schools.

This principal had a perception that there were more resources available to those schools who acted early and became part of the Cohort I schools,
We really tried hard to get into cohort one. The things that they were able to attain, the money became readily available to them. (Principal-School 3)

The remaining four principals were generally satisfied with the process of exploration and selection that had been used. They had no tangible recommendations in retrospect, other than some minor regrets or misgivings,

My perception as the building principal is that everything fell into place for us and we were very fortunate and it has worked very well for us. I would not change anything that we’ve done in terms of where we’ve come from and where we are now.

When following up with a question about impact on the State fourth grade assessment (ESPA) this principal responded,

Achievement scores on the ESPA have shown a marked improvement: reading scores and math scores. We’re pretty much pleased with where we are and how we got there.

(Principal-School 2)

Although the principal from School 5 was very satisfied with the Success for All model, the only recommendation about its implementation was related to the rate in which it was put into place,

I would personally go with the model because I am very satisfied with it. I would skip a year in between the components (the reading and the mathematics) of the model.

Within the reading, I would have started one thing at a time. Some identified teachers starting it and modeling it for the others so that others would have the comfort in going back and trying these things. Giving ourselves a whole year to gradually ease into the program, not just sink or swim. That’s what we did and it was just too much. (Principal-School 5)

The principal of School 7 was pleased with the process and was without regret,
I would have done it the same way. The faculty will look to me as being the leader to make the best-informed decision for them. You can’t make that decision unless they help. It was a team thing. (Principal-School 7)

Finally, the principal of School 10 was also most satisfied with the process. A little more time was only a minor wish that was expressed,

A little more time. Even another couple of days. We were given this responsibility and we knew there had to be a buy-in vote. We explained that it had to be 75 or 80%. We took it very seriously. It was collaborative. No regrets. (Principal-School 10)

Summary

Teachers were actively involved in the model selection process in 6 of the 10 schools. This involvement included exploration of the available models through either direct contact or through selected faculty representatives who then later reported back to the whole staff. Also this engagement included participation in learning forums where information was presented on the models being considered. And although not pervasively experienced, were some visitations to school sites where the model was being implemented.

The principals of these schools described attending State presentations and bringing information (usually printed) back to the faculty. Additionally, they accessed their central office networks and assisted by requesting reform model presentations to their staff to increase their faculty’s knowledge base about the school reform model options.

In the other four schools, teacher choice was essentially eliminated. Through imposed administrative forces, and in one school (School 5), even the threat of sanctions for teachers who did not support the administrative reform model choice, the required vote was attained to
establish a contract with the developer for adoption of that model. These principals orchestrated their model selection through either direction that they were receiving through their district administration or through a sense of desperation for improved student achievement, as in the cases of School 2 and School 5. For both of these schools, Success for All was selected with implementation to begin as cohort one (1998-1999) schools.

One of the most significant findings of this study was that the teachers in 8 out of the 10 schools expressed that they did not feel that they had enough information to make an informed model selection choice. Their principals on the other hand, overwhelmingly believed that the teachers did indeed have enough knowledge to make an informed selection. Eight out of these nine principals interviewed expressed this belief. With such dramatic misperceptions on the part of these principals, it leads one to question the general effectiveness of communication between faculty and the principal and further, the ability of principals to “read” the culture of their own schools.

The extent to which teachers were satisfied with their selected models varied. Issues such as increased workload, little in the way of valuable strategies or interventions, and poor quality training were negative aspects to their models that were cited by teachers. Principals concurred with teachers regarding the quality of the training. Several of the principals also expressed disappointment because they had believed that their models were going to lead their staff and students to higher scores on State assessments. None of the models really addressed that measure. In fact, most of the models had little knowledge of what was even expected from students in the New Jersey student assessments. Principals emphasized that this was the critical measure to which they were held accountable. Rather than the state assessment, Success for All had its own 8 week assessments that measured student reading level success independent of the
New Jersey assessment(s). The other models generally had some form of implementation assessment/checklist based upon observable teacher and/or classroom behaviors or traits. Principals felt that there was limited added value for their schools from these measures. Finally, when teachers and principals were asked about what they would do differently if they had to go through this type of selection process again and/or recommendations to others adopting one of these comprehensive school reform designs, there was an overwhelming expression by the teachers for more information. This included a desire for more information and greater exposure to other models, as well as the opportunity to observe and visit schools who were implementing the models. Principals were generally satisfied with the models selected by their schools. In those schools where the model was imposed upon teachers, the degree of principal satisfaction was very high. In those cases where dissatisfaction was reported by principals, it was generally attributable to either a lack of quality service or that those services did not meet principal expectations.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the influences acting upon teachers as Abbott District schools sought consensus on a single whole school reform model. While seeking to identify those influences, a particular focus was placed on the role played by the principal in this model selection process and the extent to which the principal was an influence. This consensus was to have been indicated through a voting process by members of a school’s teaching staff to adopt one of the reform models that was sanctioned by the court and endorsed by the New Jersey Department of Education (6:19A-3.1). Each reform design determined a minimum vote that was to be attained in order to engage into contract with a given school reform developer. These votes, depending upon the reform developer’s requirements, ranged from 75 – 85 percent of the teachers in favor of adopting a given model.

Schools were encouraged by the state of New Jersey to explore the attributes of the varying whole school reform models in attempting to determine which particular design would have the most favorable impact on their student population and would align best with the needs of their teaching staff and school community. The New Jersey Department of Education sponsored a number of forums where school staff could attend to hear presentations by the staff of the varying whole school reform model developers. Principals and members of the School Management Teams who attended these expositions, gathered information and materials to take back to their school colleagues. Schools were given the choice of beginning implementation of their selected model in any one of the three years of 1998 – 2001.

This qualitative study gathered recollections and perceptions of 50 teachers through focused group depth interviews from ten different schools in five different Abbott districts about
the whole school reform model selection process. Specific questions were posed regarding factors that influenced the decision of the school faculty to vote for their eventual reform design. These interviews, and any statements made in these interviews, were completely confidential from the school principals. A parallel component of the study involved a semistructured interview with the principals of those same schools. These interviews, and any statements made in these interviews, were completely confidential from the teachers in those schools. In determining the extent to which the principal influenced the teacher decision and the eventual vote, the responses of the teachers and principal at each of the participating schools were compared.

Further questioning in both interview scenarios probed respondent recollections and reflections on whether enough information was available to teachers to make an informed decision, the degree of satisfaction school staff had with the selected model, and what would have been done differently if they had to do the process over again. From these interviews, the following conclusions were made based on the analyses of the data presented in Chapter IV:

Conclusions

In reaction to the mandate to adopt a whole school reform model, all of the schools were in compliance. Some of the low achieving schools viewed this requirement with a sense of optimism in that maybe this was going to be what was needed to assist with the improvement of achievement scores. However, 9 of the 10 schools simply complied and engaged in selecting one of the models. In four of the schools, teachers perceived and reported that their model was administratively imposed. Only one of the schools (School 9) expressed dissatisfaction with having to comply with the mandate at all. This school was a high achieving school that had
demonstrated success through their State assessment scores being above the State average for both Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics, as well as recently being recognized by the federal government as a Blue Ribbon School. Interview responses from the teachers reflected some level of frustration that they had to comply with the mandate along with everyone else.

It drives me crazy to think that we are doing Community for Learning when our scores are good and we have dedicated teachers and we have a plan that goes well.

(Teacher-School 9)

They believed that they had a model that worked, so accordingly were indignant that they had to assume an improvement model in lieu of what they were already doing.

The issue of having sufficient time provided a challenge for some of the schools according to teacher interviews. In having to make a decision that was going to virtually impact all teachers’ daily work, there was the perception that there wasn’t enough time to be totally certain that the exploration had been deep enough or that all of the options had been thoroughly explored. This time limitation for schools in one district (District E) was created by central office influence. One school was urged to become a cohort I school. That inherently restricted exploration time. The other school in this district adopted their model as a cohort II school, but had their deadline advanced which meant coming to a decision more quickly than previously planned. The other two schools, both from District A (Schools 1 and 2), just felt that they didn’t have enough time to explore all of the available models. Berends et al. (2002) in a study of New American Schools adopting whole school reform models in San Antonio also found teachers indicating that insufficient time was a factor impeding the learning about available whole school reform models.
The factor that was consistently identified in those schools where teachers were able to exercise choice of reform model selection, as opposed to having a model imposed, was that the model design closely aligned with what was already being done. This motivation to maintain the status quo was expressed by both principals and teachers in all six of those schools. Participant descriptions included: “It involved everything that was being done” and “not as intrusive as other models” and “ease we could adapt it to what we already had.” Erlichson and Goertz (2001) validated this motivation,

Most schools chose models based on a perceived alignment with the school’s already existing practices or philosophy. (p. 56)

This tendency was also consistent with other studies. (Berends et al., 2002; Datnow, 1999; Weiss, 1995)

A factor that was also identified, particularly by teachers and principals in schools where a process model had been selected, was the desire to have open choice. Models were quickly excluded in the selection process where there was extensive and rigid structure. Study participants identified selecting their model because it was the “least restrictive” or it was “not as intrusive as other models.” This desire for perceived instructional freedom actually resulted in some cases to a vote against Success for All. In those six schools that did not adopt Success for All, it was expressed in teacher interviews at least once that they did not want Success for All or a highly structured program that was scripted. In four of those same six schools, the principals also made reference to avoidance of Success for All and/or its highly structured format. This design was perceived to have the greatest amount of structure in that teachers implementing this model were to follow a printed script for substantial amounts of their reading instruction. The State had further held this structured model out as a disincentive by stating that Success for All
was the "presumptive model." Schools that had not selected a model by the cohort III deadline would have a model chosen for them,

If any school shall fail to select a model by the commencement of the 2000-2001 school year, the Commissioner shall direct the school to implement a Department-approved WSR model. (6:19A-3.1a)

Although not specifically stated, there was an assumption that no choice would result in a forced choice of Success for All.

Where schools had been forced to adopt a reform model with minimal input from teachers, principals and/or district administration seemed to be driving this process due to low student achievement levels. These schools (School 2, 5, 6 and 8) ranked among the lowest of the schools in this study (see Table 2). [School 5 was not ranked because their students were not tested under the State assessment program.]

The teachers from School 3 felt that their model had been imposed upon them, but not by the principal. At this site the School Management Team were charged with information gathering and sharing with teachers. The communication of this information and awareness of the model choices was not effectively communicated to all teachers, leaving them with the feeling that the model had been imposed.

Further, of the four lowest ranking schools by student achievement in this study, three of the schools were implementing Success for All, while the fourth was implementing Accelerated Schools. The imposing of Success for All for these low achieving schools translated into a sense of optimism rising out of desperation. It was hoped that the required structure of this design would overcome teacher deficiencies. The principal of School 6 articulated that sense,
Some of your average to below average teachers would be able to read the directions and do it, whether they were reading teachers or not. It’s a very simple program to follow and it’s structured, so it’s easy for administrators to check on to make sure it’s being implemented. (Principal-School 6)

Principals played one of two very distinctive roles in the whole school reform model selection process. In six of the schools, teachers perceived that the principals served as facilitators where they would locate, gather, and provide resources; provide forums for professional interaction and information gathering; and/or provide accommodation for staff so that they could seek out information on the varying models. Conversely, the other four principals were perceived as playing a more autocratic role to force a particular reform model. This usually resulted in the orchestration of teacher experiences where only one model was presented to faculty; limited information was shared; and/or little or no accommodation was made to support staff to learn more about alternate designs. Where little choice was given, or perceived to be given to teachers, some principals reported that their district administration was exerting influence for the adoption of a particular reform design. Bodilly, Keltner, Purnell, Reichardt, and Schuyler (1998) reported that schools in their RAND scale up study of New American Schools had models imposed upon them,

But our interviews revealed that teachers and principals in at least seven schools (out of forty) reported that central office made the choice for them. As some put it, “word came down from the central office” that we were to adopt that design. (p. 51)

In other cases teachers reported that they voted but knew the vote had to go the way central office wanted to go. They said they voted several times until “they got it right.” (p. 51)
Beyond the principal and central office, this study surfaced several other reasons that were given to influence teacher decision and consequential voting. Access to funding was used in the case of Schools 2 and 5. Becoming cohort I schools as these schools did, enabled access to these funds sooner. Another school (School 6) reported that because their feeder school had adopted Success for All in cohort I, they were expected to vote for that model to ensure student consistency and articulation.

Teachers from 8 of the 10 schools indicated that they believed that they did not have sufficient information about the models to make an informed selection decision. In some cases, teachers reported that this lack of information resulted from specific models being restricted from school exploration by either the principal or the district administration. In other cases, sufficient and/or informative awareness sessions were not provided on all of the models to build a basis for confident objective decisions. Teachers lamented how informative it would have been if they could have visited other schools; observed videotapes of the model being effectively implemented; or had presentations in faculty meetings or other large group forums by model developers. In these 8 out of 10 schools, the teachers expressed a need for more information about the models in order to make an informed selection. Datnow (1999) also found in her study of Memphis schools that there were some teachers who were frustrated due to a lack of timely information on the range of available reform models. Stringfield and colleagues (1997) reported that the quality of implementation was raised when teachers had the opportunity to thoroughly explore the range of school reform design options to best meet their school's needs.

This study yielded strongly incongruent perceptions when principals were asked this same question about teachers having enough information to make an informed decision. Seven out of the nine principals responded that teachers did indeed have sufficient knowledge to make
an informed model selection decision. Additionally, the availability of detailed and accurate information about the model that was eventually selected, resulted in a level of frustration for teachers and principals. In some cases the model was presented in one form during the orientation process and then changed during implementation. Teacher reflections including, “the model is never the same year-to-year” and “the model falsifies a lot of things” provides evidence of different perceptions of the proposed design and the reality of model implementation.

In the 2 schools where principals expressed general dissatisfaction with their model, both were critical of the services and the quality of those services delivered by the school reform developer.

Model developers in a number of cases did not have sufficient well-trained staff to provide quality implementation support. One teacher described, “They presented a product that they really couldn’t produce.” Datnow (1999) described the need for model development staff to be clear about the expectations and the elements of the model that were to be implemented so that teachers are “fully aware of what they are getting themselves into” (p. 17). In a RAND study of New American Schools, Bodilly and colleagues (1998) reported that a number of principals in their study reported early into the implementation process that there had been a lack of clear understanding of what their model required. Hatch (2000) describes that even though there is a formal vote and in some cases the principal signs a memorandum of understanding regarding the expectations and commitment to a particular model, there can still be a lack of clarity of what is really involved. Erlichson and Goertz (2001) found this to be particularly true with models that were considered process models or models that did not have their own curricular components.
The degree of teacher satisfaction with the school reform model that was ultimately selected varied. In 7 out of the 10 schools, teachers reported that they were generally satisfied with their model. Principals reported that in seven out of nine schools, they were also generally satisfied with their models. Exploring this variable of satisfaction with the model more deeply,

In the seven schools where teachers expressed general satisfaction with their model, in five of those schools teachers perceived the leadership role played by their principal as facilitative in the model selection process. In the other two schools (both of which adopted Success for All), the teachers perceived that the leadership role played by the principal as autocratic. Their satisfaction seemed to be derived from the positive impact the model implementation was having on student achievement.

In the seven schools where teachers expressed general satisfaction with their model, in six of those schools teachers expressed that they did not have sufficient information to make an informed choice. This pervasive feeling and need by teachers to have more information could be attributed to the media through which they received their information, or simply a need to have constantly more information to make the best possible decision.

In the seven schools where teachers expressed general satisfaction with their model, in six of those schools teachers expressed a desire to maintain the status quo in their educational practices as a driving force in their model selection.

In the six schools that did not select Success for All as their model, five of those schools expressed a general satisfaction with their model.

In the three schools where teachers expressed general dissatisfaction with their model, in two of those schools teachers reported that they had not received sufficient information about the
models; perceived that their principals functioned autocratically in the model selection process and had no opportunity to select their model from the available model choices.

Satisfaction with their model choice was expressed by the teachers in Schools 1, 3, and 7 who reported an outcome that was not anticipated, that being that there was a greater sense of collaboration and joint work resulting from the whole school reform model adoption.

In two of the low achieving schools that adopted Success for All (Schools 2 and 6) resulting from a forced choice according to teachers, principals reported that student achievement had improved considerably since the model implementation.

Implications

As schools responded to a state mandate, teacher choice of a school reform design was influenced by a variety of factors. Of the 10 schools in the study, 6 engaged in essentially a democratic process to examine available choices, learn about those choices, and then vote on the model that teachers believed to be the best choice for them. Very seldom in these interviews did either teachers or principals mention that the motivation for selecting a model was to specifically benefit students. The state mandate had forced schools to comply with a directive from the state Supreme Court. As a result of having to act in compliance, teachers' reactions were largely homeostatic. Guarding against what was perceived as too much structure (as in the case of Success for All) and pursuing designs that would allow maintenance of the status quo were common interview responses to the motivation underlying teachers' votes where their systems allowed choice. In the four schools where reform models were imposed by their principals and/or district administration, there was a sense of having been bullied into the adoption. Why
then would teachers vote for a model that they did not support? That model, Success for All, required a secret ballot and an 80% affirmative vote. The answer of course is self-preservation. Non-compliance to an administrative directive could mean consequences or sanctions. The teacher group interview at School 5 described the threat of being moved to another school. Giving up relationships with students and colleagues was to them, not worth it. Fullan (1993) describes mandates as only being successful if they involve “things that do not require thinking or skill in order to implement them and can be monitored through close and constant surveillance” (p. 22). If state departments of education and school districts depend upon mandates to promote practices that improve student achievement, superficial activity that resembles design-based reform may occur. Fullan reminds us, “if there is one cardinal rule of change in the human condition, it is that you cannot make people change. You cannot force them to think differently or compel them to develop new skills” (p. 23). Sarason (1990) posits, “they (legislators) confuse a change in policy with a change in practice” (p. 101). A mandate is a mandate. Providing choice within the context of a mandate will neither promote different thinking nor develop new skills. State departments of education and school districts need to find methods and strategies to promote the building of internal capacity. Tyack and Cuban (1995) clarify this goal, “Reforms proposed and implemented by school administrators and teachers themselves to make their work easier and more efficient or to improve their professional status were likely to stick better than innovations pushed by outsiders” (p. 57). A significant underlying factor that was not addressed in the expectations for reform model adoption was to what extent are people dissatisfied with their current conditions and levels of success at their schools? Additionally, Evans (1996) advises, “People must be sufficiently
dissatisfied with the present state of affairs – and their role in maintaining it – or they have no reason to endure the losses and challenges of change” (p. 57).

A further implication of this study questions the philosophical assumption that whole school reform designs will have teacher commitment and buy-in through conducting a majority vote. It was the presumption of the school reform developers, further reiterated by the New Jersey Department of Education, that where there was a consensus vote to adopt a given model, there was going to be commitment to the model’s implementation. It was assumed that the teaching staff at any given school had weighed the varying attributes of the available models and had then determined through their vote, that the selected model would best meet the needs of their school community to improve student achievement levels. As described earlier, people did vote. A model was selected at each school. However, the actual commitment for change by the schools in this study is questionable. This study yielded four schools (3 Success for All Schools; 1 Co-nect School) where the reform model was being forced, according to teachers. Yet the vote at each site was in excess of 80% to adopt those models. Even a vote of this magnitude can hardly be interpreted as an indication of support and commitment in an environment under autocratic leadership.

The perceived lack of information by teachers to make an informed decision of models arose from a variety of factors: not having exposure to all of the models; not receiving deep and accurate information on the models; receiving information solely through a print medium; or relying on a few colleagues to provide in-depth information on the varying models. The one staff development strategy that was deemed most powerful in truly being able to understand a reform model was through witnessing the model(s) first hand through visitation. Teachers in this
study who participated in such visitations found the experience most valuable. Teachers who did not visit implementing sites of the model(s) frequently expressed a strong desire to do so.

While teachers in 8 out of the 10 schools expressed that they did not have enough information to make an informed choice of reform model, seven of the nine principals indicated that teachers did have sufficient information. Frequently principals expressed that because teachers were given print materials, this constituted sufficient information. This method of information acquisition was found clearly to be unsatisfactory for the teachers. This element has far-reaching potential for the work of those who provide leadership in the area of professional development. Through providing opportunities for teachers to see new practices being implemented, this can provide a sense of comfort and confidence for teachers moving into the adoption of new strategies and techniques. Additionally, such first-hand experience contributes to a personal sense of anticipating that one actually has the ability to do what is being asked.

Finally, although schools were mandated to adopt a whole school reform model, even those schools that expressed the most reluctance were able to identify benefits from the exercise. In some cases there was improved student achievement. This was identified primarily in reading at the three Success for All schools where adoption of that model was imposed. Several schools also indicated that there was a greater sense of collaboration since adopting their model. This was due to having a common focus where everyone was pursuing common goals and using a common vocabulary to communicate about their work. Even the school that had earned Blue Ribbon status and felt that their best interests were not being served in having to adopt a model at all, reported some benefits. Teachers cited improved student management systems as a result of the Community for Learning model as well as increased communication among teachers.
Recommendations for Further Study

Tyack and Cuban (1995) succinctly describe the essence of the mandating of whole school reform in New Jersey,

Reformers are often impatient about the time lag in educational reform because they operate on a schedule driven by election deadlines, career opportunities, the timing of foundation (or federal CSRD) grants, the shifting attention of the public, or the desire of media people for the dramatic photo opportunity or sound bite. People with problems look for educational solutions; people with solutions look for problems; but the implementation does not follow smoothly from the pairing of problems and solutions. (p. 55)

This study has demonstrated how a number of schools could accommodate and conform to State mandates and yet continue existing practices with minimal change. Recommendations for future research studies to understand this phenomenon include:

1. Completion of a comparison study that examines the degree of implementation of a selected whole school reform model and the resulting student achievement impact where adoption of the model was both mandated and adopted voluntarily by school faculties.

2. Completion of a study that measures and compares achievement gains in these same ten Abbott schools as were engaged in this research.

3. Conducting an examination of the changes in teacher practice that have adopted both ‘process models’ and ‘structured models’ in schools where teachers express satisfaction with their implementation progress and the effects on student achievement.
This study found that generally teachers did not feel that they had enough information in order to make an informed choice in selecting a whole school reform design. Principals on the other hand believed that indeed teachers had sufficient information to make an informed choice.

A recommendation for future research is a replication of this exploration to compare congruency of principal and teacher responses to the question whether teachers had enough information to make an informed school reform model choice.

As information was both sought and provided, there were numerous staff development strategies used to provide an information base to faculty. Through this study teachers and principals related the use of print material, oral presentation by both model developers and faculty colleague representatives, and visitation. Teacher visitation was the strategy that was expressed as the most powerful in securing a complete and accurate concept of what a given model entailed. Visitation was also the information-gathering technique that was most frequently identified by teachers as they reflected upon their model selection process. In virtually every school, teachers wished that they had an opportunity to visit each of the models that were available as choices. Further study is recommended to validate the influence of this professional development strategy of engaging in first-hand observation. It is suggested that this research examine the impact on teacher satisfaction of the reform model selected and the degree of its implementation where some school staffs participate in a visitation to a site where the model is being implemented, while others learn using alternate methods without first-hand observation of the model being implemented.
Concluding Thoughts

The need for change in the urban schools of New Jersey to improve student achievement exists...in most cases. If a State Department of Education is going to get involved to effect such change, it cannot paint all of the schools with the same brush. The notion that a school is classified as high need by association is neither reasonable nor rational. Schools in urban districts that outperform many of their suburban counterparts, like School 9 in this study, are constantly examining their practice to maintain high standards and continuously improve. Having to comply with mandated reform for such schools serves as a distraction for schools that are performing in a way that everyone, including State Departments, would wish for. Secondly, the resources that are expended to ensure that these schools comply are being squandered.

State mandated reform has not worked, is not working and will not work. In the case of the Abbott Districts in New Jersey, the 10 schools in this study reflected minimal conformity to be in compliance with a court decision. Where there is neither perceived need nor dissatisfaction with the status quo, implementing changes have little chance of being incorporated into the culture of a school. Tyack and Cuban (1995) remind us,

Legislators, officials, and courts can do a great deal to equalize school finance across states and districts, establish policies of racial or gender equity, or provide added resources for children with special needs. Experts in cognitive psychology, curriculum, and the cultures of diverse communities can suggest new and effective ways to teach. These are necessary but not sufficient steps in improving instruction. Unless practitioners are also enlisted in defining problems and devising solutions adapted to their own varied circumstances and local knowledge, lasting improvements will probably not occur in classrooms. (p. 136)
If state departments of education are going to play a role in school reform, they must explore potential interventions that support the building of capacity among the professionals in each of those schools. Beyond that, they must come to understand the parameters of their potential influence.

In other larger jurisdictions including San Antonio, Miami-Dade County, and Memphis, the large scale attempts to implement whole school reform models have been abandoned (Viadero, 2001). In May 2002 school districts in New Jersey have been instructed by the State to limit expenditures due to State budget shortfalls. The federal Comprehensive School Reform Development grants that supported the contracting of the reform model developers are drawing to a close. With the motivation of continuing existing practice by many of the implementing schools, it is unlikely that dramatic improvements in student achievement will occur in the short term. What then is the possibility that the implementation of these resource-hungry whole school reform models will continue long-term?

The prerequisite indication of staff support through a formal vote seems to have been a perfunctory exercise that was interpreted as commitment to a given school reform model. This study validates earlier findings of Datnow (1999), Datnow and Stringfield (2000) and Hatch (2000) that the results of a voting process does not ensure commitment to the model, the practices it espouses, nor any assured commitment to the implementation of a model’s pedagogical elements.


Appendix A

Verbatim Interviews

District A

School 1 – Teachers

School 1 - Principal

Accelerated School – Cohort 2
SCHOOL 1 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the Accelerated Schools model?

I think our SMT was presented with the models and everyone was given literature on it to read and then as a school we came to consensus on it and then we actually had a vote on it. It also had to be approved by our SMT, the program we chose. I think we chose it based on the type of school we have because our school is a type of an accelerated school. Our school has scored the highest of all the elementary schools in our district for a number of years on State mandated tests. We felt that it was the least intrusive program to our school. Some of the schools have a very dictated program where you have to use a specific book. You have to do it at a specific time. You have to read specific directions immediately from a manual which we thought was very intrusive.

Most teachers seemed pretty happy with the Accelerated program because they could make changes in their teaching and yet they could still use their way. Everybody has different teaching styles and we thought this could accommodate all the teaching styles. We just all had to make certain changes but everybody could bring out their own way of teaching and they all felt they wouldn’t have to be completely different in the classroom.

One of the things that really struck me when we were reading about the programs that were available to us, when you’re dealing with a highly scripted program it really doesn’t allow you too much flexibility for students who don’t get the script. A lot of times teaching is being flexible and finding alternate methods of showing students how to reach their goal. Scripted programs really don’t offer that kind of alternative. As soon as students learn, they move on. We were given 2 or 3 options as to what program we would like and we were under the knowledge that we definitely had to pick one. We picked the Accelerated because it tends to go along with the way we teach already. It was the least invasive. We could use the same materials we already had, the same textbooks and so forth.

I liked what I heard about the Accelerated Schools model because it was out of all of them what we were told, the least intrusive and it would not really affect the program we already had in place. We were told with the Accelerated program that we could do what we were already doing using the materials we already had. We were also told that the Accelerated Schools model was the least costly of all the models.

We weren’t allowed to choose SFA because it was too expensive and because we did well on the testing. I heard it was only open to the schools that did poorly on the testing.

Were there other models you considered as you narrowed your choices?

We each had a choice to look at the programs. I think our SMT went a little further into it and gave a little shorter description of each one so that they could see in a shorter order which programs might have been the best. There were only a few schools that were just starting so it was hard for us to go and look at another school. Another teacher and myself did go to a school that had the scripted program and it wasn’t for us. There was no flexibility. You had to read the directions exactly how it says in the book; don’t elaborate; don’t go into an explanation, just read it and let the children do the work.

I don’t know how unusual it is for a district to allow each school to select its own program. Most districts go district-wide with their program. Every school was given their
individual choice for which program. I do believe that most districts just picked one and district-wide they implemented. Here we had a whole lot of programs and they really gave us a lot of flexibility and choice in how we wanted to run it in our school.

I think one of the reasons I voted for it was that it opened a lot of avenues for collaboration with other staff members. Students think in different ways and we need different approaches. Many of us feel very comfortable in ways that we approach things and this offered me an opportunity to look at methods used by other teachers and see how I could fit that into my own teaching style and integrate them into my own day and my own schedule in order to help students who don’t necessarily respond to the way I teach.

Accelerated wasn’t pushed on us but it was made to seem more attractive. To be honest, I think it was already chosen. It seemed to be what the administration wanted. But basically to cover themselves, they made sure we had literature on the others but everybody knew. The administration talked about the cost.

Where did you get your information about the varying models?

The curriculum department, they gave us a lot of information on each program and different descriptions of each one. These were placed in our mail boxes. Various sources, anytime there was something coming around, we got those materials.

Do you feel you had enough information to make a wise choice?

They gave us quite a bit of literature.

Based on the literature, time was a factor. They gave us the literature and they wanted us to make a decision. Time was big factor. I could not read all the literature. My decision was based upon what I was told by our administration and it sounded appealing to me as opposed to some of the things I had already heard about in existing school models. It seemed to be what our administration was leaning towards.

I would have appreciated more time to read over the literature we were given. It would have been more beneficial if we had had a workshop. If we had someone come in from each program and discuss the pros and cons, we would have been able to select more objectively. We couldn’t go and visit other schools or anything like that. We weren’t given that option.

Was there consensus in your selection of the model?

I think it was pretty much a unanimous vote.

What was the single most important factor in your vote for Accelerated Schools?

Flexibility. There was a lot of flexibility for the way we teach the students and for the way teachers do things. There was a lot of freedom for us to really do what we need to do. Everyone could accommodate that differently and still get there.

I think it was flexibility but also more hands-on because children learn in different learning styles and modalities. Because I teach special needs students who are at multiple grade levels to begin with besides being at multiple ability levels. Some of them are very visual learners and some are very tactile learners so the model gave me that freedom.
I think also for me a combination of things: flexibility, the fact that it drew on the different learning styles and it also enabled us to work together collaboratively with other staff members. This is one of the things that brought improvement to our school. It has really encouraged communication between the staff. When I looked at the program, it seemed to me that it encouraged collaboration, encouraged the use of materials, presented different trains of thought in approaching things in different ways. That flexibility to bind the staff together I thought would make us a stronger staff having us collaborate more frequently.

It was the idea that it was not as intrusive as other models or disruptive of the way we already do things. That told me, I don’t care how much it costs, if it wasn’t going to disrupt my life that much, I’m for it.

They weren’t going to change books. They were going to change us from traditional teachers to Accelerated teachers. They wanted us to be more hands-on.

Did you sense that there were any influences at work to encourage you in a particular direction?

A key factor in our district is the money source. How much is it going to cost to run this program? We have to pay all this money to run this program. We're not going to have the money for the materials we need to run the program the way we need to. That's a big thing, the economic factors. We looked at one program and we were told this is how much this program will cost us per year. Our school is given a budget, now we have to pay 14 or $20,000 for this program. Now we still have to make sure that we have enough money so that we can buy our textbooks and supplies for the teachers to work.

The district said we could not pick SFA so right away they were narrowing down the options. And then I think the school administration encouraged us to pick Accelerated.

I heard other teachers talking about other programs and it sounded very negative. One of our colleagues knew quite a bit about the Accelerated program. She would come to a staff meeting and explain it more. She sounded excited so that probably influenced us.

What role did your principal play in the selection of the model?

I think no more than anyone else. She is a member of the SMT. She could tell us about what she had heard about the models from other principals who were already using some of those models. Just as a member to vote as we did.

Sometimes I think she facilitated some of the discussions by expressing her opinion about one program or the other. Basically she expressed her opinions and said, “Ok, what do you guys think?” She left it open for discussion. I think that’s one of the things that helped us toward our decision quickly. She expressed her opinion. We expressed our opinion. We went over what the different opinions were and came to our vote.

She always said, “Remember, you guys are the ones that have to deal with the program, not me.” She was very clear about that. She voted as one vote but she wanted to make sure that we realized that we were the ones working with the program, not her.

She made sure that she provided us with the literature on all the models. I don’t know if she narrowed it down to those 3 options or if that was done for her.
Do you believe that she had an affinity toward one particular model?

I don’t think she expressed it but I think she was very happy with the one we chose because the fact that our school was a high scoring school, accelerated, except in vocabulary, helping students move on beyond abilities that they’re showing now. I think she was very happy with the one we chose but she didn’t really express beforehand her choice.

I think she was for Accelerated.

She talked an awful lot about the money and how that was a big thing for her. It wasn’t as costly. I remember her saying, “Do you know what those programs cost? And on and on. Money was a big issue for her.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model you selected, in your case Accelerated Schools?

I think as a staff and working with this program for 3 years, that we’re so happy with it that we’re not going to another program. I think this will be the time, or next year, that we have to make up our mind. We have 5 years that we have to make a decision on that. But I know that coming up soon where we have to make up our mind, even though we’re not out of the program, we have to make up our mind whether to stay in the program or leave it and go to another one. The staff has expressed to each other and to the SMT that we want to stay in this program.

The writing has improved with the Accelerated program.

One disadvantage of having so many different programs in the city is when a child does move to another school, he has to learn that program. I have a new student who just came in from a neighboring school but they have SFA. That student is geared toward the SFA way of learning. And now with Accelerated, it’s completely different. There’s no script. There’s no set materials and we have to get the student accustomed to the Accelerated program. Our system is very transient.

I can see some improvement in the children. It made me do more hands-on than the traditional teaching. We are working at a fast pace.

I’m satisfied, I’m not happy but I’m satisfied. We do very well on the testing, the State tests before this program. If we do well, why can’t we continue doing what we have been doing? Why do we need a program from the State, we have to change. I can see if schools don’t do well on the testing, OK let’s try to improve. But we’re doing fine.

I’m satisfied because I didn’t have to change my personal style of teaching. Things that we do in the Accelerated program are things that we had been doing anyway. But we do more of it, like hands-on, than we did. The Accelerated program hasn’t really affected or changed much for the classroom teacher at all. The number of constant meetings after school with the Accelerated Schools program make it seem that you are going around in circles. Accelerated program is like helping to build a program. Through identifying strengths, brainstorming, actually we are creating a model of our own. The constant meetings running late into the evening, I’m sick of that. One of the teachers counted how many meetings we had of a year and it was over 100. It’s ridiculous.

These school programs are making education become your life.

They take away from the students because the amount of paperwork for the program is time I could spend planning for the kids, marking papers etc.
If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of Accelerated Schools, would your choice be the same? What would you have done differently?

I think most likely it would be. If anything, I would liked to have had a little more time to see some of the other programs. The timelines were one of the shortfalls.

I think we also spent a great deal of time examining each program determining which one was right for us. That’s why I think now that we are very satisfied with the program because we had a chance to choose it. We had a chance to explore it and to reap the benefits that we’ve gotten from being part of this program. It has really enabled us to come together as a staff by helping us to develop our communication.

I think it brought us all closer together. I work with everyone. We all have the same goals now. We probably did before but we never really discussed it. There’s just this unity now. At my grade level, what we do now is just so much more involved. It just seems to be working. We’re focussed. We know what we’re doing and where we’re going. I think we would do that but it is just so clear now.

The children are working better in groups now, taking risks, and are just a little more comfortable with the whole thing. I see changes in the staff and the children too.

I also see that the staff really works to enhance the curriculum from the board of education. These children have to accomplish a certain amount of things at each grade level but we’re not only looking to do that but we’re trying to bring them higher. That’s the Accelerated program. We’re bringing them higher. That’s why I think we continuously score high every year on testing.

I also think that one of the things it has really done is that it took questions that may have been in the back of some of our minds but we never had the opportunity, or the forum to express them. It has given us a structure to ask those questions. A structure on how to deal with the answers to those questions. For example one of the things we’ve looked at is how can we improve our students’ learning? We talked at the grade levels, “What are we doing?” We came up with the idea that we can have more communication amongst the teachers. That was early on. So the teachers began arranging times to meet and discuss things and talk about what they’re doing and arrange more time to align what each teacher was doing so we were all on the same page. Then later on in the program, we started to ask how well are our different grade levels aligned? Are we following a nice process so that kids can go from pre-k to k, to 1st to 2nd to 3rd and so on and stay in a nice consistent pattern of learning. We said, “Well let’s start talking about it.” So now we have different grade levels taking to each other. It really opened up channels of communication where we can ask each other questions in a very non-threatening way where we feel comfortable asking the questions, answering the questions and then dealing with the issues that come out of it.

Our big problem is transience rate. They will come in mid way through the year and leave 3 months later. Some of them even come back the following year and leave again. That cases us a lot of problems with continuity with those specific children.
SCHOOL 1 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

I guess it was 100% because to begin with the principals had to be involved. We had to make sure our staff was informed and exposed to the other WSR programs. We had to select a program, we had no choice. So based upon the information that we got; we, the principals listened to speakers and we were shown videos. Then we had to present the information to our staff. If they wanted to hear a speaker we would bring in that speaker. With Accelerated Schools, we went to Columbia University, had a meeting there, and they addressed our concerns about the program. We were given a lot of materials to read about the WSR programs and I shared it with the staff, information that was given to me. Basically we were looking for a non-prescriptive non-described program which we tried to have. We would be able to have a say without someone telling us what to do and how to do it.

What do you think really drove the selection of the model, in your case Accelerated Schools?

The point that we had more control of it. It wasn’t prescribed. We could do what we want with someone coming in here telling us how to teach reading, how to teach math. Basically that was it. Then the concept of the accelerated program, high expectations. We were already achieving academically so we really didn’t need a lot of outside help or someone coming into the school and telling us how to do it. So we were looking for something that we already had in existence. We already had a steering committee, the SMT. I had subcommittees that were similar to their cadres. Everything tried to meet the needs of the teachers and the parents. We have an active parent PTO. We already have parents involved. We already have a parent on our SMT. So we wanted something similar to what we were already doing.

Were there other models that you considered to meet your needs?

Not for me. What happened, the principals were given a lot of literature to read and we had individuals speak to the principals and just based upon hearing what I did, you just eliminated others. Basically I only had one model in mind, and that was the Accelerated Schools program.

Why did teachers not consider another model?

I guess basically because of the information they were given concerning the other WSR programs. If they did not hear, if they did not attend the faculty meetings in which we presented this information. We did provide them with web sites. We did provide them with magazine articles for them to obtain as much knowledge as they possibly could about the WSR programs. Then when they voted, it was over 90-95% for the Accelerated Schools program. There was a lot of conversation amongst the staff too as to which one they wanted.
Do you think the teachers had enough information to make an informed decision?

Yes, because we provided them with articles, descriptions of the programs. I asked if they wanted to visit other schools. There were 2 or 3 other schools that had already started from the first cohort and I asked if they wanted to visit and some of them did visit another school to see their WSR program. So they were given the opportunity.

How was it that you were a cohort II school?

To be a cohort one, they were selected by the Supt. The rest of us all had to come on board in the second year. We had no choice. The Supt. wanted all of us on board in the second year.

What was the single factor for the teachers to choose Accelerated Schools?

It wasn’t prescriptive, we could do what we wanted to do somewhat. Follow their guidelines. We were under the impression... They get you other ways. It might not be prescriptive but they get you other ways.

Were there any influences acting on you or on the school to select Accelerated Schools?

I remember a central office liaison person between the WSR programs and the district. She suggested that we look into it. She thought our school was an example of a school that should participate in an Accelerated Schools program. She had more information and knowledge on it than we did because here we were trying to concentrate on several different models. I guess she had been investigating longer than what we had so she felt it was our forte. She felt that would be great for our school and two other schools knowing our academic progress.

That was just a suggestion, there was no pressure?

No, it was up to the schools.

To what extent are you satisfied with Accelerated Schools?

Not really satisfied. I've learned how deal with them, cope with them, take out what I need in order to operate the school. When I first started to go to Columbia University to attend their workshops/inservices which were usually 1-2 days at a time. They weren't really meeting my needs in fact my question to them was, "how are you going to help me improve my test scores." That's the main purpose of the WSR program. Test scores were supposed to be improved and they should improve. It shouldn't be overnight but you should see some improvement and it shouldn't take 10 years because my understanding is that the State is going to hold us accountable over a period of years to improve performance on standardized tests. I don't have time for them to take me by the hand and slowly follow me, carry me through the process of succeeding academically. What I did, I wrote a letter because I was very unhappy those 3 days of training, asking them to assist me in improving my language arts test scores on the ESPA. I also asked them to help me improve my children's writing because that's what
ESPA is entirely about. I attached to the letter the CCCS of NJ. I also attached to the letter our academic test scores from the Terra Nova and the ESPA and I asked for help. This was about 3 years ago. I’m still waiting for them to respond. So when you have the State hammering at you; you have the Supt. and the board members wanting you to achieve and then you have this formula that shows incremental improvement in each of these areas over several years and you don’t achieve. We don’t have time for slow processes. So what I have done is I use it as a tool. Accelerated program is a tool that helps me run the school, just like this computer, it is a tool. I take little bits and pieces and I have them work for me. Like I said, I already have committees. So I put the committee into our two cadres. So I adapt. The portion of this accelerated program that I like is the professional development. Before the WSR program I did professional development. My faculty meetings, I had many inservice programs. I had people come inside and train staff, even during school time. I don’t think I am well-liked by the Accelerated Schools people because they feel that my whole school operation should be under the accelerated Schools umbrella. I can’t do that otherwise I would be way back there in step one.

If we were to roll back the clock, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

You cannot depend on a WSR model to change your school. You have to use it as a tool. In another school in our district that is using Accelerated Schools, their test scores are actually going down and I think it is because they are just doing aspects of the model. You’ve got to use it as a tool. You can’t depend on a model. Models are also general. They are not going to adapt to your needs...and that’s my problem. They don’t want to understand or hear why you do something differently. They don’t know my needs nor do they want to hear my needs. I need to do what I need to do.
Appendix B

Verbatim Interviews

District A

School 2 – Teachers

School 2 - Principal

Success for All School – Cohort 1
SCHOOL 2 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model SFA?

We were presented with one option. We were only told about SFA. We didn’t know about any other model?

How did you feel about that?

It created a lot of chaos and hard feelings because they were not taken into consideration.

You knew that there were other models out there?

Actually we didn’t at the time when we voted. We were presented with SFA, we voted and we were under the assumption that regardless of how we voted, that’s what we were choosing. I didn’t learn that there were other models until I spoke to other teachers at other schools. A friend of mine who actually stated that they had visited other schools that had different models before their school decided on their model. Before we voted, the year before, is when we found that we were getting SFA. This is it.

What do you think then drove the selection of the model?

A few select staff and the principal. And I just think that the first on board meant that you were the first to get the funds. I think that the choice was made upon money. From what I understand there were individuals who did research on the model but it was only a handful.

Why were other models not chosen?

I have no idea.

We were under the assumption that the first chosen that was ready to go was the first to get the funding. Knowing that the first cohort schools seemed to get the bulk of the money and now that we have been in the program, the budgets are dwindling and being cut and cut and cut. We were able to live lavishly for three years where some schools weren’t. When a school needs money, you’re going to jump on something because you’re looking at dollars and you’re not looking at anything else.

Take me through what happened in the selection process.

It was in a faculty meeting. When everyone was dying to go home at the end of the day there really wasn’t much presentation. We voted before we went to any inservice. I think we were presented with the inservice in June and after it I realized I really don’t want this. It was too late.
Were there strong opinions at the time where this seemed to be going?

Yes. It was obvious. We talked to each other. When you talked to your friend it was like, "I don’t like this either. I don’t want to do this." Everybody was saying I don’t want to do it and when we got to the meeting, "this is what we’re going to do." I think that’s why a lot of people transferred, that was the only way out of it was to go to another school. We lost a lot.

What do you think there was about the program that caused people to want to go elsewhere?

The facilitator that was in charge of the program (not the one we have now). In my opinion she didn’t understand the program herself. She may have been knowledgeable in the research but she was not a people person. She had a difficult time dealing with different personalities and it started to show. It came out in a very negative way and there was a lot of animosity among facilitators, staff… then the fact that you were thrown into the model. It’s not an easy model to take on especially as a classroom teacher teaching the program. There’s a lot of work, a lot of prep. I just don’t think there was a lot of thought for us. It was just here, do it, and here’s what’s going to happen. Even if I can’t answer your questions, you’re going to do it. The first year I did SFA it dictated my home life because the person couldn’t help me. The other 4th grade teacher and I, we worked almost every night, either on the phone or in person to get through the manuals to be able to teach. If I were a brand new teacher coming into this, I would have left.

When the program was going on we were trained. They should have been trained before they even opened the book. New teachers now get more than we did.

What percentage of the staff voted for SFA and why do you suppose that was the case?

We have no idea. We don’t know what the results were.

Change always brings upheaval. This district changes every 4 or 5 years with the changing of the government. Every time we turn around there’s a new program. The unrest was just taking on a new program but what really topped the cake was the facilitator. That’s where the true unrest came among the staff. In my opinion it wasn’t the program itself, it was the person running the program. She didn’t facilitate anything. She didn’t know anything about the program. She had no training just like the rest of us. You would ask her for something and she would say read your manual.

To what extent do you feel you had enough information to make an informed decision to select a WSR model?

None…except for SFA.

What was the most important factor you considered to select your WSR model?

What is it going to do for our children as far as improvement? The program that we had before this was a total disaster, the whole language approach. Anything would be better than what we were doing. So I was just hoping we would see improvement with the kids in reading.
Anything that would have helped the kids, because what were doing at that point was not working at all.

Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a particular model?

We were told, this is what we’re having.

What role did your principal play in the selection process of your WSR model?

Ninety (percent), then whoever the facilitator was at that time, she was the other one. I think it all goes back to the State dangles these lovely things at you. I’m not putting the blame on him because I guess if I were looking at thousands and thousands of dollars coming to my building, I would jump on it too. Especially if you’re sitting in a school district where supplies are dwindling and the program that we’re doing is not working and test scores keep dipping down and down. You’re looking for a miracle. So the State is dangling this miracle in front of you. What would anybody in that position do? I just feel that the process wasn’t done correctly towards the teachers.

It didn’t sound like there was a lot of positive energy around this program. Why then did you vote to adopt it?

It was either what we have or try something new. I would rather vote yes than continue with the garbage we were working with, the whole language program. We didn’t know about any other program. We were at the bottom as far as test scores are concerned. When you’re at the bottom you’ll try anything.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model you ultimately selected and why?

I’m satisfied with the reading. Our facilitator has had a lot to do with it. The hard work I’ve put into it has a lot to do with it. As far as the math part, I’m not satisfied at all, in all aspects.

We have the early learning and I am satisfied with the program. The program makes me reflect on my strategies. It keeps the children thinking. It develops those thinking skills. Our facilitator has been excellent.

I do believe in team work and team cooperation but I feel the math Wings program, when you’ve got a lot of kids down here, they’re getting too much help. When it’s time to independently work, they’re entirely lost because they’ve relied on their team members to do it. To me when we’re being observed in the program by SFA’s people. They’re looking at the hoopla. They’re not looking at the content. They’re not looking at the grade sheets and they’re not saying “why is this child not moving academically?” You did a cheer or you have a party table. In reading there’s a balance between cooperative learning and independent learning. I don’t see that balance in math.
Have your test scores improved?

Yes our scores have improved. I have seen a big difference.
Our model doesn’t have all the extra things that we do.
When we adopted the model they told us “you don’t need anything else.” That’s not true. The model falsifies a lot of things. Right now we’re up against the State fighting for an after-school and summer school program because the SFA program states that they don’t need anything beyond what they offer. They’re not looking at other factors, like attendance. We have looked at the kids who have started out in SFA and have been with the program all the way through (factoring out mobile students) and they have improved considerably. I don’t see the same impact from mathematics.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

Spend a year learning about the model(s) and visiting schools that had it. Also have people come in for presentations. Provide the training well before trying to use it with students. I would have chosen a facilitator that was from within the building, not an outsider who had limited experience as a teacher; one who knew the kids and knew the staff.
SCHOOL 2 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of SFA?

Not knowing how rapidly the implementation of the WSR legislation was going to come about, we were already ahead of the process which is why we were able to become a cohort I school. My predecessor had started doing some research so some of the faculty members had shared with me they had done some research for SFA. I received a telephone call from our curriculum dept. saying there was a possibility we might have some Title I money left and would I be interested in looking at a WSR model. I asked which one? I went to the staff member who had done the research and we thought this was great. We started talking to the staff about where we were going to go. We were looking at the fact that we had extremely poor test scores. Our students were not doing very well at all. We realized that we had to do something else. We were doing the same old thing and we were getting the same old dismal results. We decided to try something different and see what happens. We had already had an awareness visit from SFA so when the State talked about that they were looking at becoming first cohort schools. We were already ahead of the curve.

How long had your exploration gone on?

We started talking about this in the January before WSR was introduced by the State and continued to leisurely explore this model for the rest of that school year. In the new school year, that's when the curriculum office contacted, our interest was renewed. By November we had already had the awareness visit. It was February when the State called together schools for awareness sessions. At that time they indicated that they were looking for schools to become cohort I schools.

When the State introduced WSR, there was an array of models available. Did you look at any of the other models?

Because we were already ahead of the curve, we didn't want to muddle the process. We had already made the determination. After the SFA awareness visit, we had already taken the vote and had overwhelmingly approved the fact that SFA was going to be our model of choice. Since the State had decided that SFA was going to be the presumptive model, let's not go off on a tangent, this is where we are going. This falls right where we are, let's not muddle the process.

If I had been a teacher at this school, what would I have experienced in this awareness process?

We discussed our test scores and we looked at where we were and where we were going to go. The reason we readily accepted SFA. As the building principal and being the educational leader, I took the lead in the process was because I had to let the staff know that since we were doing so dismally, SFA offered a bilingual component. We also had a special ed. population. So of all the models, this one probably met our needs in terms of student population greater that any other model out there. That's what I as the principal started to put out there to the staff. What we did is we presented the research. We had the awareness session but even beyond that, we
used the internet to get more information. If any staff members had any particular questions, we would call the developer or go on-line to get the information.

Were there strong opinions one way or another as you closed in on making a decision?

Our vote was 91%. We did have people who had their own opinions about what to do. There is also apprehension anytime you try something new. We were venturing off into uncharted waters that were new to everybody. There were the usual and customary fears. The thing I was impressed with is that people seemed willing to try something else. We were not satisfied with the results that we had.

Do feel that the teachers had enough information to make an informed decision?

I think that they did. We heard that there were some schools expressed later that they didn't have the opportunity to choose their model, we were not one of those schools that had that experience. I think it had to do with the fact that we were already in the pipeline and we just continued on. The resistance or the people who had questions. They made their questions known but it was that the level of resistance was so great that it made us want to stop. I would say that whatever the resistance or the opposition was, the questions were answered. The vote said that 90% of the staff wants this so we were going to move on.

What was the most important factor that teachers considered in their vote to adopt SFA?

I'm not sure. I think it was that we were looking for something new. SFA, in terms of the research we had done and remembering the fact when we moved into the first cohort was driven by the fact that we were a bilingual center, this was going to at least help us address all of the academic areas for the population that we have here at this school. I really can't say with any evidence what the teachers were thinking about.

How would you describe the role that you played in the ultimate selection?

I think with the aid of the teacher who had done the bulk of the research along with the SMT, I think my role was fairly easy. I felt like the sales person coming in, the Fuller Brush man, saying that I had this product and I want to sell you this product and explain why I think this product is going to work. The district had just published information about the schools and where they were performing academically. In most instances we were at the bottom or near the bottom. I appealed to the professionalism of the staff. I was able to appeal to their pride. I was able to appeal to what it is that we were trying to do. The new terminology was seeing myself as a change agent. Before that I saw myself as a riverboat gambler and I was willing to take the chance. That's what I said to the staff, we need to take a chance. There no place for us to go other than up. When I went into administrative meetings, we were the brunt of some pretty nasty jokes and you don't want to hear these things. What I said to the staff was, we need to do this. I think that was the nature of my role in this process.
To what extent are you satisfied with the model and why?

I am ecstatic. I am just as happy as can be. Does the model meet all of our needs? No. The results are we made minimal growth in the first year. In the second and third year we just started taking off. With that we’re just as happy as can be. When I say we’re happy, I’m the building principal and the credit has to be with the team I’ve surrounded myself with. I have some tremendously talented and wonderful people: who are my facilitators, my vice principals. The one thing is that we’re all on the same sheet if music and we all want the same things and we’re all working for the common goal. SFA has been successful for us. Does it have its limitations? Yes. We know that. That is our vehicle but we know that we have to supplement that. Right now we are as happy as can be.

What are some of those shortfalls?

It really doesn’t have a writing component and we know that for our children to be successful, our children have to learn how to write. We have to supplement some of the language components too. We’ve also implemented the Math Wings. We know that there are some of the computational skills that some of the youngsters probably need and the program doesn’t always address those. But at the same token, it has given us something to hold onto. There has been a tremendous staff turnover. Last year I had 17 non tenured teachers. The thing I liked about SFA, and there are probably some of the veteran staff members didn’t like, is that it’s very scripted and it tells you in detail how to do. But for a first year teacher coming in the fact that it is scripted gives them something to hold onto. It gives them a vehicle to ride and to lean on until they can gain some of those experiences. Looking at the results, that is why I am pleased with the model.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

My perception as the building principal is that everything fell into place for us and we were very fortunate and it has worked very well for us. Taking some of the old things: “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” With that in mind, I would not change anything that we’ve done in terms of where we’ve come from and where we are now.

Achievement scores on ESPA?

Achievement scores on ESPA have shown a marked improvement: reading scores, math scores. We’re pretty much pleased with where we are and how we got there.
Appendix C

Verbatim Interviews

District B

School 3 – Teachers

School 3 - Principal

Coalition of Essential Schools – Cohort 2
SCHOOL 3 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

I was part of the original SMT.

No but I went and looked at several of the models. At the high school there were people presenting. People came here. We had Modern Red come here. In fact initially that was the one we chose. And we even voted on it. Then as soon as we started, we knew that we had made a mistake and we were able to revoke that.

The original SMT actually went to the schools... I did see several (of the models).

Did you see presentations or did you go to schools where they were being implemented?

Some of us went to schools. There were visits to schools.

Some of us literally had no input. Modern Red was the one that everyone thought was good and we had a little meeting on it...

We met for about an hour and a half...

I remember being very negative toward the representative from that model. The questions that I asked him had to do with why... When you look at these models, all of a sudden it's like five consulting firms came together and put together these models and my question is "Why were they chosen by the State...?"

The deal is that it was consensus based on... We were being forced to find a program.

We really believe in our hearts that our school doesn't need a program (because we were doing many of the things...).

We have brought attention to Coalition because this school functions very, very well.

Beyond the SMT members, as a teacher in the school, what involvement did you have in the selection of the model?

I don't feel I had any.

We just heard after "they" (the SMT) came back...

We went to one workshop. It was Modern Red Schoolhouse (MRS). And then a few weeks later, or it might have been a few months later, we were told to vote. We hadn't seen any other program so we voted Modern Red Schoolhouse.

The role of the SMT was to field for the faculty. We have a large faculty...

The way I understood it, and I wasn't on the committee, is that there was a group of people (the SMT) that was doing the search/doing the discovery and even at the teacher meetings, we would bring back a report on that. Somehow we got to Little Red Schoolhouse and I remember us being seated in a, maybe a half-day session, and the gentleman presented.

Being in the classroom, I was a classroom teacher in a testing grade. Whenever we had half-day workshops, my grade level was always out at an ESP workshop. They may have presented some of the other ...
But I did go to you and tell you how I felt and how I thought this was good for our school.

I didn't get a feel for any of it to be honest.

There were teachers that went and visited schools.

What do you think drove the selection of your particular model?

What fit our school? What could we live with? We didn't want to throw out the baby with the bath water. We wanted to keep the good stuff. We didn't want prescriptions. We wanted to have a model that enhanced what we were already doing well...

...without the restrictions that some of the other models had.

There weren't a lot of models to choose from.

What other models did your school consider?

Modern Red Schoolhouse. It wasn't chosen because it had a separate set of standards. I believe they were called the Hirsch Standards. And there were a lot of them. And we already have standards in NJ. They claimed that they weren't going to impose their standards on us but we were not comfortable with the direction they were taking as soon as they started. They wanted to change textbooks and they really started to manage us more than we were happy with.

To go back to Coalition, Little Red Schoolhouse you keep coming back to the salesman mentality: changing textbooks, what's in it for me?

With Coalition you just took what you had and you weren't purchasing a lot of other things. We didn't want Modern Red's materials. We sort of liked some of the stuff we had here.

What would I have experienced as a teacher in this school leading up to that model selection?

As the school selection representatives attended the all of the half-day workshops out of the building and then they would report back. I would get a folder with the information, briefly glance through it, and then reality snaps to you.

I remember there were presenters on our staff and they would be either on fire or not be on fire.

I do remember those workshops. Once we saw the components of Coalition, I think we were happy with it to see that there weren't many restrictions. A lot of the things that the model consisted of, we were already doing, we were comfortable with...

Our only concern I think was that it had been a model for middle schools and high schools. We wondered how it could be adopted.

Were there strong opinions one way or another towards any of the models?

Everyone was kind of in agreement.
You have to understand that the mentality was, from the State either choose one, or we'll pick one for you. We really didn't want to get into SFA. That's what really energized us and motivated us. We knew we had to find something before they found one for us. Because we all know teachers who work with SFA and most of them don't like it. It's very structured...
...not a lot of room for creativity.
Scripted. We didn't know exactly what we wanted but we knew we didn't want that so we were kind of were forced to do something quickly.

It sounded like you were very close to Modern Red Schoolhouse. Did you vote on it?

Yes.

Did the vote fail?

No it passed. It was a flawed premise that we voted on, that was the problem. The premise was that they were not going to force those Hirsch Standards on us. As soon as they started, they came out. Here they are, pages and pages just like the NJ standards but they were going to be in addition to...and we said no way. And start changing your textbooks. That was the other issue. We heard about other schools that had done it and they were miserable.

It was a salesman mentality.
With Coalition, there was no copyright this or that.

When it came to the vote, what was the degree of acceptance?

It was pretty high because you have to remember we almost made a mistake. We really liked this model. It was so open-ended.

What attracted so many people to actually vote for Modern Red Schoolhouse?

We had to rely on the people that were doing diligence in bring the information back to us.
They spoke as if they were process oriented and then when we voted, we started to see the change immediately to prescriptive...do this, change this... So everybody freaked out.
I voted for it because I really didn't know about any of the others.
It was really a State mentality floating around. We all felt pressure. And when you feel pressure, you say these are the people representing us, so let's go with them. But we didn't want SFA, that's all we kept saying.
We trusted their judgement and we screwed up.
There was lots of pressure!
To what extent do you feel you had enough information to make an informed decision to select a particular model?

I feel I did not have enough information so we went by the SMT committee. What they brought back, we trusted them. They knew more than I knew and whatever they came back with we were encouraged, “this is better than this because we saw this go on over here or this school adopted this so you don’t…” Some people went and visited but most didn’t. We trusted their judgement and that’s how I voted. Some teachers were confused.

I felt I had no choice so I jumped on the bandwagon. I didn’t feel we had to adopt anything to begin with. I had been to other schools in the district. Our scores were tremendous compared to other schools and I thought what we were doing was maybe not perfect but why change it? If it’s not broken, why fix it?

We also didn’t want to have a model forced on us, that’s what we were afraid was going to happen.

I remember being offered to take tours of schools with other models.

What was the most important factor you considered in your vote to select a WSR model?

It was open-ended. It was more aligned to what we are doing now. Maybe it was arrogance but we thought we were doing a lot of the things Coalition was doing and it allowed us to continue.

We have a lot of creative people in this building. We don’t always do the right thing but we do collaborate. If someone has a good idea, we praise it and share. There’s not a lot of back-stabbing.

I think I went around actively to some people, my friends, and we felt comfortable, like we had made the right choice.

Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a particular model?

Yes. The State pressured us to pick or we will be assigned. That provided a tremendous amount of energy and motivation for us. We did not want them giving us SFA or whatever…

What role did your principal play in the selection of the model?

She was pretty involved. She came to some of the meetings with us. She sat at the SMT meetings and discussed things with us. In fact she was one of the reasons we voted for Modern Red. She was gung-ho until after we voted, they turned their story a little bit. They started to move in the other direction. She said stop…and that was the end of it. She is also a power-with person. She accepts all kinds of feedback.

She turns over a lot of it to us. She knows what her teachers will and will not feel comfortable with and how we could adapt to this. I think she made a good decision.
Any other role?

If we needed time, she would pull you out of class, get a sub for you.

Do you believe that your principal had an affinity to a particular model? What made you think that?

She was very positive about MRS. She had seen more than we did. Some other people might have been with her but they were principals. She also had a network outside of the district. After we voted, the model seemed to change completely.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model you ultimately selected?

Very satisfied. We were already doing a lot of the things that the program had ideas about. There's a lot of room for creativity and not a lot of restrictions. We really didn't have to shift our thinking a lot.

When I read their ten principles, I can remember thinking, I do that; we do that; we do this great...

Why are we paying someone with a model we are already doing. They should be paying us.

We've been doing it.

Has the model changed your thinking? Has the model impacted upon what you do and how you do it?

It has caused us to think about it more; to be more aware.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

I know I would probably ask to go see different schools so that I could make a more educated choice.

Even if we didn't go, if we saw a video tape showing this is what a classroom that's set up to have this implemented. Even if can't actually go out and see it. It is difficult being a classroom teacher, if we had a videotape showing this is what it looks like; this is how a teacher would use it, I think that would help in making a decision.

I really don't think we understood... We are very fortunate that we got out of that situation (MRS) and we're in a coalition that is very similar to what we are doing anyway. We didn't have to make a lot of changes because we were doing many of the things already.
SCHOOL 3 - PRINCIPAL

What was your involvement in the selection of the model?

We had a voice in it, but it was an equal voice. When I came here 4 years ago it was just in the process of exploration seeing the different models out there. Nothing was done until it was presented to the staff which we took our time doing it and that's why I think it's working even better. I was on the original committee when WSR just came into the district. I had to do a lot of investigating of all the different models. We originally were going to go with Modern Red and then the trainer, the facilitator...the school voted against it.

Did you or other members of the administration do certain things to help that along?

We attended several workshops and we scheduled several workshops and presented here during faculty meetings and staff development days and we did send representatives to other school districts to observe what they were doing, different models. There were also summer workshops that staff attended.

What do you think drove the selection of the model?

The ease of which we could adapt it to what we already have. It fits. I believe it was very important that we took our time and that we didn't take the first thing that came along.

What kind of things fit?

Well our goal is to impart the enthusiasm for reading and that will in turn hopefully domino theory everything falls in place. Through the reading, you can do science, you can do social studies... When we took a look at the steps that we would have to do, I think paperwork was a consideration. The curriculum that we have and the way we present it. We are able to remain flexible and adaptable. That's important in education.

What other models did your school consider and why were they not considered?

Modern Red Schoolhouse. We were close to that. We didn't take it because of the adaptability. This is a very successful school. We're successful in State scores. That's not the only thing that you measure success by. It's how we relate to community. It's what we do with kids academically and socially. The flexibility; the idea that we are to remain flexible and adaptable. So that was one of the major concerns.

And Modern Red?

We got close but we decided against it. We talked to other schools in the district who had started their programs, SFA etc... There are teachers who know other teachers.
It was done on a school-wide basis because we were always aware that everyone had to buy into it.

How would you describe the model selection process?

What went on here, it was extensive. There were times that our facilitator was off to a workshop once or twice a week. She is exposed to a variety of programs and then she comes back and she turnskeys. She may give her opinion and she may like it, she may not like it. In some cases we pursued some of the models; in some cases we decided against them. There were extensive workshops where we did turnkey; in house workshops; exploration… It was an extensive process. We took our time and we decided what we have; what we see and what’s the best for us.

Did you notice any strong opinions or feelings from teachers as this unfolded?

The staff was very vocal, pro and con all the way through.

Were there any models that they were adamant that they did not want?

Yes, I think SFA and at least one other…too rigid..

To what extent did you feel that the teachers had enough information to make an informed decision?

They were given every bit of information. If they asked a question or if they even showed an interest in a certain program, the research was done. So if it was asked, it was answered. Oh I definitely think they had enough information. Many of them were on the committee, circulated and went to information sessions and then came back and turnkeyed it back to the others.

What was the most important factor teachers considered in their vote to select CES? What do you think drove that one for them?

Very possibly it reflected the program that we already had in place.

Were there any other factors or influences at work at that time to get you to adopt a specific model?

No.

Did the administration have an affinity for a particular model?

No. We realized that the better avenue to take would be to get the staff consensus. In the beginning I did. It was Modern Red. Until I realized that… I was looking for a process, not a program. I felt that we were doing so many things right, that we really didn’t need a SFA that’s going to say, “here’s a script, read it” Our teachers are
really unbelievable. Coalition is a process and that’s how in the beginning Modern Red was going to be, a process. That’s how they presented themselves as a process. That was one of my favorites. I just felt that those books by Hirsch “Everything you wanted to know about…” It turned out that’s not what it was at all.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model CES? Why?

We’re very satisfied with it. We’re still in the beginning stages with it so we’re still learning a lot about it. It seems to fit. Very, very satisfied. I like the program. I like the fact that it’s a process not a program. I like the fact that we can take what we do and fit it into their model. We have an excellent facilitator and trainer. They are wonderful. Whenever we need anything, she’s here. She was here for our budget, she did all the research for our reading recovery teachers and I feel that they are a big help to us.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of CES, what would you recommend be done differently?

Just do it sooner. Instead of wasting all of that time and energy exploring… I guess you needed that to know about CES. I wouldn’t have spent as much time looking at Modern Red. That put us back a whole cohort. We tried really hard to get into cohort one. The things that they were able to attain, the money became readily available to them.
Appendix D

Verbatim Interviews

District B

School 4 – Teachers

School 4 - Principal

Success for All School – Cohort 1
SCHOOL 4 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

We went to many meetings and we were given outlines of 4 models: traditional, eclectic, Comer and SFA. Four half day meetings and then we were asked to choose a model. How long ago was that?

Nine years ago. There were students from Columbia University who gave a lot of the presentations.

This was something that was going on in this district before NJ mandated the selection of WSR.

The principal who was here at that time was innovative and she was told by the Supt. that this would be the wave of the future and she wanted to get in on the ground level. We were one of the first in the district.

When you had these presentations, were all teachers present?

Yes. There was a school-wide committee afterwards. We were all called into a meeting afterwards and we had to vote. The faculty voted on which model they thought would be best suited for this building.

Did you have a chance to chat with each other?

Yes because we were given these half-day sessions and they were spaced far enough apart that we were able to discuss. Then we were given opportunity for small group discussions at those meetings.

What do you think drove the selection of the model for you?

We liked the idea that there was tutoring for children in the first grade, individualized program and the 90 minutes of intensive reading instruction. The entire program wasn't really gone over at these half-day sessions. There was kind of an overview of SFA. It was after we selected the model that we found that it was much more intense than what we had really thought.

I know that I felt that it wouldn’t be a drastic change from what we were doing at that point. We had BSI (Basic Skills Instruction) where children were either pulled out or the BSI instructor would come into the room and this just seemed to me to fit into what we were doing without changing everything. That was one of my reasons.

Did you have to re-vote when the State mandated WSR?

No.
Did you receive any extra staffing as a result of the State mandate, i.e. WSR Facilitator?

We have a SFA facilitator, one for reading, one for math.

Was that person in place for the full 9 years?

The math we just established 3 years ago. People could apply to be the SFA math facilitator.

Were there any observable changes when this State mandate came in 4 years ago?

No we were up and running. There were no changes.

What other models did you consider as you moved toward making a decision?

We were torn between Comer and SFA but Comer was more of a social program getting input from community resources and we really wanted to address more of the academic program to improve the reading scores.

How would you describe the selection process?

We were brought into group and we were given questions to answer to see if the model would fit to meet our school's needs and then we brought it back to discuss with our faculty. There were other schools there with us. At our school we made a decision and then we followed through on it. Once our decision was made that May/June, they brought in SFA people to train us so we would be ready for September. Then we had to write the plan for the budget...and that's how we spent our summer.

Was this a district initiative?

Yes. I think it was the lowest schools were brought into it first.

Why were there just 4 schools?

The lowest schools with the lowest scores. I think that it was the principals who were willing to take the chance that was the combination. The principal knew that it would be a lot of work also. It was uncharted territory so to speak. Members of the school-wide team went to visit other SFA schools as well as another one.

Were there strong opinions one way or another?

SFA only affected the lower grades. We started out 1-3 in the first year and then they added on kindergarten and the 4 and 5. One of the highlights of SFA was there was a 90 minute reading period, which you would have normally, but before you were working 3 reading groups in a 90 minute period. Now you had a smaller class size also because you had almost everyone teaching reading.
You had smaller class size and you were doing 90 minutes of intense reading with just one group of children.

How many kids per teacher?

There was a limit of 15. Small class size...small first grade, small fourth grade. Smaller class size, that was the whole thing...no more than 20 in a classroom, no more than 15 in a reading group. Some of the schools we visited, everyone was a reading teacher. The gym teacher taught reading, the librarian was a reading teacher, the art teacher... Everyone became a reading teacher in order to get the smaller class size.

Did you get information about the models from any other sources other than these presentations?

I think we were given booklets on each model but that was it. It was maybe a 2-page pamphlet, an outline.

SFA requires an 80% vote now. Was that the case for you 9 years ago?

Yes.

When you were moving toward the voting stage, did you feel amongst the staff, now I guess it would have been only the Grade 1 through Grade 3 teachers who would have voted?

No everybody voted. Eventually it was supposed to run through the entire staff because it being a WSR model. SFA was only developed up to grade 3 with the intent of each year adding on a grade as they developed a program.

Did you get a sense that there was enthusiasm for this model, regardless of how people marked their ballot?

I think so.

When we adopted the model there were 30 of us. Now there are only 3 left.

Why is that?

I guess they had their reasons.

When it came to vote, to what extent did you feel that you had enough information to make an informed decision about adopting one of these models?

I think we did enough discussion groups that we had a feel for what we were going into.
What was the most important factor to decide that SFA was the model for you?

Smaller groups. Smaller class sizes all on the same reading level. You didn’t have to have a group here, a little of this, a little of that. One ability level. I also went up from 60 minutes to 90 minutes a day for reading.

Were there other factors or influences at work to adopt a specific model?

It was definitely left up to us.

What role did your principal play in the selection process?

The same as everybody else, one vote. After it was all said and done, she indicated that SFA would not have been her first choice but now that was what everybody wanted, she got into it gung-ho. She was behind it 100%.

It was Columbia University so she pushed to find what other schools in the area have SFA and she gave us the time and made sure there were substitutes for the classrooms so that we were able to go and visit the other schools. She came with us to a couple of the schools. At our faculty meetings, she gave time to the teachers who went, speak about it. She would bring them back and have them get up and speak about what they had seen at the other schools.

Do you believe that your principal had an affinity to a particular model?

No. She never pushed. You had no inkling as to what her wishes were. When we selected the model, she was 100% on our side and got what we needed and made sure that we got all the tutors in before we started.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model? Why?

(Long silence).

It changes every year with new things being added to the program. It’s hard to get used to doing it one way because of its research, they’re revamping it. It’s hard to get used to doing one thing and then 6 months later you have to do it a different way. They’re very demanding.

It’s never the same from year to year. I know change is good but sometimes there is too much change in the materials. They’re always being updated. It’s hard on the budget end when you have to allot your money to reorder newer books.

What other things change?

The group sizes changed. We no longer have small sizes. The tutoring, a very important component, they are being pulled to do other things as well. For those kids who need the tutorial program, they’re not always getting what they need because they’re being used elsewhere. So the things that we basically voted on and wanted in the program have been turned to the side. Once we took on 4th and 5th grade, we don’t have
enough people to work within the first 90 minutes so some of the tutors are doing a second 90 minutes so that takes away from our tutoring time. It was something that had to be done.

What other things do tutors get assigned to do?

Sometimes class coverage. Substituting. Sometimes they’re pulled out to go on a field trip.

Are there positive aspects to SFA?

In the reading groups, all children are on the same ability levels. The tutoring aspect, I think is wonderful because you form a very close bond with that child, one-to-one. A child that may be afraid to speak out in the classroom will voice a lot of things during the tutoring. They’re not afraid to sound out a word or make a guess at a word because they’re not going to be embarrassed with other children around. Plus with children who do not have anyone at home to help them, they’re getting that 20 minutes extra every day.

And the homework, they’re reading 20 minutes a night to somebody. It was greatly emphasized to the parents when they came for parents’ night that that was exactly the homework that they have and that ‘s why they’re not getting such a great reading because the parents aren’t doing.

We have parent breakfasts, one every other month and we have a tremendous turnout. The parents come and we have the breakfast, talk to them about what is going on with SFA. Most of the time we do an activity.

How closely is SFA aligned with ESPA in your opinion, and do you have to do other things to augment what SFA provides?

We do other things however the past 2 years, SFA has come in and they’ve given us more ideas and time to do Adventure in Writing which is the writing process. They’re trying to set up open-ended questions for the new series coming in. The math is pretty much in tune. The problem solving isn’t there for what is expected on the ESPA.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of CES, what would you recommend be done differently?

(No Comment).
Appendix E

Verbatim Interviews

District C

School 5 – Teachers

School 5 - Principal

Success for All School – Cohort 1
SCHOOL 5 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the WSR model?

Nothing, absolutely nothing. We were told to attend a meeting and vote.

And you had a single presentation?

Yes (yes, reiterated by others) from Success for All. And we had to vote, what, the next day I think it was? Somebody came around...the secretary came around with an envelope.

It was the next day. We were told that we would do it or we could opt to go to another school.

What do you think drove the selection of this model?

Money. They financed more of it if you took Success for All than if you went with another program, as we found out. So they were really gung-ho for Success for All.

Success for All is one of those models that require a specific vote count. Why did you vote for, because they had to have 80% for?

They did present a nice picture, didn’t they? They promised a lot (and had nice food). The presentation was nice.

In retrospect, the presentation seemed much better than the program.

And we were not told of the other avenues that we would have to take with Success for All, the math or the world lab. We were just basically told reading and we were guaranteed certain things with their reading that did not happen.

And also, the presentation that they gave us seemed manageable.

Yes, but we didn’t get a lot of information that became overwhelming after the program began.

We didn’t know that there was going to be the amount of materials and work that the teacher had to do. That did not come with the program.

They also came to us at the end of May and they told us if we wanted to see another school that had it in action, we could go visit. Now another district in New Jersey had Success for All reading, but we weren’t allowed to go there. We were told bySuccess for All that they didn’t do it properly. We had to go to Brooklyn or the Bronx and who wants to go to the Bronx at the beginning of June?

Then I went to a workshop in September, a reading conference. Guess who was presenting? The Success for All New Jersey school! So in other words, you can’t trust any of them (as we found out. They’re back stabbers.) And I believe that the New Jersey school is only doing reading! That’s why their scores are so good.

So we kind of went into it with a little bit of hope and thinking well it sounds like it might be a good program and maybe we should try it. And if we don’t vote for it we’ll probably go to another school anyway. Maybe this will work. Plus they didn’t show us any of the materials did they?
Success for All was great, even at the training, not telling us how much we were
going to have to do. They presented this picture that they’re going to have everything for
you. It’s not like that!

We were also guaranteed that there would be no more that 12 in a group, in a
reading group. We have 18! Promises, promises.

It seems that Success for All doesn’t truly have children in mind. They don’t
truly listen to teachers. And they have a tendency to come in and tell you that you’re
doing something wrong and offer help to fix that problem at a cost.

Also the people who come in have minimal experience in a classroom. Possibly
one woman we had did enrichment for two years and thought she was an authority as a
point trainer. It doesn’t make sense when she’s never dealt with children who have
learning problems and 2 years in a classroom, something’s not right here.

Plus it was written by graduate students (the math program...so was the reading).
There are mistakes in the materials that we were given. We brought that up. Their
response was “oh yeah, we know” and it was just passed over. Some of the stuff that
they expect the kids to do at the k-2 level is impossible! There is no way. It is way over
their head.

The whole program is timed, 3 minutes; 2 minutes; 5 minutes; 7 minutes ... 
There’s no mastery in the math.

There was only one model presented to you. Why do you suppose that other models
weren’t presented to you?

They weren’t State recommended or pushed or whatever it was remember...

It was money! Also, didn’t the principal push that?

For some reason I heard that. I don’t know.

I think that there were a few people who got together and looked at some of the
models and they decided they were all pretty similar but for our purposes...

But were they classroom teachers?

No.

I don’t know. You’d have to ask the principal.

No, but I don’t remember anyone being asked to look at anything.

See the question is, why did the State offer it?

Because I don’t think that the State really knew exactly what was involved in this
program, as we didn’t going into it even after the training...But you didn’t. They didn’t
ever tell you. You learned it.

So the selection process, take me through it. You said there was a single presentation?
Was it a staff development day? Was it a faculty meeting?

No it was after school. We were told that day.

It was a 2-hour meeting that we had to attend with our Superintendent there.
Everybody was here weren’t they? And the presentation was given.
And you voted the next day?

The secretary came around didn’t she?
Yes she did...she did. She had an envelope and we put them in...
We had to sign and put our names on it? Yes, yes.
It was an unusual vote because they were saying that it was anonymous, yet they were recording somehow... There was something unusual about the way we signed and did it.
If you voted no, they had to know because then you would be moved to a new school.
Then when we had the training, we were supposed to let them know when we couldn’t make it.
They scheduled the training during the week when one of the teachers had indicated she couldn’t make it. She was told she had to be there.
What are you going to do? In other words you have to change plans or you’re out. Pack up your classroom 2 days before school starts.
But then again, the Superintendent was doing his job too. He was under the gun and had to do something. We were in whole language and it wasn’t working. Definitely.
We had a history of not working. We had a lot of problems and we had to get something.
When was that, April? I think part of the reason was that they wanted to make a decision.
It was May, the second week of May!
None of us in this school were exposed to any other program.
I didn’t even know there were other programs until the next year.
Neither did I.

Were there strong opinions at the time? Obviously the vote went in such a way that they had to get 80%. Because Success for All said that they wouldn’t work with any schools that don’t have an 80% or greater vote. So you had the vote?

It was the way it was presented and we knew we needed something and it does have some very good points.
There are some good points.
I felt that they wanted you to be honest and say if you really don’t want to do this, be honest and say I don’t want to do it.
They give you the option, and then you would be moved. Because he (the Superintendent) did say that day, “you will do it or you will be moved to another school. Basically you were told.”
But what good is it? The next year the other schools were going to get it too.
But the other side is that you wanted to do something about the problem (low achievement) there was a little bit of hope. A lot of people like myself voted for it because of all of those factors, not just one.
What was the mood? It’s one thing to vote for a model and then there is the true consensus that comes from the people. After the vote was there this feeling that we had done the right thing?

My feeling of the mood was actually before the vote. Most people voted for it because it was coming in.

But didn’t you think when we had our training that the mood was very upbeat because we had a great trainer. Of course we didn’t get everything. How much can you do?

I think the mood was there wasn’t much of a choice. Because I know some people who were dead set against the program who just voted along.

But the mood was mixed.

You have identified the fact that you got information on that one model, do you feel that you had enough information on that one model?

No, I would like to have gone to observe. And when you’re told to go to the Bronx or Brooklyn in June.

It’s like going to an ice cream store and they say “OK, we have vanilla, choose.”

We didn’t even get a chance to look at chocolate. We weren’t even shown vanilla.

I don’t think Success for All ever told the State or anybody what was involved in this program. I feel Success for All hasn’t been very truthful about the whole thing.

And you know, if we had the opportunity to look at other programs, we might have gone Success for All. But we have nothing to base it on. We may have said this is the best for our children.

What was the most important factor for you in terms of actually voting for Success for All?

I really felt that we needed to do something and it was the more structured situation. They told us that we were going to have to work. They made it pretty clear, they (the administration) didn’t want us there unless we had our whole heart in it. Of course as we say, we didn’t know what we were getting into. That’s the way I felt, and there were other people too.

Sure.

I feel too that we had to do something. The program that we had wasn’t working (whole language). I don’t know where that came from either. The presentation was very good. What really sold me was that I would have one group of no more than 12. I was promised and promised by the principal and the superintendent and the Success for All person. Come September, I had 18. It just seemed very manageable, even with all the work. And the children would be all grouped the same level.

Wasn’t there something in the whole school reform to reduce class sizes?

The other thing that seemed very promising, and this is in retrospect not knowing the program, it felt like everyone would collectively solve the problem. That no matter whether you were experienced or if you were new, it seemed like there was a way to get
everyone on the same page. What I feel now is that a group of monkeys could do it. But then, that was one of the reasons I voted for it, this will get everyone on the same page. A lot of people need to follow a script. And that’s fine if that is your style, but the script isn’t so good.

But it had that kind of promise.
The presenters were very good.
I liked the phonics part of it. In whole language they took away the phonics part of it and I figured this is good. But that lacked a certain amount of follow-up.
When we made the decision, there was hope there.

What factors and influences do you think were at work to get you to adopt Success for All?

This school adopted Success for All and was made to vote for the model in a very short period of time.
The district has a way of wanting to be first. The district showed that through actions to begin its preschool program and its gifted and talented program.

What role did your principal play in the selection process of the model?

She pushed it.

Do you think your principal had an affinity to a particular model?

It was obvious. Success for All was the only model being considered.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model? Why?

For the bilingual students, it provided structure for them. I really feel that it is working. I don’t do it exactly the way they describe it. The first year we tried the time contract. I don’t do that.
It provides a good structure and a foundation which a creative teacher can adapt it to your purposes. Now there are people who may not be able to and go directly to the script. If you’re not happy and are bored doing something, what do you think the kids are going to think?

See that’s the problem. We’ve been told that we have to stay to the script. That is the problem, the lack of flexibility.
And the lack of creativity.
Take your gifted children, it stifles their creativity and it’s terrible if you stay to the script. Take your special needs children, you can’t do it if you stay to the script. It is impossible. For a large majority of the children, it works fine. But if you’re not allowed flexibility, it’s a disaster. And you need flexibility as a teacher.
I like hearing this though what I keep hearing is that the model is bringing us away from the ills of whole language. What I would love to know is what other models could also do that?
If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection of your whole school reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

To demand to be exposed to 3 programs before we voted!
I would take the transfer (to another school).
But you were still going to get it. It was a whole district thing. Interestingly enough, they voted too after they heard the complaining that went on here.
Where were they going to go?
Knowing what we know now, we should have demanded to be exposed to other models. Not why is this being put down our throat?
It should have been brought into us earlier in the year and we should have had the opportunity to go and observe it.
And we should have been made aware of the fact that it would involve math the next year and then they wanted us to do ‘world lab’ the third year. We went bananas. So now we’re having it next year. These were things that were not told to us.
The first year, we were made a visitation site. All the other schools had to come and observe us.
As well as people from all over the State!
SCHOOL 5 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

At that time, we didn’t know anything about the models available. All we knew was the mandate from the State to select... We had to go to WSR and we had to select a model. The State was promoting the Success for All model and I really looked at it. But they made presentations by all the models and we went to them. All the principals, the Superintendent the Assistant Superintendent and teachers, especially the heads of the 2 teachers unions. Anyway, we went and just sort of learned a little bit about what each model had to offer and our Superintendent said let’s see who can begin this because we have to get going. So I volunteered. Let me see what my staff will do. I want to bring about all the information and I would like to go with the presumptive model for several reasons, mainly because if the State has done their research, this looks like it would be the best. Then I did some of my own. I traveled and found out more about it and I liked it so I thought, let’s work with this. So I brought it to my staff and presented it and asked them research as well to get information from the web, and whatever they wanted to do to find out more. And we had an awareness session also, of course. And then they did the vote and it passed. 91% of the staff voted for it. Now...I think that there some very well informed teachers. We had one teacher, a kindergarten teacher, who asked to be transferred back to the school in order to participate in the program. A couple of those who had voted against it came to me...A P.E. teacher...A 'master teacher' who was satisfied with the way things were going “I think I am doing very well in my class and what I want you to know is that I will do my best because I am a professional.” I felt very good about that. The reason why she voted against it was valid and the fact that I had her support after that was very good too. It was excellent the way it came about, I thought.

What do you think drove the selection of the model?

I think it was leadership from central office and from my end. The Superintendent went over to the school and before the teachers voted or anything. At one of our faculty meetings he said, “We have to have a model. We have to start Whole School Reform. There’s no other way about it. He told us study was out there. Comer hasn’t worked in Chicago. You see other things and you want to try something you know has been successful. Please research it. You will have my full support. We know that this model has not been successful in the other New Jersey district. But they didn’t have the support of their administration. They didn’t have the resources. They could not implement it right. You will be able to implement it right. I’ll be changing principals all over the district next year. I will keep your principal here with you.” I wasn’t changed that year but I was changed the following year due to changing circumstances. But that’s why the staff, I think, saw that they were going to be supported. That there was pressure coming in from every direction, from the State primarily, the court, and there was a need for change. The kids were not doing well. I don’t know to what extent they knew that the kids were not doing well, because we don’t assess at the K-2 level with standardized tests, so they didn’t have that pressure. But
some other things that happened afterwards reinforced the fact that the kids were not
doing well.

Were there other models that you considered as you came closer to actually selecting a
model?

Not for us. The research was done in the fall and in the spring but once I decided
on my end that this is what I wanted to do. I didn't impose it upon them. I really told
them, please research it. I didn't provide anything. I just thought I would leave it up to
the staff. My staff was excellent, a number with Masters degrees. They were pretty self-
sufficient about research and the word was out throughout the district. Everyone was
looking at models. At the time we had the whole language approach and a lot of
teachers had never caught on. I think it had been 10 years. The new teachers were lost
because unless you're experienced and you know your skills, it is very hard to bring up
them using whole language. I don't know to what extent they researched it but there
were discussions. I know from this one man that came over that people were looking at
it. When he decided to change, there must be a reason here. I gave a lot of handouts.
Everything I received from the State, I gave it to them but I didn't do awareness sessions
for any of the other programs. I just gave out the handouts.

If I had been a teacher at your school, can you walk me through what I would have
experienced leading up to the vote?

I always had a faculty advisory committee. The discussion was ongoing as to
what we had to do in order to meet the State's requirements. All that year we starting to
work with the 9 elements of Whole School Reform. It wasn't just the model. We had to
look at everything. We had experience with school-based planning. That we had done
and we had worked with that for a while. The name changed to School Management
Team. We established that committee and everyone was involved in the Whole School
Reform process. As a teacher, you would have gotten handouts that told you what the
different models were. I think people read short paragraphs better. At faculty meetings
we discussed it a lot, because it wasn't last minute. Here we are, let's select something.
I'm presenting you this, and that's the end of it. But they were given every opportunity
to find out more.

What would that time frame have been?

The entire year. Also the association was distributing a lot of information. The
fact that we involved our 2 presidents, they were passing along information also as to
their choices.

You mentioned that 91% of the faculty voted to adopt, did you feel that you had a critical
mass of people who were willing to roll up their sleeves and really do this?

Oh, you bet. They were very professional about the whole thing. This is what the
district wants us to do. This is what we voted for, let's do it and let's do it right. Within
the first 16 weeks, we were one of Success for All’s visitation sites. That’s how well they implemented it. I don’t know if it is their professionalism or they were really behind it. We had a fantastic facilitator. I think that she was crucial. She was fantastic. She was so well organized that when the teachers walked in, Success for All started. It’s a lot of hard work. Those teachers are exhausted. From lack of knowledge at the time, the school, like the first child in a family, you make all the mistakes with them. The same thing happened with this school. By the 2nd year, we started Math Wings. We should have skipped a year because those teachers were totally burned out. We lost a couple of people in the process. They just couldn’t deal with it. Some because they couldn’t deal with the extreme organization of the program. It was a very tough program to implement. They’re doing great. We have tripled our ESPA scores in Language Arts/Literacy in the last 2 years. It is a program that shows results immediately and that I think kept everybody going.

Were there strong opinions that came out at this time?

There were things that had to be ironed out all along the way. The teachers are very good at bringing out those problems. Success for All continued to do their implementation visits with teachers and then they have a debriefing after they observe the classes. Teachers challenge them and they say we don’t agree with this or whatever. They express everything, mostly frustration. For the most part you saw a desire to do it and to do it right and to get the kids to achieve.

What do you think was the most important factor going on in the teachers’ minds that they considered in voting for Success for All?

I think that having to go for change, that they were ready. I feel it was a pendulum. I think that they had whole language and they wanted something that they could feel structured although I don’t know if they were committed to so much structure. I think it was a pendulum effect. It is a very hard working bunch of people and they just wanted to get something that worked. I don’t think they were seeing much success with whole language. I think that most of them at heart, wanted to have structure and phonics back into the system and that’s what they got…and then some.

Were there other factors and influences at work that influenced their decision?

I think the financial part. I think that the fact that we were to be given so much money. I don’t know if they were aware of it but it definitely influenced me. The fact that we were going to get all the materials we wanted. We were going to get the tutors and all the support and everything aligned to the model, that was important to me. When everything serves reading, you’ve got to do better. To me that was a major factor. I don’t know about the teachers. I really don’t know what they were thinking. They have always been able to say everything that they wanted to, actually throughout the district, and the Supt. encourages that. He goes and has roundtables with the teachers and tells them to tell him exactly what you think. And don’t be afraid of anything you want to say because…and they do. They say, we’ve run out of materials. Within a week they have
the materials. So they have no fear of expressing their professional opinion and so they did. I think what motivated them was because I wanted it, leadership. I wanted it and the Superintendent wanted it. What we wanted was so well researched and was so successful in so many places. Whenever we visited and saw models working, we saw nothing that came anywhere close to that kind of success.

So you went for visits?

Yes.

Did the teachers visit at all?

Our facilitator went to another district in NJ, but the model wasn’t really being done right there. When I visited Texas, I went to some of the schools implementing the model. They were one of the strong ones (states) starting the program, and Baltimore. I liked it, but there were some aspects of it that I didn’t like but you can’t have a 100%. The program is always changing. That was a factor for me too. When you give feedback and something doesn’t work, they will adjust. It is continuously changing and I like that.

To what extent are you satisfied with Success for All and why?

Very satisfied! I am very satisfied because I see the figures (test score results). It’s working. It says Success for All, but it’s not for all. I see that happening with special populations. We have to do more for special ed., bilingual and the gifted but for the other populations, it is working very well. We have such a long way to go but we have done very, very well. I am now beginning to get concerned about the intermediate grades, the 3-5 grades. Once they learn to read and read well, what then? I think that we need to beef it up. I don’t know what we’re going to do but we’re going to have to do something. But I am going to begin with the special populations and I’m going to start some technology with them which Success for All doesn’t really allow for in their 90 minutes (reading period).

Did you find that teachers were having to do additional kinds of instruction in order to supplement Success for All to meet ESPA-like requirements and the NJCCCS that maybe the model by itself didn’t address?

The first thing that they thought was that it was a reading/writing program and it’s not. It is only reading. They had to do extra writing and we didn’t have that in place. The writing had been done with whole language but we had to come up with a curriculum. We’re now training the teachers because we now realize this is a handicap to have organized instruction in writing. Last year we started with the spelling and grammar. This year they’re doing more creative writing in a more organized thematic way throughout. Prior to the ESPA, those 4th grade students who were close to reading at grade level, the district introduced an 8-week program of an additional 40 minutes of reading instruction.
Those kids shot up. They went way, way up. The kids themselves evaluated the program and they loved it. Nobody had ever given them the extra. They didn’t use Success for All. They used something like, with novels, and I think some used Scholastic, Reading Counts, some used different things. So it was pretty much up to the individual teachers but was just to give them that little bit extra push. In math there is no tutoring. There is no support. We realize that we need something more already.

Were you aware that when you adopted Success for All that it would be the reading program, then the math program then the social studied program?

Yes, because we had to come up with a 3 year plan of implementation where the model would be completely implemented in 3 years. And that’s what got us into trouble at this school. After that, the State eased off and said 5 years so that we could skip a year in between (each of the disciplines to be implemented).

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about what went into the selection and implementation of Success for All, what would you recommend/or do differently?

I would personally go with the model because I am very satisfied with it. I think I would skip a year in between the implementation of the components of the model. We went full blast into the model. A lot of districts didn’t start from the first day expecting to implement the full thing (model). That’s what got us a lot of pats on the back from Success for All but it was very hard on the teachers, very hard. Within the reading, I would have started one thing at a time. Some identified teachers starting it and modeling it for the others so that others would have the comfort in going back and trying these things. Giving ourselves a whole year to gradually ease into the program, not just sink or swim. That’s what we did and it was just too much. They were excellent top-notch teachers. I could not have asked for a better group of teachers to do it with. And the facilitator was phenomenal. Thanks to her, she took a lot during that year. But, they did a great job.

What were the repercussions of jumping in with both feet? You talked about the intensity of it all. What were some of the consequences of that?

Jumping in the way we did, by January we were doing it and doing it well. We were named a visitation site (by Success for All). That year we had hundreds of visitors from our district, because they knew that they had to do something and the push was for Success for All from everyone. I think because of the ability of the students because of mobility, they would have been jumping from one model to another. In the district the schools go from K-2 and then 3-5. Can you imagine changing the model at that point? It would have been very traumatic for the kids and I think everybody realized that. The teachers from different schools came over and our teachers told it like it was. They didn’t pull any punches. They said, You’re going to work your tails off. You’re going to hate it. You’re going to do this and do. Look what the kids are doing. When the teachers saw the kids doing reading and sharing and cooperative learning, they were
amazed. I would have done it exactly the same, except I would have made it a little easier on the teachers. I think that the wear and tear on the teachers was tremendous that first year.
Appendix F

Verbatim Interviews

District C

School 6 – Teachers

School 6 - Principal

Success for All School – Cohort 2
SCHOOL 6 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

Inservice. We had to attend inservice after school. An SFA presentation kind of presented the program to us but that was after our feeder school had had it. We were offered a list of choices of the models. But we only received a presentation on SFA.

How was it that you selected SFA vs. the others?

The principals went to inservice on the 5 different models. Wasn't the State also backing it also? There were similarities to some of the programs we had.

Help me understand how this played out for you selecting SFA.

I liked the idea of it at the time when they presented it that we would have one reading group versus four or five that I had in my classroom. So that to me seemed positive.

It seemed more structured than the other reading program we had, balanced literacy, and it seemed to have the components to be very structured.

You mentioned that you had a presentation by SFA but you didn't from the other models, do you know why?

No.

Did you wonder at the time?

Yeah. It was recommended by the State that it was successful. I think that since our feeder school had already done it for one year, the presentation was more to reaffirm the program for the other schools. If we agreed with it, they went for it. If the other school had it and we didn't have it then they would be left behind. When they came over here then we would already have the program going and they fit right in.

What information did you get about the other models and how did you get that information?

I think we had a sheet listing the names of all the models. I remember seeing a sheet that was handed out to each one of us at a faculty meeting.

You didn't have any kind of presentation on those at all? Their names were on a sheet?

Yes.
What do you think drove the selection of SFA?

The fact that our feeder school had it. It was recommended by the State. The union was also backing it.

Were there any other models that were considered or did you know enough about any of the other models to the extent where you could make a choice?

I think a couple of other models were on that list but it was SFA that was being pushed.

How would you describe the selection process?

SFA came to make a presentation at a faculty meeting. Principals were sent out to different districts to observe SFA and then they came back with information to share.

Did any of you have a chance to visit?

Only in this district. We went to our feeder school.

Did all teachers go?

I don’t know if everybody did but we were told that we could.

Where and when did the vote occur?

At a faculty meeting. We had to write down our choice.

Do you remember hearing the results of that vote?

It was overwhelming.

Were there strong opinions one way or the other?

Yes, there still is.

How were people feeling?

I personally felt that I needed more information about the other programs because I didn’t feel I had good judgement in choosing one, and seeing one without seeing the others and knowing what the others had to offer.

I remember talking to a teacher that taught at the feeder school and I remember him saying that there were good and bad aspects to the program. I just wanted to hear more and see more before I began the program. I just felt that I hadn’t seen enough.

At the time I remember being concerned as to whether this program would meet the needs of all our children. We have bilingual children. We have special ed. Their
presentation seemed good at the time because to me 4 groups in a class vs. one, that was why we went with their recommendations.

I heard it from other schools. My sister had this program. That’s the first time I had heard of it. She’s in Georgia. She kept telling me it was a lot of work. All you do is cut letters...

What was the most important factor you considered in your vote to select SFA?

The way it was presented to us. It seemed like it met the needs of all the students we come in contact with in our district.

I vaguely remember not voting for it because I got the feeling that the overwhelming population of the district would vote for it. I wanted information about one of the others so I voted for one of the others. I’m a rebel.

Maybe because our feeder school was using it and it seemed to be working there for a year. I watched it in their classrooms and it seemed pretty good.

The teachers said it was good. The students seemed to learn.

I remember too thinking, one group, same level, 90 minutes; it just sounded good.

I just felt that it was already implemented in the lower grades and it was very strongly considered that we pick it up. I didn’t hear terrible things about it so I figured if the feeder school was happy with it then it would be OK for us.

The only concern I really had...I have a friend that teaches in another Abbott district and she had told me that one of the problems with the program was class size. In the past we had taught reading groups where there were 3 or 4 kids in a reading group and you really get to reach the children and that was my main concern. She said that one of the reasons it hadn’t worked in her district was because they had such large groups they had to modify things.

Do you think there were other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a specific model?

I guess SFA is the one they wanted us to choose because they didn’t give us presentations on the other ones.

When you say they, who is they?

From the top.

The superintendent along with the principals. The administration.

Any other influences out there?

The feeder school having adopted SFA. The State recommendation.

Why cohort 2?

We couldn’t wait because we are sister schools. With the 2nd grade students coming here, we had to be in place.
What role did your principal play in the selection of the model?

We know they visited other schools and they sat in on the inservices with us too. We don’t know any other role, that was it. She let us go for visitations during our specials.

Do you believe the principal had an affinity to a particular model?

I don’t think so.
I know she was enthused about balanced literacy...[laughter]...she didn’t stay. I don’t think she had an affinity for a particular model.

To what extent are you satisfied with SFA?

Smaller than a regular class size.
I think that the students enjoy reading to each other and they answer some treasure hunt questions together and I think they like Adventure in Writing because they discuss what they are going to write with their partner. And you can see some success in their work.

When we first started, I felt that it was very controlled but as the program progressed, it is a very highly structured program, but we were allowed to change some of the activities that we do every day so that it did not become monotonous. We can change for example, the Adventures in Writing. We can change the topic to make it more interesting. I like the idea that I have all one grade. I have all 4th grade. In the first year I had 5th graders and 3rd graders and they didn’t seem to get along well.

Does every one have one grade?

No, I have all three grades.

Has SFA made a difference in terms of student achievement?

Not as far as the ESPA.

Do you find that there are things that you have to teach over and above the model to prepare the students for the ESPA?

Especially in the math. They assume that the children know much more than they do. Take division. They spend maybe a day doing 2-digit division by 1-digit that would take me normally 2 weeks to do. This time normally in the year, I would just be getting started with division. Now I’m done with multiplication, done with division and almost done with geometry. I’m rushing through it. I don’t feel comfortable that they know how to do it for the ESPA.
My personal opinion is they should have begun with 1st grade, because they do assume that they have that prior knowledge, and build it each year so that they do have that background.

I do believe that the very basic building steps in reading and in math could be presented in a different way and presented in a better way for SFA. I think that when they get to 4th grade and the very basic language arts skills have not been mastered then I have a problem even though I'm teaching reading comprehension skills and SFA in my groups, there still seems to be a lack of skill development. It's almost like building the house without the foundation. So I have a problem with that.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

Know all the models. Be presented all the models to feel more comfortable. Be sent out to other school districts that have every type of model and see it in action. I agree. I would have liked more information looking back over the other models we could have had.

Maybe if they had brought the other models to us to present, we could have compared them.

What was the time frame from when you had the SFA presentation and then had to vote?

Two days. I think we had two afternoons. Didn't it seem that we had to adopt it immediately? We didn't have any time at all.

Were your visitations after the SFA presentation?

They said that we could go down there (the feeder school) during our own time to see how the program was set up.

On your own time? How would that work?

After school or during our specials or our lunchtime. We would just see the set-up of the room.
SCHOOL 6 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

Prior to being the principal, I was the head teacher for reading and writing. That past couple of years before we adopted a model I attended many different sessions the New Jersey Department of Education held and exposed us to the variety of models they thinking about and looking at. I went to many different sessions for at least 2 years before I adopted at my school. We jumped on the bandwagon fairly quickly.

So you gathered information along the way. Beyond that, leading up to the selection of the model, did you play any other role?

I discussed the different models with the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent and district administrators. We discussed the various models in depth. We discussed what the State department was suggesting and the thought occurred to us that we had had a very good reading and writing program in place. When anything is new, it takes a few years to for it to catch on and for the test scores to start to come through. So at the point the State decide to go with Whole School Reform, our test scores were not looking extremely attractive and especially because we’re an urban district. Even though we saw signs of improvement in the test area, we were an Abbott district and we didn’t have a choice. We had to do Whole School Reform. The thought was do we create our own program? At the time we realized...our Superintendent is very creative and very bright and we could also tell from the conversations with the State and the many meetings we went to, if we took the time to create our own program, there was a chance that they would have approved it. But then if you didn’t improve your test scores, you would have had to take one of the programs anyway. So it kind of discouraged you from creating your own program. The program that the State was suggesting was Success For All because supposedly of the research and its track record and so forth. If you tried any of the other programs and they didn’t work, you were going to have to do Success For All anyway. So we decided to go with Success For All. We looked at all the different components of Success For All and even though we felt that some of the things we were doing were even better than Success For All we could live with the Success For All model because it did encompass a lot of good teaching things we were aware of. The biggest component was the fact that we would put a facilitator in each school that would help the teachers get aboard and give support and so forth which was missing from our past program and we might have had some quicker results had we been able to do something like that.

What do you think actually drove the vote to select Success For All?

To be honest, we did encourage the teachers to vote for it because the handwriting was on the wall in terms of the test scores, in terms of Whole School Reform; in terms of what would happen if you adopted something else and it didn’t work. We realized the best road to go was Success For All and we knew that all programs would work if they buy into them and do them. We decided that whatever we chose to do, and the Success
For All program, we would back it 100%. Central office would make sure we implemented it correctly so that if it was going to work, it would work.

What other models did your school consider and why were they not considered? Did you get down to several models before selecting Success For All?

There were other models that were attractive to us but Success For All did seem to encompass more of what we knew we needed. It was covering more different areas. Other programs were less structured and we recognized a need that if you’re going to do something, you need to have everyone aboard. Success For All had the support from the foundation and the materials and it made it an easy package for you to do. Some of your average to below average teachers would be able to read the directions and do it whether they were reading teachers or not. It’s a very simple program to follow and it’s structured so it’s easy for administrators to check on to make sure it’s being implemented. The other programs just didn’t have all of those components that we knew if we were really going to do something different and make it work. We felt that Success For All was the way to go because of the influence from the State and because of the program itself. We did encourage our teachers to vote for it. We explained the situation with Whole School Reform. We gave out information on all the programs. We had people go to presentations, if they wanted to go but we still pushed for Success For All and the staff did go along and vote for it.

If I had been a teacher at your school, what would I have experienced?

You would have heard the different programs being discussed. There was information packets, folders and things passed out at faculty meetings and discussions about the different programs by the principals. Central office staff got the principals to attend many of the State meetings and so forth and we passed it along to our staff. I do have to admit that we pushed for Success For All. If anyone stated that they wanted to go out and visit a school that had one of those, we tried to accommodate them. There was a definite push for Success For All.

Were there strong opinions one way or another toward the model?

No. They went along with it because they knew we wanted them to. They did recognize that we had to do something that we had to improve test scores. They were used to change because we had just changed our reading and writing philosophies and our programs 5 or 6 years prior to Whole School Reform so they were kind of a little step ahead of some districts where they had just gone through change so they were a little bit more accepting to change.

To what extent do you feel that the teachers had enough information to make a good choice about a particular model?

They didn’t have extensive information but they had information. They had whatever we were able to pick up at the different State meetings.
What do you suppose drove the teachers? What was the most important factor teachers considered in their vote to select Success For All?

They wanted a program that had structure that would tell them what to do; direction. Teachers basically don’t want to be poor teachers. They want to do a good job. The program that we had prior to this left a lot for them to develop on their own. A lot of us who had been teaching for years felt that teachers needed to be creative and be able to use their own ideas but when it actually came down to giving them that freedom, it didn’t work as well as we thought. More teachers wanted more structure and be told what to do and how to do it. They didn’t want to think on their own. I think that’s because of our educational system for the past 25 or 30 years. The way you become a teacher and what is expected of you. You have always been told what to do. When we gave them the freedom, they didn’t jump and go with it. They went back to wanting more structure and being told.

Were there factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select Success For All?

There were influences. We had a Superintendent who recognized from the get-go, it wasn’t a good idea to try different models in one school district. If you’re really trying to implement something to the best of your ability, everyone has to be on board and you really couldn’t learn and do 4 or 5 different things at once well. Therefore, our Superintendent did push us to choose Success For All and all the schools to do it together so that there could be a force, to be united, that could make sure that it happened. We have found out since then that the school districts that did choose different ones are having extreme problems. It’s too hard to manage. You have kids going to different schools and it’s kind of silly. We’ve come to the conclusion that we did the right thing. I, as the head reading and writing teacher wished we had done our own thing but I too didn’t feel I had the strength to take what was going to come down after that if the scores didn’t come up as well as the State wanted. I too pushed for the teacher to do Success For All because that’s what everyone wanted. It wasn’t a horrible program. It was a decent program and what were they going to do to us? If we implemented it correctly and it doesn’t work, it’s still up in the air. What are they going to do to us? Our teachers were good about it. They did a lot of work in the beginning. They were aware that it was going to be a lot of work.

They(the teachers) knew that you were pushing for SFA?

People watched what I was going to do because they knew that I was happy with what we were doing and I had to be very careful. I still have to be very careful. I think that Success For All is fine. Is every child going to read with Success For All? No. We still have reading recovery in our district which is a fantastic 1st grade intervention. I am a former Reading Recovery teacher so I may have prejudices in that department.

Were teachers aware that central office was pushing for Success For All?
They were aware of the influences. They were also aware of the reasons why too.

To what extent were you satisfied with Success For All? Why?

I was satisfied because it is a decent program that employs many good teaching strategies. I was pleased with the fact that the mediocre teacher could do a better job of teaching reading because of the program. Do I think it's the greatest thing in the world? No.

If you were to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of Whole School Reform, what would you recommend be done differently?

I wished that I had the energy and perseverance to write our own program to teach our children to read and write. I would have rather have done our own program. We are an Abbott district and a lot of the Abbott districts need guidance. They needed structure. They needed a Whole School Reform program. So we went along with it. I know that this program is far better than what was going on in some areas. For our district, I know that we had a head start on reading and writing in different ways that would have eventually worked but we didn't have a packaged program like Success For All that had everything thrown in it. Because of the reasons I stated earlier, it just made sense when you are an Abbott district to do what the State wanted and give it all you have to see if it would work.
Appendix G

Verbatim Interviews

District D

School 7 – Teachers

School 7 - Principal

Co-nect School – Cohort 3
SCHOOL 7 - TEACHERS

What was your involvement in the selection of the model?

Several of us went to State meetings so we were thoroughly involved in that. The district set up developers to come to the school. SMT members, teachers and parents sat in on the different developers that came into the school. We had developers come to this school where that the whole faculty sat in on it prior to our choice of Co-nect.

In the State presentations, we just got the tip of the iceberg and we just sat there while they explained what would be done for the ensuing year or 18 months. After that, the district chose several models and they came on site here and we had some half-day workshops as a faculty. I think they brought in about 4 or 5 of them: Modern red Schoolhouse, Educational Vistas, Coalition of Essential Schools, Co-nect, Success for All...

We had a wide variety of choices and we listened and were invited to a staff development. We were there for approximately half the day. We sat and listened to their sales pitch and we discussed amongst ourselves what we thought was apropos for this town and this economic community. Right from the get-go, we knew what would not work here.

The faculty would discuss the models in the faculty room, in grade levels...this one would work here, this one would not...

The representative team would go to the State presentations and then we brought back the information. We had faculty meetings so the entire faculty had everything up to date. Then several of us went to Maryland to see Co-nect in action. Then we went to a school in Philadelphia. The school in Maryland was a very upscale suburban, mid-America. So we wanted to see somewhat closer to our district. So we went into a district in Philadelphia which was very urban. But we saw it at work and we brought back the information and the teachers were aware of everything that was going on and then eventually they wanted to take the vote.

The SMT team brought it down to 2 models: Co-nect and Coalition. So the SMT, we would sit down and we went through all the models and then we brought it down to 2 selections taking into account the input that we received from the faculty.

What do you think drove the ultimate selection of your WSR model?

I think the way that we believed in it. I think it also came down to teachers...any change is scary. Take the first step, a little frightening, what is going to happen to the curriculum? How much work is this going to be? I think we all looked at it as we can draw a lot of parallels between Co-nect and what we were already doing in the school. The change was not going to be that big. We were doing many of the things they were proposing anyway. We didn’t want to reinvent the wheel.

Why was Coalition not selected as it came time to pick one model?

It was geared more toward the middle school or a high school. And that program was more conducive to that type of set-up. Co-nect is elementary.

And I think Coalition wasn’t in the elementary school. It was set up for middle schools and high schools. But I think too it was just so general. These are our principles... I think there are 12 principles that they had and you do what you want to do with it. So we wanted some
structure but not that we had to do Success for All. This had to be done and this had to be done...

What would I have experienced as a teacher on this faculty through this model selection process?

The workshops.
I guess you would have had a lot of questions. You would have asked how does this fit into what I am already doing? How much change is going to take place? These are a lot of the questions that came from the faculty. If there is a change in materials, will the materials be provided? What will the model do for us and the kids?
Through the workshops, we kept the teachers informed every step of the way. If a question was asked that we didn’t know, we found out.

Was there consensus?

Yes, 100%.

Were there strong opinions one way or another for this model?

None of us were really jumping up and down over the fact that we had to implement any model. We really weren’t happy with that at all. But we knew we had to and we knew this was not a choice that we had and so with that we listened to the different companies that came in and pitched and we just made a decision based on our community, our socio-economics.
We tried to see what was most beneficial to the kids, the least intrusive. We didn’t like it. We didn’t want to but we really had no choice. The State said this is what we have to do and we did it.

I think that’s what made people feel good. They did have a choice in choosing the model. Nobody’s really walking around saying we shouldn’t have selected Co-nect, this is an awful model. We’re happy about the choice we made. We just weren’t happy that a choice had to be made.

Why did you wait to be a cohort 3 school?

We don’t know why.

To what extent do you feel that you had enough information to make an informed decision to select your WSR model?

Personally, it was after I visited the one school and I saw it actually in operation, it became more clear what we would actually be involved in. Then when we visited the second school that was more like our school, it became even more clear. Yes this is something that we definitely can make work here. It would take time and adjustment but you do know that you would have a great partner and you do know you can make that work. It was the scheduling really that the difficulty came in.
After seeing it in action... They came in and told us about it but I didn’t really have any idea until we visited the schools to see how it worked. The first school was even higher than
middle America. They were in pods and they had everything you could possibly ask for. There was want of nothing and I thought this isn’t going to work. Our schools are not set up like that. The we visited the school in Philadelphia 4 or 6 weeks later where the schools are set up like this. This made me feel 10 times better. If they can make it work, we can make it work.

I think the faculty had enough respect for what we had to say. It was not that difficult.

What was the most important factor you considered in voting for your WSR model (Co-nect)?

We could continue to do what we were doing and at the same time it gave us a chance to step back and analyze what we had been doing over all these years and make the changes, making improvements without any really drastic measures like getting rid of our reading series or implementing a whole new reading curriculum.

I would have to agree. This school was used to working...every year we would have a theme. Teachers were used to working collaboratively with one another and there wasn’t going to be that much change taking place. We knew some change had to take place and it has with common scheduling and stuff like that. This is a very cohesive school. People in this particular building I think work very nicely together. There were some older teachers and they did not want change. Their methods of teaching were that of 30 years ago. I liked the student-driven work that they were showing because I think that kids need to take a more active role in their education. That’s what really sold me on it and that’s how we presented it to the faculty. Yes you are the model but the kids...

Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a particular model? If so what were they?

It was our choice to make. Our Assistant Superintendent loved the Educational Vistas because of the technology base.

What role did your principal play in the selection of this model?

He played really the same role we did. He ultimately left the decision to us. I think he would have backed us no matter what we chose. I think he knew that we were the ones that were actually going to make this work. It was either going to be sink or swim. He sort of agreed that we should make this decision. He was in favor of ALEM, with the learning centers. I mean he went nuts over that one. He took an active part. He did investigate different models and went and visited and reported back.

Do you believe that your principal had an affinity for a particular model and what was that?

He was very excited when he came back from the school with ALEM. He came into my room and said you have to see this in action. Maybe you and a couple of teachers could go and visit.

We explained that is not going to work here. First of all, our classrooms are not set up for that kind of a set-up. Secondly, it was too much how they had their reading blocks of time...It would not have worked here. The way our specials are, it just would not have worked here.
I think the ultimate decision was going to be ours. He did not buck us not even a little bit. I think if he went to see Co-nect in action, he would have liked that too. Unfortunately he didn’t so...

To what extent are you satisfied with the model that was selected?

I think there’s more collaboration among the teachers, the grade level meetings, the common prep time... I’ve been here for 25 years and for 23 of those years we never had common prep time. We are trying to get the specials to come into the classroom which they are beginning to do. They didn’t know what we did up in our room and we didn’t know what was going on down there. I just think the action planning has brought us to how we can improve. The critical friends visit, that’s another thing. They’re hands-on and they see what’s going on. Last year I went to Washington, Maryland. It was very time consuming and I walked out of there exhausted but it was a worthwhile experience. I walked out of there thinking, I can’t wait until they come to our school to see what we’re doing. I just had a different viewpoint on it.

I wondered if this was going to be an extra... just one more thing that we had to do. And I think that 50-60% of the faculty felt the same way. Once we got into it we started to see changes. For this year’s project we worked off of the curriculum. I think we made the project extra work. This year I saw it differently and I chose something that would fall right into line with the Core Curriculum Content Standards that we are responsible to teach and we just picked it up and continued from there.

It wasn’t supposed to be a separate thing. It was supposed to be woven into your curriculum already. We had a hard time understanding how to do that. This year we took a couple of standards and we worked backwards.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of Co-nect, what would you have done differently?

I guess every model thought that they could belong anywhere. But that is really not true because there are so many different economic areas and some of them really don’t belong here. I think the homework needed to be done prior to bringing them in here because some of them that I saw were a waste of my time.

The State needs to say, this is it—this is where we are going, instead of politics coming in and this program is coming in with a different name on it. They tend to look for just quick fixes. They just want the scores to be raised and it’s almost like, that’s enough, now what should we try?

I think we did a great job. I think it’s a shame that more people didn’t go to visit the model schools.

But they could have.

We asked, we want to go and see this and there was no problem with central office. The facilitator was excellent in letting us know everything that was going on.

How did it occur that all of the elementary schools in a given district deciding on the same model in the same year?
I think the administration was not in favor of us not choosing different models from elementary school to elementary school. There is a lot of transience within the district. They realized as well as we did the difficulties there would be if students moved across schools that had different models. So we basically kept it all the same for the purposes of conformity and it would just make life easier.

It was at one of the information meetings with teachers, principals and parents where the whole group decided it would be nice if we all chose the same model because of the mobility. But then it was still left up to the individual school.

We heard about districts that adopted a number of different models and they’re pulling their hair out. Maybe it was a good thing that we waited to be in the third cohort because heard about some of the disasters going on.
SCHOOL 7 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

Well we had to put together teams or committees for review. We went to a couple of expositions that were held in New Brunswick (by the State) and we visited all those things. We brought the information back and we turned-keyed it with the staff here. That was one way. We had different opinions on it. Another thing that we had done was that we had visited certain schools that had a couple of the models that were being considered to get a working idea as to what they looked like. What we did to finalize was to send teachers, actually 3 teachers to visit some of these WSRs out-of-state to get a different perspective. And the final thing that happened I coordinated everybody with a team. What are we going to do? What are we going to pick? We kind of narrowed it down from this, this and this. OK, these are our choices and then we had a final vote.

You say we the team, are you talking about the SMT or was there another team?

No the team that I made was basically a selection of faculty members that represented the whole school: the primary grade level, the middle grade levels and the upper grade levels. So this way everyone had a different view to go back to their teachers and talk to their grade level partners to explain this can work; this can work; this will cause this; what are we going to need to do?

What do you think that ultimately drove the selection of the model?

For us it was what we were familiar with doing all the time here. Project-based learning is no big fish. It’s been around. I think for this school specifically we had always been thinking each year of having a, through our school management team, some kind of culturally diversified activity. We started off very small a few years ago a school-wide project to make a cookbook. Then we expanded into native-Americanism was very big. We had a building-wide project. Then we had a science fair, then science and math. We were on our way to doing these things anyway, so why not look for something that matched our capabilities? And we kept on coming back to the Co-nect model. It fit us well.

What other models were in the running towards the end and why didn’t you select those?

We were diversified. I think Adaptive Learning Environment Model (Community for Learning) was the other one. That seemed to be something that I thought we were able to do but it still needed more tutoring, more people and then it really came down to a budgetary thing. We had to plan these things and really what didn’t effect us that wasn’t so expensive... We really didn’t find any other model that jumped into what we wanted to do. Maybe the Adaptive Learning Environment Model was something, but it really came down to what we were doing already was what this program offered. It was kind of cut and dry.

What would I have experienced as a teacher here in the selection of the model?
For any teacher, they would have seen the information that was turn-keyed towards them. They were given the opportunity to always come forward and give an opinion. We met quite a bit as we were going along. We wanted to make sure that everybody was on the same page. We really did not want to make a decision that was going to come back and bite us in the butt later or we didn’t want dissention. So everyone was given that 100% voice. What we tried to do was to get everyone involved in it so that they would be ready to buy into it. For any teacher here at that time, they had open involvement with that which was happening. It was a little bit scary because for this school district, nobody was really into having to make these types of decisions because education was the way most of the teachers had been taught whether it was 30 years ago or 5 years ago. You were going to teach the way you had been taught. Who wants to reinvent the wheel? The main issue from me and the team that was selected was to make sure everyone knew what was happening. There were no hidden agendas. Everybody had all the information. And at the same time, the biggest thing was that you were always reminded that in 3 years, don’t stand up at a meeting and say this is not working, we should have; we could have; we would have... That’s not the place for it. That’s why we were very cognizant of making sure that everyone had an open opinion.

Were there any strong opinions as the timeline got close?

No, I wouldn’t say so. There was a percentage of “this is what we’re going to do.” They are very confident people. The veterans said, “this too shall pass” because they have been reinventing the wheel. The new people were a little bit nervous. They relied on everyone else’s input but then again they were cautioned, make your own decision. When we narrowed it down to what are we doing here? And the kind of support that this model was going to be giving us, it was almost like a no-brainer.

What were the sources of information so that you and your faculty could make what you believed to be the best possible decision?

Beyond the State sponsored expositions and visitations to schools who were implementing the models, we relied on certain districts that were in the first cohort and the second cohort, we just kind of bounced off of them quite a bit. We were in no hurry so everyone knows everyone else ‘around the world’ especially in this little Abbott community of ours. We did make phone calls and we found out “how is this working, how is that working?” Another principal and I along with the Curriculum Coordinator went to another district to visit the ALEM project. I was really partial to that because that’s what I had seen a few times. I was not familiar with Co-nect but if it was project-based, that was something that I know about. I don’t really have to get too much into that. It was just fact-finding, getting information and just seeing what was out there and then making the best choice.

Did you have consensus? What was the vote?

I think we were 100%. We held the vote in the auditorium. All the faculty members that were full time voted. There was a little sense from the central office that they wanted the
To what extent do you feel that the teachers had enough information to make an informed decision?

Based on all the information that we presented to them. Number one: the 3 teachers that I chose, a 6th grade teacher; a 3rd grade teacher and a 1st grade teacher, the 6th grade teacher had the most experience by a few years. Using all of their capabilities, it was the best thing to choose people who were going to make informed decisions and they had upstanding character throughout the place. So when the younger teachers needed an honest opinion, these people are the go-to people that are here. That's what I felt was very important that you pick the right people to do the right job. I felt that once I had that in place, and it wasn't like you're asking me to do that again...there was none of that. All of these people knew that this is what was coming down the road. Once we made everybody realize that this was something that we are doing. You can't really take an attitude that "this too shall pass." Just like computers in education, there's a computer in my room. It's not even plugged in, but I have a computer. We couldn't participate like that. We had to make sure that everybody understood the ramification of what we were endeavoring towards and how we now are going to use this as tool to make ourselves better.

What do you think was the most important factor that the teachers considered in making the decisions to adopt the Co-nect model?

Understanding the fact that it was not going to be an upset or upheaval of what their daily life was going to be, number 1. Once they realized that it's not that all your learning, this is project-based learning, but all teaching in the class is not going to be based on the fact that everybody's got to work in a group, they've got to do a project, that's not it at all. There still has to be time for drill, there still has to be time for that teacher/student interaction. Once they found out that a lot of the things that they were doing normally, not realizing it was what they could just plug right into this. Once they found that out, the comfort rate just rose.

Were there other factors or influences at work in terms of moving the teaching staff to select a particular model?

No. There was nothing. It was solely done by what we were to choose. The only recommendation we got from central office was to try to stay consistent with one. Meaning the elementary schools try to do one. We are all different but it does make it an easier thing, I guess for budget purposes.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model that you ultimately selected? Why?

It has just made the teaching staff a little bit more on their toes, not that they weren't there already, it's good to make them feel like something new is what you can try. You're revising a curriculum somewhat. One of the big things I like about this model is that it really
makes you use the computer because you have the project web site that you touch into. Once that has all been established and every teacher has their own personal computer plus more, they can really go to these web sites and get a lot of help. And that kind of forces you to do that. Then at the same time making them realize that for the most part everybody would make a project which was usually at the back end of something. The idea is to make it at the front end and that is where all your learning is going to go on because it is going to make more kids be more involved with the learning when there is more activity going on. That’s the one thing I like about that because the kids really do learn better when there is active participation instead of sitting in rows or sitting in groups of 4 or 5 where we think they’re working in groups but all they are, are glorified rows. You can see the difference in the quality of what is going on as they’re learning. That’s the one thing I like about this. It has caused the teachers to do a little bit more.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

I can see the need for school reform; for districts and cities choosing models. I think it needs to be more than that. Choosing a whole school model gave us the opportunity to get our class size lower; be able to purchase more equipment because we needed, in order to make this model work, this, this and this... All of those things as far as facilities and equipment and the hiring of people is great but if you had all of those things in place, what am I going to need this for? Maybe because our town is an Abbott district, as far as funding, that’s where our teacher problems were. 31 kids in a classroom vs. 21 kids in a classroom. Big difference. That’s where whole school reform has really helped us with. I do that with my staff when they ask, “do we really need this?” And I say do you remember when you had 37 kids in your class? How many do you have now?

Do you need the extra work? No! Do you need the extra paperwork? No! You’ve got all these meetings that you have to do. There’s quite a bit of it. But take a look at the whole picture. How is that moving you along? I think it has helped us out. Would I have changed anything regarding what we went through to select the model? No, I would have done it the same way. Regardless of what model I would have chosen, it had to be done that way in order to be fair with everybody. The faculty will look to me as being the leader to make the best-informed decision for them. You can’t make that decision unless they help. It was a team thing. Everybody knows what is going on and don’t you dare tell me you didn’t know. I wouldn’t find it acceptable and no other staff member would. It’s really not tolerated that way. You make a big decision and you’d better know.
Appendix H

Verbatim Interviews

District D

School 8 – Teachers

School 8 - Principal

Co-nnect School – Cohort 3
SCHOOL 8 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

Several of us viewed different models. We went to an after-school program and representatives from different programs came. I would say we saw 3 or 4 models but not everyone went to all of the different ones. There were 3 or 4 different ones and some people were asked to go.

It was the powers that be that wanted Co-nect.
They were hoping that we would select Co-nect. Co-nect was the last one.
Co-nect met down here in the computer room. The whole school met on that and he did his demonstration.

When we went to the church, it was never mentioned at that time.

I had went with the principal to a few meetings to learn about Little Red Schoolhouse and SFA and a few others. We did get some information but not at that time on Co-nect. This was our 2nd year with Co-nect so it was the year before. We went to a few meetings and presentations on the others and it just seemed like Co-nect was the wrong path but we did vote. I think one of the reasons Co-nect was selected is because it really was the closest model to what we were presently doing. Co-nect is project-based; we always did projects. It was the least amount of materials. It was almost a take-off on what we were already doing. So it seemed to me that was one of the reasons.

The form that they gave out [the ballot] had ______ Co-nect, and ______ Other, so it was pretty clear. Co-nect was capitalized; it was the first one there. Also the information wasn’t given when different people went to different things. That information wasn’t given to the entire school. Only Co-nect information was given to everyone.

But that was kind of denied.
They kept on having you go to Co-nect, Co-nect, Co-nect...
Many people felt that they didn’t know enough about any other one to make an honest choice.

I think that Co-nect was the last one that we went and viewed. The other ones were 6 months or a year before that.
We want to know how it got narrowed down. Who decided and when was that decision made? We don’t know. We knew what they were hoping what we would choose.

Didn’t one of the schools not choose Co-nect?
Yeah, and they now have Co-nect because they then re-voted.
We were kind of told if we didn’t do Co-nect, then we would be forced to do SFA. We didn’t pick it. That was the fear kind of thing. Well if we don’t pick; if we don’t come to a consensus, the State will force us to do SFA.

What do you think drove the selection of the model?

They didn’t expect us to check off other (on the ballot) and write something else in. they didn’t want us to write in Little Red Schoolhouse. They figured there would never be enough people writing a little thing down to be a majority.
But in the one school there was a 50/50 split. The principal got really angry; tried to call meetings from 6:00 – 8:00 at night, then have to go through all this other stuff.
I think what drove it was fear of the unknown because we kind of knew…

We had a little knowledge of Co-nect and that was it.

I voted for Co-nect. I like project-based teaching and that’s what I voted. If you didn’t want it as classroom teachers, then that was your position to say so.

Were there other models that you considered?

Coalition and we brought up Comer.

Coalition wasn’t a choice because many elementary schools weren’t using Coalition. There wasn’t enough information or it was more suited for high schools… that’s what we were told.

And then we were also told that they wanted to keep all the elementary schools in line and have the same program.

I voted for Co-nect because it was the only one I understood what the program was all about. It was the only one that we had enough information to say, I can work with this. We also forgot about the other ones because they were done a year before or whatever. That one was fresh in our mind too, and we thought we could live with it.

I voted for Co-nect because I thought it was the least amount of change. At the time all of our teachers were doing projects, maybe not to the extent, it was the least amount of materials being thrown away and pre-testing and portfolios and descriptions and a lot of other things that a lot of models did involve.

I think that the school system as a rule wanted us to pick this one because they were thinking of the cost of getting rid of every math book and buying all of those materials. Even though the State gave us money to pick SFA and to pick Co-nect, we had to pay money. They thought in the end it might be cheaper than replacing a math series for $5,000,000.

With SFA there was a lot of individualized reading. We don’t have the staff for that so it meant hiring the staff plus besides the staff, the room. The other thought was, would you rather work with one student or the whole class? A lot would. There was a lot of discussion on that too, who was going to be hired?

They (Co-nect) didn’t tell anyone about project builder. They left out exactly how much work was involved.

How would you describe the model selection process?

Stressful. Extremely stressful. We became pitted against each other. There was a lot of stress, a lot of unknown. What’s going to happen if we do pick it? What’s going to happen if we don’t pick it? Towards the end, we had a lot of meetings, people visiting, Co-nect schools. A certain group went to Maryland, another group went to Philadelphia. There was just a lot of stress as far as I’m concerned and I don’t think we were given an accurate picture of what went on before. When we brought that up, that we really didn’t hear much about Little Red Schoolhouse or Comer or any of them. We were told, yes you were. But in reality we weren’t. People did go to see these schools but the information was never really given to the staff. We got maybe handouts, there it is. Too cumbersome to read; big packets of stuff.

We never actually had meetings to discuss it, this is what we saw, we don’t think it’s for us…
We came back, it was the 3rd year, we have to pick. This is the amount of time, we have to have a decision. All along there was no rush...

I even remember people saying, “well you went to see it. You didn’t tell us about this, didn’t you see it?” People were angry at each other. When it came time for voting people were angry at the people who were either voting for or against it, depending what side they were on. We felt like there was something going on because for example one of the other schools, the same group went to see the school in Maryland and that same group of people went to the school in Philadelphia. No one else was given the opportunity to go and visit. Not here, we all had the opportunity. So there was that feeling that there was something going on in the background that we were not privy to. Why couldn’t other teachers go? Why is the same group getting to go?

Did you ever have a forum where people would come back and report on what they saw?

Only with Co-nect. The people that went were selected to go. They didn’t actually volunteer. People who went were asked to go. People were chosen for specific reasons…which we don’t know what they were.

Were there strong opinions about the models?

I transferred in from the middle school. There was a lot going on. A lot of mixed feelings, a lot of uncertainty. But again when it came down to the vote, they voted the program. They went along with the crowd so to speak so that is what they got.

I think if a choice had been no WSR, I think that would have been checked for most everyone. Most of them didn’t really want any WSR.

I think if they had listed all of the different WSR programs, it would have been different. People would have felt a little easier about voting. In another school you weren’t allowed to leave the room with the paper (ballot). You felt that everyone was watching, were you checking or were you writing (on the line marked “other”). That was another stress on people, what am I going to do? There was no opportunity to talk to people. I think also you kind of had the feeling if it’s a done deal, you don’t really have any options here. You go through the formality of making a check.

To get 85%, that was the big pressure. What if we were the only school in town that doesn’t come up with a majority? That was a big play. Time was running out.

To what extent do you feel that you had enough information about selecting a particular model?

We really didn’t have enough information about all the other choices.

The man that came in to present it (Co-nect) skimmed over it. He said it was just a little project. You won’t do little projects, that’s it, no big deal. They did make light of it.

They were very good sales people. All of them were. Little Red Schoolhouse, SFA, all very vibrant, selling their product.

They (Co-nect) never told us about Project-Builder. They never told us about having school process reviews or any of the things that went into it.

It all comes down to there wasn’t a faculty meeting held for each and every one of the different choices with all of the information given out for each and every one. Like there should have been a Little Red Schoolhouse meeting where the representative came and the entire school
was there. Everyone would have had an informed choice to make on each of the individual models. Where Co-nect is the only one where we were all together where we had a faculty meeting where actually knew what the program was supposed to involve. But on the others it was so shady and only some people knew and how could anyone have really voted knowing we really didn’t know?

We knew just the fact that the district paid for people to go to Maryland, sleep in hotels, this is so out of the ordinary for us. We knew. That was telling us right off the bat that this is the way that we would have to go.

We were like overnight? Maryland? That was a shock.

Were there visitations at all to see other models?

To somewhere and look? No.

Even locally?

No. You spoke to the representative only. And that was even a select group of people that was asked to go.

What was the most important factor that you considered in your vote to select Co-nect?

I liked project-based teaching. I liked team teaching. I like working together, unfortunately teaching phys. ed. it doesn’t apply too well. I don’t get to move out as much as I am able to.

When I voted I tried to find one that fell into my comfort zone. Something that I knew that I could do, something I knew I could do well and that I really believed would help the students be higher achievers and that’s what I thought about when I passed in that vote. I didn’t vote for it (Co-nect). I wanted Comer.

I voted for Co-nect because again I mentioned that we’ve been on a change. I’m not in a classroom. I’m basic skills. I think if I were in a classroom, not knowing what I know now, I think I would want the least amount of change, although it ended up being a lot of change. At the time I thought it was the least, that’s why I voted for it.

Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a particular model? What were they?

The underlying pressure that we knew what they wanted.

Who is they?

We don’t know who the theys are.

The people who sign the pay-checks.

Central office?

Yes. It was clear. We knew what they wanted.
When you get a paper (ballot) saying Co-nect or Other... The word was out even before the paper was handed out. The expectation was when you went in to vote.

Basically you were told that every school is going to vote for Co-nect so you might as well too.

And I think too they said, "If you don't choose this, SFA will be shoved down your throat."

Then when we heard that another school didn't vote for Co-nect we thought, "What's going to happen to them?"

They couldn't go home. We got to leave. "If you don't vote this you're not leaving today."

I also think that the upper management people decided on this because it involved so much technology and they knew if we had this we could get a lot more technology, get more computers. The State would give us money towards buying these items because you can't get them without the money and you can't do the program without the items. They wanted those things and they saw this as a way to get them, and it worked. We have a computer lab now and we do have things we didn't have before.

What role did your principal play in the selection of the model?

Our principal is our head honcho here. She is the boss. She makes the major decisions and we followed through to keep her program going.

She gave us opportunities to visit anything we wanted to but I think that it came across, for whatever reason, was pushing Co-nect. Whether she was getting pressure herself, I don't know. She pretty much made it clear, she didn't force us but, we knew that this is what she wanted.

Do you think that came at the end? I don't remember when we looked at the beginning models of her being that way. She was going to all of them and looking at them thinking we were really going to have a choice.

She said you don't really have a choice.

But she never really said it. Something happened later. When we first started the process she must have gotten the impression from someone that this was where to go, and that your staff is expected too.

Do you think your principal was also influenced by central office?

Yes. But of course she would never tell us. She is a team player, if this is what the team wants, then you go.

In terms of the philosophy of the program, I think she was for that, the project-based teaching and all that.

We all were.

But she's usually pretty clear about letting us know where and what she wants, and that's good.
Do you believe that your principal had an affinity for a particular model? What made you think that?

She is very project oriented.
We were doing a lot of projects.
The way it was presented to us, I don’t think she expected what has come to be.
I think she likes what’s come to be.
But from our end, not from the Co-nect program end.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model you ultimately selected?

I was disappointed with it. I don’t think they have a whole lot to offer. I think we do more of the programming for them and we supply them with more information and knowledge than they’re giving us.
I think they’re unsure of themselves and they keep changing their minds on how to present your project and things like that.
I think they talk around in circles to avoid answering a direct question because they don’t want to be held accountable for what they say.
When we had our last visit here we met the production manager. Obviously we are producing his product and we’re paying to help him get richer. It makes no sense to me.
Those of us who are classroom teachers, it is an overwhelming task. I would say the only new thing we’ve gotten out of it would be using rubrics which they didn’t need to pay $65,000 for. We were already using core content standards.
I think the only thing that might have helped were the driving questions so there’s a focus on where you’re ending up. But that’s the only thing.
The workshops that they presented here were embarrassing and ineffective. They were unprepared. They were really poor.
The very first year we had the program, every one of those workshops... That’s very sad. I think they presented a product that they really couldn’t produce. They really didn’t have a product to back up what they were selling.
Every time you get a different presenter, you get a different story.
They come. You’d have all the things they said there, and then they would say we didn’t tell you about this, this and this... they’re just not clear. They don’t want you to be almost successful.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a whole school reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

I think the same amount of time should have been given for each and every model to present their stuff, just like Co-nect was given all in the same school year. I think people should have been sent to see schools that were doing each and every model rather than just see one model. To discuss and talk and really be able to say what you thought without repercussions. I would like to see each whole school reform model come into the building and give a short program of what their work involves. Because you could see from A – Z. Teachers to be able to
speak to teachers doing these programs. When they are in front of other people, everyone speaks for things but behind closed doors, they might have a different attitude. I think because of the pressure, the State doesn’t really know about how people really feels, and they’re spending an awful lot of money thinking that they’re doing a great bit of good, but it’s only spending taxpayers’ money.

Quite a few good presenters to do a program on rubric writing and you’d be done with it, instead of wasting all this time and money.

Our test scores were never really below.

Our scores were not bad.

Their come-on is within 7 years, scores will improve. We asked with the transiency rate, how could you measure that? They didn’t really answer that.
SCHOOL 8 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

There were many administrative meetings where we were encouraged to investigate as many different programs as we could possibly investigate. We were encouraged to visit districts that had different programs. Then the state began to run different awareness conferences. I went initially by myself and then I began to take some people with me. We began to siphon through the various programs and began to narrow it down. What would be the easiest segway for our district knowing where we are now and where we intended to go. From that point, every time we had a meeting at the State level, the committee brought back the information to the faculty and constantly handing out materials on the various programs that were being made accessible to us. Eventually we began to realize that there were 2 programs that were closest to the direction that we were going. I think that what should be said is, early on all the elementary schools agreed that if it were possible we would all go with the same program. Since there was some mobility within the district which has now really at a minimum, it would just make it so much easier for training. Finally when we were able to narrow it down, we had people opposing, for and against, and they discussed the strengths and the weaknesses of the various programs. Then we were informed that 85% of the faculty had to agree to a particular program and it came down to having an election and it was very close. I think we just got it at 85, it was that close. Some of the other schools had a little bit more difficulty with that. That’s how we finally resolved it.

What do you think drove the selection of Co-Nect?

I think with me it was 2 factors. One is that we had been a “project” building. That has been our style. We do quite a bit of project work but it wasn’t as structured. It didn’t have the format that we really needed which we weren’t aware how much we did need that format. It has made it just so much clearer and more educationally sound. And secondly we were on our way with the computers. They’ve been in the district. They’ve been in our building I’d say 6 years or 7 years but they were never incorporated as well as they are now under Co-nect. The children are now very computer literate. Co-nect did that for us also. So I think those 2 strong components drove us in the direction of Co-nect.

What other models did your school consider? Why were they not chosen?

It vacillated between SFA and Comer because we do like to have more parental involvement in the building. The SFA was even a possibility because of the structure of it. We had just gotten a brand new reading series and a brand new math series and our understanding with SFA is that you have to start again at the beginning with their materials. Even though it was so highly structured, it wasn’t feasible for us at the time. I think it was more or less Success For All. Another thing that turned people off is that one of their premises is that in the 1st grade the 10 lowest children needed a one-on-one tutoring set-up. We couldn’t even go there. Not that the State wouldn’t help finance it or whatever, it just didn’t seem practical for us. And Comer because of the family… even now we sometimes say we still think about Comer as a possible choice that we could have made.
How would you describe the model selection process?

I think you would get a lot positive and negative feedback. For 2 years we talked about having to get into a Whole School Reform program and the process that we had to go through. We had to narrow it down and always having these meetings and giving pieces of paper, and explaining. When it came right down to having to vote, they still felt that it was being shoved down their throat. They still felt nervous about change and I think that was the main concern more than anything else. What does this mean? It said initially we only had to do one project-based learning experience a year. Knowing us we would end up having to do this all the time. There was that nervousness. I think the apprehension by some who said “I don’t want to do this,” those are the ones that voted against it. Those that said I do this in some form and we do have to make a selection, and it’s going to be the least disruptive with what I currently do. It’s just going to make it better and stronger.

Were there strong opinions one way or another?

We’re only a faculty of 35 and talking about 15% of the population (those that didn’t vote for Co-nect). One or two might have been, “Why? We don’t need this. What we have works. Our scores are up there and all of that... I think that the majority of those few just knew that this wasn’t going to be just a minor change. This was going to be a change and were we ready for that? I think what turned out to be an advantage when this came in and we voted, we had more old-timers in the school. Since that time certain things have changed and now 1/3 of my faculty are non-tenured. So that made it a little simpler. They’re coming out of the colleges now and this is part of their training. It’s still not total commitment and harmony. It’s a lot of work.

What were your sources of information about the models?

The internet, other districts, the State meetings that we had, just knowing people in other districts not myself but teachers knowing other people... We are an AFT town but we also have the NEA. They had really trained their people well so they came back with a lot of information.

To what extent do you feel that teachers had enough information to make an informed decision about selecting a WSR model?

I think at the time of the voting if they didn’t feel comfortable making that decision, it was only because they themselves didn’t read through the materials or ask the right questions because any questions that they had, the committee of people that were responsible gave them the information.

What do you think the most important factor that teachers considered in their vote to select your WSR model?

I think they knew that they had to choose a WSR program. We had waited up until the last. I think we were down to the wire. I think it was there was some similarity to what they were already doing and the others were completely foreign. I think that’s what did it.
Were there other factors or influences at work to move the teaching staff to select a specific model? What were they?

Central office wasn’t involved in saying what direction we should take. They really put it in our hands and just make the decision whatever we felt. We’re just one school and there were 6 schools involved and everybody took it back to their buildings. I think presented it similarly. That was another thing, a couple of the schools even invited the particular programs representatives into their building to explain what their program was about. I recall one of the schools was committed to SFA until we went back and looked at what had to be done and the major turnover that we had to create in order to abide by their block scheduling. In all honesty, I’m sure they knew where I was coming from.

Did you have an affinity for a particular model? Why?

There were always projects going on. When Co-nect started to explain how to look at that project and what it can truly mean to a child in the scope of the unit and what they were learning, it was an eye-opener for me. I never thought of it in that respect. I never thought of looking at the end result and then start at the beginning... A whole picture had evolved. I like change. I like trying new things and falling down on my face if I have to and getting up. That’s my personality and they know that. I think that what they were concerned about was that this is not going to be once a year, this is going to become our life. I had to reassure them that in the first year it was just one project; in the second year it was just 2 projects and then from now on it takes over. It is the philosophy that each child has a reflection of what he is doing; and should have a rubric as a scoring mechanism to assess; and the driving question... All of these things truly work and I think that the majority of the staff see that picture. But it is a lot of work because it is different. Change is hard.

What role did you play in the selection process?

I feel that they felt that I would have supported any direction they would have taken. A decision had to be made. That was the bottom line. I tried the first year, once the design team was put into place, I really put it in the hands of the team to try to get the message out. If we’re committed to something, I don’t want to get involved, otherwise I don’t want to hear about the problem. You have to stay involved. I feel that I’m a supportive person. My staff goes to workshops that they feel are necessary. They do go to 2 workshops a year other than the Co-nect workshops. I have all these new people and that became a concern because they didn’t start at the beginning with us. They came in on it last year not really knowing and not being trained in the initial stages of Co-nect.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model and why?

I’m satisfied with what the teachers are doing. I don’t think Co-nect trained them well enough. I don’t think Co-nect assessed critical friends fairly. So I think the problem is with Co-nect, in the administrative end of Co-nect. But as far as what the teachers have learned and what benefits they have gained from all of this, it is something that I would support. I believe in what we’re doing. I have to say that we have learned a lot. I just hope that it continues. I get the
feeling with Co-nect that they’re setting themselves up for a fourth year rather than saying the job is done.

If you were able to go back in time knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a WSR model, what would you recommend be done differently?

I still would have gone Co-nect. I don’t think we learned enough about Co-nect as an organization before we committed ourselves. We didn’t set up a list of demands and if they didn’t meet those demands providing us with alternatives as to how they could correct the things they didn’t comply with. They come in and explain, we complain about this and that, but they don’t say let me come back and I’ll redo this workshop or I’ll re-explain the material. We didn’t really set it up clearly. We just said we have to make a decision. We listed the basic philosophies and we made a choice and we got committed. I think if we had been better businessmen, we would have really looked into states and cities that had used Co-nect and really let us go out there and let us really talk to these people. We did do that though, but it was the principals that were trained. We went to Boston for training and met people from Tennessee and all different parts of the country. They seemed so far behind us. We’re in this metropolitan area. We’re different. When you hear these people say, “Wow, this is great!” We sat for 5 days at these workshops and we’re going we sat for 5 days for something that we could have got from a book and read it ourselves? We didn’t visit a school. They just mixed us up in the training with these other principals. I don’t think we did our homework. It’s very typical. You really had to look at this as a business. We were committed for $180,000 for 3 years times the number of schools you have, what are you giving us? I think we should have handled it more as business people and held them to what we expected. We have no way of taking this anywhere.
Appendix I

Verbatim Interviews

District E

School 9 - Teachers

School 9 - Principal

Community for Learning School - Cohort 1
SCHOOL 9 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of you involvement in the selection of the model?

I was on the School Management Team so we were apprised of the city going into Whole School Reform models, and the different models they were going to let us choose from. The pressure to be 1st cohort to make the decision yesterday. School Management Team gave us no review of 2 or 3 models.

When we first started, we where given the idea that we would have time to choose. So we went to a workshop. We had the people from Community for Learning come down. We had eliminated some because in their dialogue, they were too didactic, too inflexible so we were really going towards Community for Learning. We were thinking we had time and then all of a sudden it was Wednesday and they said by noon today pick a Whole School Reform model. Then there was a push for the most flexible and adaptive that would fit in with the program that was currently in progress.

But what the State changed their mind on later that totally threw me was that "you could write your own model" vs. selecting one of the choices. We had our own and we were very successful. But that was the year after.

I think we went through the motions of going to the workshops but it seemed like it had been decided.

As a faculty member, it was kind of like we've looked at what's out there and if we have to pick one, this will probably be the best one for us.

It was the lesser of two evils and we did it not by vote but by consensus. It wasn't until after that did we get information about exactly what it entailed and when it was designed, who it was designed for.

What do you think drove the selection of Community for Learning?

Right away we pulled out Success for All. Community for Learning, my conception, the way I was introduced to it was they would come into the school and see what you needed in the school and adapt the program to what was needed here. So I felt safe in thinking, if they come in and say strengthen this a little or this is doing well; go up a little higher here; you don't need to do so much of this... But in reality, it was all consuming. This is the model now fit your program into it. That was one of the reasons I geared more to it. I just felt that someone was going to come in and they were going to come in and say "this is good." It was just 3 or 4 years previous that we were a Blue Ribbon School. We were told by every State person that came in here, you should be a model for the entire city, State of New Jersey. I didn't realize how encompassing it was going to be.

One of the meetings that we had gone to right at the beginning and they were talking about the support that was going to be given. You do it but you feel like you're on your own because we did not get the support that was promised.

We really didn't have a chance to really investigate them. We just did what we were told. We couldn't understand, being a Blue Ribbon School, why they wanted to change something that was so successful; it just didn't make any sense. It was very frustrating; it is still frustrating.
There was no other model that was even a consideration?

The board grouped it down: one was Comer (which I barely survived at my other school); one was Success for All; Little Red Schoolhouse was not mentioned; Accelerated Schools was not mentioned. Comer, Success for All and Community for Learning were all that were mentioned. It was only after when we went to some State meetings that we became aware Little Red Schoolhouse, Comer…

I think what we did was, “We’re going to have to make this decision, let’s make sure we’re in the same program as our sister schools (above and below grade levels).”

How did the selection process play out for teachers in this school?

It was presented, these are the 3 choices, these are the negatives, these are the positives, this is what we really should be looking towards, does anyone have opposition?

We have the vote now. I think in all honesty we had more time. We would have had trips and would have seen these programs. We were given a false impression that we were going to have more time. All of a sudden, the powers that be said, “Make a decision now.” This has been typical in our district, “We’re thinking about doing this” and the next thing you know it was a reality.

We felt that everything was predetermined. You can talk about it but it’s a done-deal. An example is we have site-based management and it runs pretty well in the building to the extent that it can. But we’re site-based management but the board picks our math program and says you have to do this.

I think teachers have the idea that this is only going to last for a couple of years. It really isn’t going to affect me. I’m still going to have the autonomy to make the decisions in my classroom and it’s just another name on a pretty package. There was not a lot of resistance because that was the prevailing feeling.

We were all hit with the adaptive word. We would adapt everything.

Was there consensus among the staff?

There was consensus because people thought, this is it. We tend to go along with what the principal tells us to do in most situations. At that point it was, do we have a choice? No. Then we might as well stick our hands up and keep moving.

Did any stand up and vehemently oppose and say I’m against this? No. It wouldn’t have done any good.

Were there strong opinions one way or another?

We just thought it was another innovation coming along that we had to do, not realizing how all-encompassing this thing has become.

That was shortly after we had our Blue Ribbon recognition and we weren’t thinking we aren’t going to do it. We were thinking “why do we have to do it?” That was the prevailing question, “Why?”

It still drives me crazy to think that we are doing Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environment Model when our scores are good because we have dedicated teachers and
we have a plan that goes well. I know it is not because of Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environment Model that our scores are the way they are.

It drives me crazy that we send them a check every month.

I know they are probably thinking "oh wow, they're doing so well because they adopted this."

You were a poor inner city stupid group of people before we came in...

When Klagholtz left and Hesper (Commissioners of Education) came in, it was that second year he said that you can write your own Whole School Reform model. I had people calling me saying that they were doing well at their schools and asking me if this model was the least obtrusive. Truthfully, I still think it is the least obtrusive.

It seemed like from a distance that it wasn't so much an issue for our school. It was an issue that was being battled out in Trenton between the Governor and the courts. They're looking for ways to be accountable for these monies going into lower income districts.

I think the thing that frustrates me is out of one side of their mouth they're saying individualize your instruction and then why don't they think of individualizing the schools?

What do you think was the most important factor in the selection of Community for Learning?

Adaptive.

They said that they were going to look at individual needs of the school. That was a selling point for me.

It was the closest to what we were doing already. If kids need extra help, we gave it to them. We had centers, we just didn't call them centers. We had independent work, we just didn't tag it.

Were there any other influences at work?

We have always tried to be good at what we're doing. When the principal came in and when the School Management Team recommended Community for Learning because it was the least obtrusive, we followed it.

We didn't have time for another look. Someone looked it up on the internet at one point but I can't remember whether that was before or after the vote. The principal was new so we looked to the School Management Team to help him.

What we were given, we looked at and that (Community for Learning) was the least of the things that we thought were going to inhibit the school.

Didn't you feel pressure to be cohort I?

I didn't feel that at the beginning but then at the end I felt it when we got messages that we had to pick it and that was it. Then I felt the pressure. In the beginning I thought we were going to pick the model in September. In January we started looking into these things, just touching. Then we looked at it a little bit more and then we had Community for Learning come down. We went to another school in the district and we had implementation specialists give a presentation but it was still relaxed. All of a sudden in May we had to pick something.

We found out later that the model had been designed in the early 70s for special education...and didn't include art and music. And yet the implementation specialist had been an
art teacher and he spoke about how well this worked in his art room. This too was a selling point for us.

What role did your principal play in the selection of the model?

The School Management Team played a strong role and he was on the School Management Team.

He was pretty much green.

He was the one who was really knowledgeable. He looked up and knew what was there. He was attentive to knowing what they were about. He communicated with the other schools, especially those that fed our school and the one we fed. He actually researched the best that he could within the time limit and brought that information to us. Then we looked at it and made our decision.

It probably was the best for us.

Why do you think he had an affinity for Community for Learning?

The fact that we were doing cooperative learning.

It wasn’t going to kill the program we had.

It wasn’t going to be didactic and structured.

You can’t understand at all that anybody in the field of education who has letters after their name says that will kill any school.

We have an Success for All school in the district, one of the lowest sets of scores in the whole city.

We thought that Community for Learning would be flexible for us.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model you ultimately satisfied? Why?

There is more conversation among teachers. Whether it has been positive or negative, it has brought the teachers together. I have seen more teachers more aware of opportunities within the State to go and do more creative things and use the resource centers. They are using those a bit more and we have our own in-district. We are using things that weren’t being used as much. For the most part we’re doing what we were doing because we were doing it and we continue to do it.

We are pushing the word adaptive and we’re saying “we’ve adapted your program.” When in reality we might have adapted our program a little bit but our program is pretty much the same.

It functions the way it did function. The key points that we like about Community for Learning we use, other aspects we don’t.

After an amount of inservice on how it’s supposed to be working and then reflecting on how my classroom already operated after 2 years I was very pleased to see the way that Community for Learning had organized my classroom. I had certain elements of it. For example they use a work folder. Their work folder was my portfolio. I didn’t necessarily have a wait-time folder that eliminates all the down-time but the students always had a fun workbook that disguised cyclical skills used in the math classroom. That book went into their wait-time folder. I could put holiday things or presidential things and they got to do more fun things. I had used
learning centers but I hadn’t used their system of self-scheduling so you knew who was where. I have to say that I think it is an excellent model of classroom organization. The calling card too, instead of a student raising their hand they put a card up. They can work in their folders until I can get to them. I though it made my job as teacher easier because the kids were more independent. I really went into it kicking and screaming, got enough information, managed to make sense of it on my own and came out having respect for it.

Right now we are not implementing Adaptive Learning Environment Model in mathematics. We have recently gone into a new math series and the staff is totally consumed with how that has to work. That is pretty much a prescribed program. I’m still at a loss how they’re supposed to incorporate Community for Learning and do this new math program at the same time. It’s very frustrating and hard on the teachers.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a Whole School Reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

I would want to write our own.
Time.
If we could go back with the knowledge and knowing we were going to be able to write our own model a year later…
When you take a class, you get a syllabus where you get an outline and it tells you what is expected and what your timeframe is and what your end product should be. I don’t remember seeing anything like that. There didn’t seem to be anything in writing.
Everything was based on the specs that whatever the State or board said. The timeline seemed to change every time you turned around. It was very frustrating. It was something that it was going to be a time honored thing. That it was going to be researched. Look into it. See what you like. Visit. Then it was boom, pick it! I feel a lot of pluses. Teachers leave their doors open more. They are getting to do more things together which is nice.
The less Temple is involved, the better we’re doing.

What do you think drove the urgency in this district?

This district is very big into being the first.
SCHOOL 9 - PRINCIPAL

What was your involvement in the selection of the model?

My involvement started off with going to principal and supervisors' meetings that the Superintendent held to outline all of the Abbott regulations that we were going to be required to do. We were basically told that we had the option of riding out the first year. But there was a very strong pressure for us all to get on board within the first year. We knew that we had to act quickly. We were working on a 2-month window of time. The meetings were going on in January and February and we had to make a decision in April. The other 2 Gifted & Talented principals got together first to brainstorm what our options were going to be and try to get our School Management Teams out to see various models that were available to us. The only model that had been previously been in the district was Success for All and I did not have a very positive view of that model. I had taught 5th grade Success for All reading and found that it was very scripted and confining. I honestly didn't but in to how they were teaching it. I didn't like it. We didn't entertain Success for All for very long. We were wooed by Temple University to come to another Abbott district to see how Community for Learning was working. We liked the flexibility that the model had to offer. We though that it would be a good fit for the Gifted & Talented program because there was a lot of learning centers and multiple intelligences work going on already. We though that would be a nice alignment. We talked to teachers in those schools that we went to see and Temple actually set up a couple of meetings in the district with various consultants to talk to with the varying team members. I know that we had other options of programs, the push from the very beginning was to go with Community for Learning. It wasn't a push from central office. It was kind of a ground swell amongst the principals and the School Management Teams. We liked what they said. We liked what we saw. There were a lot of unanswered questions but it seemed to be something we thought was going to work for our program.

What do you think drove the selection of the model for your faculty?

The staff was and continues to be skeptical about Whole School Reform in general and in the model. Everything that is promised, the reality is different. I think what lead them to go with this is that there was support from the other Gifted & Talented schools. The teachers who went out to see it thought that there was promise in it. We tried to be open as possible and get as many people as possible to come over to the different meetings. We had the observations during the school day. We had some meetings after school so that if people had questions, they could be addressed. It became more a vote of confidence in the team's decision in the model than actually saying "I voted for Whole School Reform because I think this is the best thing for our students." I think it came out to be, "Well we have to do this. This is a necessary evil in the Abbott decision. This is going to have the least impact negatively on our program."

What other models did your school consider and why were they not chosen?

I don't recall doing a very intensive search on other models other than Community for Learning. We kind of worked jointly with the other Gifted & Talented schools. I know that Accelerated was looked at briefly. Comer did not seem to fit our needs because we didn't seem
to have certain population problems or lack of interest in parents, in fact we have a lot of parental involvement. Other than seeing presentations at State meetings, that was the only contact we had with those other models.

Describe to me what I would have experienced as a teacher in this school leading up to the selection of the model.

They would have heard first from me about the Abbott decision and what we were required to do. I would have given them a timeline of what we needed to do. I was first told by the central office that we had until June to make a decision on the model. So Feb/March we were still in the investigation process. The process was shortened because we had to make the decision by April, and that came from the Superintendent. I called an emergency faculty meeting to inform people that we had to make a decision in a week. So we went one more time to talk to the developer and then we will take a vote in 3-5 days.

As you came toward the vote, were there strong opinions for or against?

There were strong opinions on both ends. The school being successful, being named Blue Ribbon, a lot of the teachers were reluctant to say that entering a Whole School Reform was kind of a slap in the face. They said things why are we changing these things? The program is successful. Are we going to be as successful if we implement this model? The opinions for it were something that aligned itself well to the building. It would be something that would bring some continuity of instruction and hopefully improve the delivery of instruction across the board for all the changing schools, so that would improve performance. What I tried to get across to teachers was that whenever you have people from the outside coming in and looking at a program, they’re going to see things that we have missed. They are going to offer insights that are going to help us to be challenged to help us see things from a different perspective and that’s healthy. That was the basis for the vote of confidence. People are going to come in and be another pair of eyes.

Was there consensus? What was the vote?

There might have been one or two that abstained but the vote was very high. It wasn’t a divisive vote. Those people were probably those who felt extreme passion for our existing program.

Do you think that high degree of support is still there for the model? Or is there still the issue of maintaining the excellence that was there prior to the model?

There are definite improvements to the way the building operates. I think the majority of people will say that the consistency; the way prescription sheets are done, the way that students are challenged into learning centers ("not that that is happening in every classroom"). Teachers obviously have their strengths. There are some very traditional teachers who doing things that are not necessarily aligned with Adaptive Learning Environment Model but they’re very successful at it. I’m not going to push people to change if they’re successful.
Temple really over-extended themselves with the amount of schools they were able to service. We have some very dedicated specialists: art, music, PE. They've had questions from day 1 as to how this operate in their disciplines. Temple was never really able to address that. You will see pockets. Some will say "I understand it. I see how it fits my program" and you're going to see others that don't. And that's not from a lack of pushing to try to get some answers.

I think what has evolved over the last 4 years, we needed to make Adaptive Learning Environment Model work. Now teachers would say, now I am going to make Adaptive Learning Environment Model work for me, for my program. They pick and choose the pieces of it that are effective. We've had some battles with our developer on some of the model's components. They don't want to change certain things because they can't. We don't want to do them, so we're going to ignore that component. It's not something that we feel is weakening the model in this building. You will see pockets of support. Overall teachers are pleased with the way students operate in their groups and learning centers cooperatively. There really isn't much of a change from before but now its got names and labels and its got a process which may not have been easy to identify before.

To what extent do you feel that the teachers had enough information to make an informed decision?

The time frame was very compressed. I don't think all of us had enough time to really make the decision in the way we would have liked to. If you give someone 6 months to make a decision, it takes 6 months. I wish we had waited to go 2nd cohort. I think it would have told us a lot. I don't know that we would have done Community for Learning again. I think the 3 Gifted & Talented schools would have pushed harder to do an alternate model. We are really looking at breaking off the financial ties with Temple for next year. The team agrees. We could spend this money on staff development so much more wisely than this relationship with Temple.

What do you think was the single most important factor to the teachers as a group in their vote for Community for Learning?

Probably trust in me and trust in the team. And trust in the fact that it gave them the wiggle room that they needed. Not that they were wiggling out of something. This program is very creative. There's a lot of things going on that teachers felt needed to be protected. They were looking for a model that would give them that flexibility to keep what they thought was the strongest characteristic of our program.

What is your degree of satisfaction with Community for Learning?

That's a tough question to answer. If I'm not satisfied, part of me feels the obligation to make that work. If I'm not satisfied with the service, I feel I need to contact Temple and really be on them to do x, y, or z. I'm not 100% satisfied. A lot of what I thought was going to happen early on did not take place. We really don't have any clearer picture of how we're doing than we did when we first started. In a situation where so much is supposed to be riding on data analysis and student performance, data driven decisions driving funding, Community for Learning's program really does not address student achievement in any other way than the standardized test
scores which are in place regardless whether Community for Learning is here or not. They do Degree of Implementation (DOI) reports which is a teacher performance. They do those CCPSs, it is a teacher performance. What their theory is that teacher performance is going to affect student achievement. It’s kind of like you’re never really measuring that other piece. Student performance data is lacking in the model and I’m not happy about that. We’ve adopted an attitude now where we’re going to continue this out. We’re going to do our best to work with the Implementation Specialist who comes into the building. But he is not well respected. He is not well liked. I keep asking him to do demo lessons. Don’t just come in and say do this, do this, do this…show them how to do it. Give them some hands-on, some very useful tips. So he comes in for 5 or 6 hours and we put up with him and we listen. It’s unfortunate, I don’t see a marked improvement. If you’re asking for a grade or a scale, I’m rather disappointed.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a whole school reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

I would have waited. I wouldn’t have joined first cohort status. I would have most certainly worked with the State to get some type of alternate model to use that money for staff development that would truly have invigorated the program. To have someone come in to work with individual departments or teams as opposed to this WS model. We don’t teach students with one method. We know that you have to differentiate and that’s what’s needed here. So I would most definitely pushed to have an alternate model and have staff development training on an as-needed basis.
Appendix J

Verbatim Interviews

District E

School 10 – Teachers

School 10 - Principal

Accelerated School – Cohort 2
SCHOOL 10 - TEACHERS

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

I was part of a group that went out researching different models. We visited different schools and we went as far a talking with different people from the models and then we brought all the information back to the faculty and gave our input and took a vote.

Even prior to that we went on-line to get as much information as we could about the different models.

We were presented with several models to choose from by the Board. We had Little Red Schoolhouse. He was here at least 2 or 3 times and inserviced the staff on their program. We went to a Success for All school. We were able to speak to all the teachers about how they felt about the program. We wanted to speak to the students.

I know one of them, it was either Comer or Community for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environment Model. They were scheduled to come here on a Monday and inservice us. The principal called the central office and was told that the decision had to be made by Friday. But we did have written material that the district had provided. I don't honestly believe that they were in-depth. I think they gave us a very narrow vision of what the program involved. So we pretty much had to rely on those, I think for Comer and Community for Learning. We tried to get as much information as possible through the PIRC. People came back with a lot of information. A teacher went on-line to get more about Accelerated. We all took part in really delving and trying to get as much information as we could about the models. If anyone on the staff who knew other teachers who were already involved, they would give us feedback about how they felt about it in their schools so that we had more information.

As soon as we found out there was a deadline, we all got out and researched because we knew this was a long-term decision and we wanted to pick the best model for our school. One that was going to have people happy with the program as possible. I think we had 98.6% % approve it.

We also had to think about how all of us react to personalities and everything else and how we react to the different programs. We were given release time. The children were watched. We were all packed into the teachers’ room and whenever anyone did get information, they came back and presented it to the entire faculty. The entire faculty that was presented. There were many lively discussions (laughter).

What do you think drove the selection of your particular model?

It was heard repeatedly that we were in favor of that model because it was the least restrictive. All of the others came with a packaged program, prescriptive packaged program. We were made aware that we could adapt this program to the needs of our school and that was something that we were really interested in. We had very experienced teachers here. They felt that they knew what was best for them and the children and we thought that this program would allow us the opportunity to arrange a program that would work for us.

Also upon investigation, we found out that this program was just what we were doing anyway. It involved everything that was being done in the classroom on a daily basis. It was us!
What kinds of things?

The cooperative learning, the challenging of the students.
Also the phrasing that all children are gifted and talented and should be instructed as such. That really struck me because I think sometimes the city kids get a bad rap. We all know that we have bright and wonderful amazing kids and they shouldn't be looked down upon because they're city kids. Also, the encouraging of the hands-on, the use of manipulatives, trying not to rely so heavily on book, book, book... Not that we did that but it is a focus because of the testing.

The other programs seemed more as remediation. That's not what we were looking for. We were looking to move on and to challenge the children. To promote more learning rather than remediate what they had already done.

And also prepare them for real life. Trying to show them the relationship between what they are learning and the real world.

We found that Success for All was a lot of drilling. That gets to be boring going over the same thing over and over. We need to expand their horizons and show things in a different way. Sometimes that's all it takes for a child to catch on. Just because you repeat and repeat the same book over and over again, doesn't mean that he's learned how to read it. He's just memorizing it. That's what really threw me off when I went to visit.

And just very restrictive scheduling. I'm a person who likes to jump around. I take stock of where my kids are we don't need to study this for 3 weeks so I can cut it off here and we can move to something else. Just too prescriptive. You felt like you were in a spot. It (Success for All) didn't allow for any creativity on the teacher's part. My understanding was that you had to use the phrase that they gave you in the teacher's edition. You could not make any changes in it. You had to stick specifically to their plan. It was just too restrictive. It's (Success for All) not even what we're trying to teach like in our ESPA test. We want the children to be creative and have critical thinking skills. I can't see how they could get there with that.

I find that we go to inservice workshops provided by the district and sometimes when we go there, the people who go there from the other models are having difficulty accepting the materials being presented. Their concern is about how they are going to implement it in their classrooms because of the model.

Accelerated is very concerned that we have Everyday Math. They feel that it is something we should have a say-so in. We were supposed to be picking the program. And things we think were going to work in the model. They keep expressing to me really a deep concern about how the teachers are handling this. They really don't have a choice. It really bothers them because the whole idea is that you should have selected what you felt...not have the district come in and tell you this is what you are doing.

What other models did you consider as time came closer to the vote?

Success for All, and I actually liked it. I spoke for it. We went there, as much it was very structured, I was a very structured teacher and I actually felt that I could do it. I could have lived with it, I wouldn't have loved it but because I was structured to start with I really thought that I could adapt to it.

If I remember correctly, I think that was the one that was being suggested that we take.
Modern Red Schoolhouse was the other one. We had the representative back a couple of times because we were thinking when it came right down to the very end after we explored the different models, it came down to the two of them.

I was a proponent of Success for All and there were a number of teachers who were, not the majority, and this was being pushed by the Superintendent. It was his pet model and my experience has always been, “give them what they want, you’ll have less of a problem.” We took the vote. I don’t know if Success for All was in the running. It was followed with a lot more discussion. Most of the people, myself included, were persuaded that the right way to go was with Accelerated.

How would you describe the model selection process?

The people that did go out and get information, brought back all of the information to the rest of the school. We were very lucky that our children were covered so that all the information that was gathered could be presented to the entire faculty.

How lucky we were that we had this opportunity to do this so that really when the final vote was taken, we really felt that consensus had been reached. Everybody could live with the decision. No one went away and felt that their opinion was not heard.

It was questioned several times, “can you live with this even if you’re not the first person in line for that model.”

Although discussions were heated, it was never hostile. It was a healthy discussion. The people that did go so because they wanted to. Some volunteered to go out, others went on the internet.

Everybody was given first hand information. It wasn’t that only a few select people were allowed to be part of this. Everybody was given the same information. So we could decide for ourselves. It wasn’t that someone was leading us in one way or another. We were able to decide for ourselves what we really wanted. But it wasn’t someone pushing us.

The only pushing that we got was from the board, the time constraint.

Were there strong opinions for one model or another?

There were strong opinions and yet people could see the advantages of other programs. We gave a lot of credence to the 4th grade teachers because they were faced with the ESPA. One teacher after a visited commented that she did not feel that the writing program was adequate for what the children would be faced with on the ESPA.

Basically we explored 3 models. We knocked out 2 of them right away (Community for Learning and Co-Nect). Truthfully we all decided. There really was not an adequate amount of time given to us by the board to really explore Comer and Community for Learning. As I said, people were scheduled to come here on a Monday and we had to cancel because we had to have our decision by the Friday. I can remember saying, the board provided us with blurbs and actually expected us to sign on for a program based on such a small amount of information. I had a real problem with that and then when we had people scheduled for Monday, and were told no, go ahead and cancel because we need your answer. Knowing what we know about the other two programs and speaking with other teachers and seeing other schools, I don’t think we would have picked either one (of the other two) but truthfully we weren’t really given an adequate amount of time to explore what needed to be explored.
To what extent do you feel you had enough information to make an informed decision to select a particular model?

Because there was a time restriction on us, we could have gotten more information. It was different when you had a chance to go and visit and you see first hand compared with having someone come in and give you a sales pitch. Success for All was one of the models that we visited. Some people thought it was great but when we visited, they didn’t think so. Also we had to do the best we could with the time we had.

Do you feel secure about how it all played out? You had enough information?

I think it was lucky that it all played out. Do I think we were given enough time? Absolutely not. We actually had been given a later deadline and then we received a call from the board to say that we had to make a decision sooner. We had a lot of pressure put on us and a lot of it could have been because the Superintendent really wanted Success for All. It was kind of like tightening the noose and I guess it was thought that would sway us but it didn’t change how we felt.

How did it occur that you were a Cohort 2 school?

The board issued blurbs and the personality of the staff was such that we felt whatever reform was necessary in this building, we were capable of bringing it about. We did not need an outside program to correct whatever needed to be corrected. We knew it was voluntary at that time (year 1) and the principal allowed us to discuss it; to vote and the vote was no. We did not choose to go into school reform at that time.

What was the most important factor you considered in your vote to select Accelerated Schools?

The idea that we could be creative. We were not being structured. We were able to do what was good for our own personalities.

And our own kids.

I felt that it suited the needs of our students as well as mine. I like to be able to do what I want to do without having to come in each day and say, "Well the plan says I have to be on this page and the plan says I have to say this." I want the freedom to have my own ideas. I didn’t my time and my classroom to be so structured. I understood also that there was a lot of paperwork involved with the other models.

Accelerated was not a prescriptive program and my experience with the children that I had in class, I never saw that those children could ever get on grade level. The idea of accelerating instead of remediating and I would think that the Gifted & Talented school we had here in this district. I couldn’t help but think if all children were given exciting experiences in the classroom, I still don’t believe that they would not learn. The remediation had proven not to work here so it was time to try something else.

For bilingual children, I didn’t like that you had to use their books, their time... Success for All was very basic. As time has passed, I’m more certain that we made the right decision from talking to other people in other schools. Now that I am a tech Coordinator, some of the
kids who need remediation for whatever reason can be really accelerated with technology. They just seem to take off when they’re in front of a computer. For Success for All, I hear all the other people in my field say that they do not have time for computers because they have reading at this time, they have math at that time…

Were there other factors or influences at work to get the staff to select a particular model?

There were pressures. It seemed that “downtown” wanted Success for All. But this particular faculty are pretty independent thinkers here. We looked at everything to see what was best for all of us. We were going to decide what was best for the school and that’s what we ended up doing.

We know what these kids need. We know what these kids want. Maybe those outside influences don’t know what our children need.

This decision was not taken lightly. We knew that this was going to influence what we were going to be doing for the next amount of time, several years and then some. I think that influenced us more than anything else. We knew that we had to do something that we could live with; that we were happy with ourselves for the long term. This was not going to change in a year. We had to decide for ourselves. Even though we were under the gun to decide quickly, that’s why everybody was so intent on doing the right thing; getting the right program; because we knew it was going to influence us. It was going to influence the children. It was going to influence everybody around us so we had to choose the right one no matter what.

What role did your principal play in the selection of the model?

I know that our principal got a call from the board office in an attempt to sway us to select Success for All. I’m sure it wasn’t easy for the principal but I give him all the credit in the world because I know this is not true with many of the schools in the district where the principal selected the model and said the teachers did. But our principal truly let us go about doing it the right way. He gave us every assistance he could. He gave us time. He was wonderful with that and he really stayed neutral. He said I have my feelings. I may tell you about it afterwards but I’m not going to say anything because I don’t want you to feel pressured. I know he got a call saying … He said no. This is what my faculty has decide and this is what we will go with. He pretty much sat back and let us run with it. He let people go out. He was very cooperative and supportive. I wanted us to make our own decision and having as much information so that we did choose the right thing.

I don’t know that Accelerated would have been his first choice.

He wants a happy building. We all do. If you want to have a pleasant place to come in and work, it was as important to him as it was to us. He really didn’t want his teachers to be miserable. It was very important to him that morale stay high and people think of it as a good place to come and work.

Do you think he had an affinity for a particular model?

I thought it was Success for All but I don’t know for sure. He never let us know. He never showed signs. He would just say what they would tell him.
He was getting the pressure from the board. Things I liked about a model, he would agree by saying, “I see your point.” I think he was really trying to keep an open mind.

To what extent are you satisfied with the model that was ultimately selected and why?

The children are happy. The teachers are happy and it seems to be coming along. We’re happy and that’s important.

I have always been a very structured person and I cling to that in the first grade. This program has helped me ease up a little bit and try new things, not be afraid to take risks. In fact this might kill a couple of my friends here but I’m doing my masters’ thesis on science. It is an area that I have never been comfortable and I’ve never been confident in. In writing, I’ve tried very hard to follow Accelerated suggestions about powerful learning and hands-on and I’ve just tried to give my children some different opportunities. Everything doesn’t have to be perfect all the time. Learning is as much the process as the end result. It has enabled me to be a little bit more free and make me a better teacher.

The program is not structured and in a sense that has created problems. As much as many teachers said that they did not want a prescriptive program, there have been times when they were waiting for me to hand them that book to do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and you will now be an Accelerated School and you are now doing powerful learning and you gave them process. The first year was the most difficult because I think a lot of people expected immediate change and we were just learning the ropes at that point. We didn’t know this. The training leaves a lot to be desired. It is very vague. We’ve had other schools get up and say I need you to model this for me. You’re expecting me to take this back to my faculty yet you’re refusing to demonstrate to me what you want. The answer was no. They take the whole theory of constructivism very seriously. We as coaches must discover for ourselves and then bring it back so that they can discover for themselves.

We’re still learning. I’ve been in 3 years and there is still a lot of that powerful learning that I still don’t know and this is something when you go into the training, we are told “it never ends.” You are just constantly trying to go to a greater level of understanding and then of course bringing it back and bringing it into the classroom. It is frustrating. After a while you really do start to feel you are getting a grasp on it. Now in our 3rd year we feel a lot more comfortable about it. A lot of it was working together. We really would be happy if the training were stronger.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection and implementation of a Whole School Reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

More time to choose and more resources. More literature. More in-depth visits from the people plus going out.

I think a couple more days would have helped. Too many days would not have been good either then you would have had too much information out there.

We could have developed a grid to compare the models by topics such as student achievement results, parent involvement, social nature... We thought we had time and then the deadline was moved up. Tell people at the outset how much time they have at the outset and then do all of the research possible and come to a decision within that time frame.
SCHOOL 10 - PRINCIPAL

What was the extent of your involvement in the selection of the model?

I followed the District’s policy. We basically had the directive all the way through from the Superintendent and the central administration. We were asked to go out and investigate all of the models and we did. I think our school really did. I emphasize, we made an effort to go out and get information on every single model. We invited people into our building. I can remember we had after-school conferences on Modern Red Schoolhouse and CES. I can remember people going out to get information from Success for All and then we had basically 100% of the faculty who gave up their own time, without compensation and I guess under my leadership, they were exposed to all the different models and all the components. When they had questions, we sent people back out again. This went on for quite a while (I can’t give you an actual number of days, but weeks). As we got close to the deadline, we took a vote. I was a facilitator. I was able give the teachers the time. I covered the classes. The instruction kept continuing. This is a very, very independent faculty and they had questions. They wanted to make sure we got the right model. So again, I was a facilitator. I gave them the opportunity to go and investigate. I did not push any model. I honestly did not have a preference. It may have seemed that I did but I honestly didn’t. I kept an open mind. I never let them know exactly what my thoughts were influencing their decision at all. They selected the model, I was happy with the model.

What do you think drove the selection of the model to Accelerated Schools?

It was pretty simple. This is a very independent faculty. They didn’t want to be prescriptive. They didn’t want to have to be locked in; no disrespect to any other model. I don’t think they liked the individual models with Comer and Adaptive Learning Environment Model. With the Adaptive Learning Environment Model I don’t think they liked the individual prescription for each child. Success for All, the focus was too regimented, they wanted to be more independent and have a little more leeway. Modern Red Schoolhouse was confusing. We weren’t really sure about what he was talking about half the time. He came to a meeting one day and said something, “you can even get rid of your principal.” Thank God they didn’t vote for him. Comer...there was a little interest in Comer. There were actually some people who liked all of the different programs but you know the word is consensus and it was a win-win situation.

As you explored these models, and I know you had a timeline to keep, what other models did the faculty consider as you approached that timeline?

To be very honest with you, Accelerated blew them out of the water. There was a vote of over 95% of the faculty who went for it. There may have been 1 or 2 people who had some experience with Success for All and thought that was being held for the reading component. If there was a second model, and it was only 1 or 2 percentage points, it would have been Success for All as second choice but very much a minority.
How would you describe the model selection process?

As a teacher, you would have had numerous opportunities to view for yourself, first-hand, when I say selection team, I wouldn't even say that we really had a selection team. I would say we had well respected members of the faculty who voluntarily went on-line, went to workshops and even attended seminars put on by the State Department who brought it all back. A teacher who preferred to stay with her kids rather than go some place and bring back. She was given a true perspective. They gave the pros and the cons of each program. That teacher would have been exposed to every single program and her vote was as important as the teacher who had gone on-line or visited.

Were there strong opinions one way or another as you narrowed down the model selection process?

Very solid opinions leading toward Accelerated. Once we got all the information. Once everybody knew as much as they possibly could. We even printed things up. Teachers compiled information from taking packets home during the weekend. The district also gave us a lot of support. There was a lot of information coming to us from all over where people could read. These teachers really did read. When we finally did have our final vote sessions, it was an informed and enlightened very, very vocal process. There was no doubt about it that these people wanted this program.

What was the District's role?

They completely supported us. The Superintendent and the Asst. Superintendent were very supportive in getting information and giving time. If I called up and said, "I need some professional time for my teachers to go down and get information about Accelerated or to go over to a Success for All school. They gave me the time, they gave me the authority and whenever I needed information, it was provided. They also allowed me and teachers to go to State sponsored programs. All the developers were there.

To what extent do you feel the teachers had enough information to make an informed decision about selecting a particular model?

I would say the high 90's. We did have a deadline for a Friday afternoon, a district deadline. We were supposed to have Community for Learning come in that following Monday. That was the only regret, I didn't let the teachers know this, but that was the only regret that I had that we couldn't have the people come in from Adaptive Learning Environment Model. But there was still enough information in the school about Adaptive Learning Environment Model and enough people went discuss it. That was the only thing if we had another day or two. We would have had a live presentation for the whole faculty. There was tons of information in the school about Adaptive Learning Environment Model. At that point Accelerated was very entrenched.
How long in advance did you know about this deadline?

I really don’t remember. I think we had ample time.

Months or weeks?

We had enough time.

What was the most important factor that teachers considered in their vote to select Accelerated Schools?

Non prescriptive program. They liked the idea that this program let us develop our dream school. The taking stock process where we would be able to forge our own vision that we could go and get parents actively involved to design our dream school. To not have someone say at 9:35 you had better be on page 52 and you had better be this or else you’re going to be shot. They do keep records. We are checked by people but it is just not as prescriptive.

Were there other factors or influences at work to get the staff to select a particular model?

There might have been some pressure for us to pick a different model. A lot of schools went with Adaptive Learning Environment Model/Community for Learning. There were discussions with me to possibly reexamine our selection. I did feel a little pressure. I guess somebody someplace felt it would be better if more schools got into one group. As I told them when they called me, that I honestly felt... that they gave it their best shot to convince me to go with another program. But these teachers, once this snowball started to go down this hill, am I going to go back now after someone suggests that we consider another model and say, “I’m sorry 95% of the people want this program but we’re going to get another model, I couldn’t do it and I explained that to the people who called me. It was absolutely the way that the State intended it to be, with support from the district. Once they realized that these teachers wanted this program, they gave me support 100%.

Did you have an affinity for a particular model?

Accelerated. During the courting process, they really courted us. Once we were married I may have had some second thoughts. I’m OK with them now. They did a good job in their presentation. They were salesmen and they let us see what we wanted to see.

What was there about Accelerated that you were hoping for?

The whole concept that we were in charge of our destiny was very important. We really felt together that we could design our dream school. I think that was the thing without someone telling me what I had to do at a certain time. When I’m left to be the principal, when I’m left to have some independence, the moral was very high. I think I was also motivated because the teachers wanted it. They really wanted this program.
To what extent are you satisfied with Accelerated?

I have been a little disappointed in the training. A little disappointed in the cooperation they gave to us through the budgetary process. A little disappointed in the personalities of some of the people. I had a very rocky start with them. I'm learning the personalities of the people involved. There was inconsistency in the training. The model itself is wonderful. No regrets about that at all.

If you were able to go back in time, knowing what you know now about the selection of a Whole School Reform model, what would you recommend be done differently?

A little more time. Even another couple of days. It probably wouldn't have made much difference but I just would have felt that would have been the best thing. I really don't have any regrets. We were given this responsibility and we knew there had to be a buy-in vote. We were explained that it had to be 75 or 80%. We took it very seriously. It was collaborative. No regrets.

Did you have the option of waiting and becoming a cohort 3 school?

I can honestly tell you that we decided that we wanted to be a cohort 2 school. I think there were schools in the district that were cohort 3. I didn't ever feel pressure from the district to be a cohort 2 school.
Appendix K

Designated Abbott School Districts

in the

State of New Jersey
Abbott District Web Sites

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http://www.nj.gov/cgi-bin/education/abbotturls.pl?string=code&maxhits=100
Appendix L

Informed Consent Forms

Teachers and Principals
INFORMED CONSENT FORM (TEACHER)

The following has been explained to me and I understand that:

1. I am being asked by Wayne Turner, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration and Supervision at Seton Hall University, to participate in a research study related to whole school reform.
2. The purpose of this research is to examine the factors and influences that lead to a teacher vote to adopt a particular whole school reform model.
3. This study will consist of one group interview session of approximately 30 - 45 minutes in which I will respond to questions with teacher colleagues posed by the interviewer related to the school's adoption of a particular whole school reform model.
4. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate or discontinuing participation at any point will involve no penalty or benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.
5. There will be no identifying information during the interview. Although all responses will be kept completely confidential by the researcher, no assurance of confidentiality can be guaranteed for others participating in the group interview. Results of the study will be reported collectively and anonymously.
6. All recorded results from this interview will be securely stored in a locked cabinet.
7. The project director, Wayne Turner, is the only individual who will have access to the individual interview records.
8. There are no anticipated risks to any of the participants who engage in this study.
9. Since participation in this study is voluntary, there will be no compensation for any participants.
10. Subjects may contact the researcher's office at with any questions related to the research study and/or its methodology.
11. I agree that my interview will be audiotaped for the purpose of accurate recollection of participant responses by the researcher. Participants have the right to have all or any portion of the recorded interview deleted and/or request that the tape be destroyed.
12. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Services Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard all subjects' privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

______________________________  ________________________________
Subject or Authorized Representative  Date

APPROVED

DEC 07 2001

IRB

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

College of Education and Human Services
Department of Educational Administration and Supervision
Tel. 973.761.9397
400 South Orange Avenue * South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what influences existed and the degree to which those influences acted upon teachers as they made their decision to vote on the adoption of a particular schoolwide reform model. The affected teachers all taught in one of New Jersey’s “Abbott Districts.” These largely urban districts were ordered through a New Jersey State Supreme Court decision (Abbott v. Burke, v) to adopt one of the whole school reform models within a three year period. The State Department of Education enacted this decision through mandating all schools in the 30 Abbott Districts adopt one of these whole school reform models sometime between 1998 and 2001.

The available models were selected from 17 models that were identified through the federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) program. Federal grants were provided to states ensuring that a minimum of $50,000 per year for three years would be provided to schools to adopt one of these models.

This qualitative study investigated the model selection process that occurred in five different Abbott Districts, two schools in each of those districts. In each of these 10 schools, a focused group depth interview was conducted engaging 4 to 8 teachers from each school. Questions probed the teachers’ reflections, recollections and feelings as their faculty prepared for, and actually voted to adopt a particular school reform design. The role of the principal was explored through the interview process.

Further, in each of those same schools, the principals were engaged in a partially structured interview. The questioning probed the role that s/he played in preparing for this vote, along with reflections, recollections and feelings leading up to, and including the vote to adopt a reform model. The interviews and the content of the interviews were held in confidence from
each constituency by the interviewer in each school. The research data are presented in the form of verbatim quotations through an analytical development of the themes that were derived from the interviews. A complete transcription of both the teacher and principal interviews is presented as appendices.

Fifty teachers and nine principals from the ten schools, who were present during the model exploration and selection process, engaged in the interviews for this study. Through the study, the elements, issues and motivations were identified leading to a specified minimum consensus vote, as determined by each school reform model developer. Such votes typically required anywhere from 75 – 85% affirmation for the available models to be implemented with the support of the reform developers’ design teams. The principal’s role in each of the ten schools was examined as particularly influential, regardless of whether that role was as a facilitator or as an autocrat. Other organizational influences were also probed.

Examining the readiness for change led to identifying the extent to which teachers believed that they had enough information about the various models in order to make an informed choice. Posing essentially the same question to teachers and their principals yielded very different perceptions about their readiness. Schools began adopting their reform models in any one of the three years between 1998 and 2001. Finally, the study examined the extent to which both teachers and principals were satisfied with the model that they chose to implement and what changes they would have made in the selection process if they were able to go back in time a complete the adoption again.