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# Raising Student Achievement Through Programmatic Initiatives and Instructional Improvement

Philip S. Georgia  
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A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

RESTRUCTURING DONE RIGHT: AN EVALUATION OF THE INITIATIVES  
IMPLEMENTED AT HOMETOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
AS A RESULT OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND MANDATE

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION USING THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK FOR  
TEACHING AS THE EVALUATION MODEL

EVERY CHILD A WHOLE CHILD: THE ILLINOIS K-8 SUPERINTENDENT'S  
APPROACH TO RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT  
DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

Philip S. Georgia

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

December, 2015

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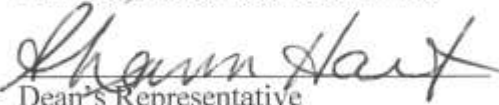
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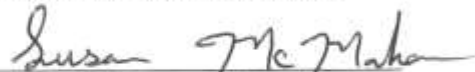
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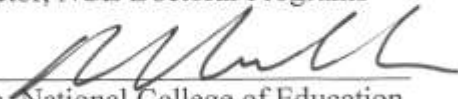
  
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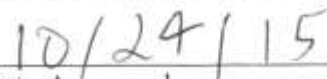
  
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Date Approved

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## Dissertation Organization Statement

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This document is organized to meet the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement with a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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Last, to my family, I offer my deepest gratitude. To my parents, thank you for your prayers, your belief in me, and your interest in my work. To my wife, thank you for your patience and sacrifice. Meghan and Ben, I sincerely hope the endless hours you've spent on electronic devices while I worked on this paper have some redeeming future value!

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to tomorrow's future, the children of today. To the past, present, and future students at W.J. Murphy Elementary School, I wish the greatest opportunity and success. To my children, nieces, and nephews: Marci, David, Joel, Danielle, Nicholas, Evan, Meghan, Benjamin, Charlotte, Caroline, Celia, and Grayson, I hope and pray that the time and dedication put into this work will inspire you to follow your own dreams and will lead to deep personal fulfillment. Learning never ends!

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## **Abstract**

This program evaluation studied the impact of initiatives implemented at an elementary school near a large city in Illinois using a case study methodology. The school was required to restructure during the 2013-2014 school year as a result of the performance mandates outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

To compare the post-restructuring status of the school with the pre-restructuring status, student growth data for multiple grade levels and for each federal subgroup was collected. In addition, the staff's perceptions about the successfulness of the school were gathered to measure the impact of the restructuring initiatives.

An analysis of both the achievement and survey data revealed a significant increase in the academic success of students and the perceived effectiveness of the school.

## **Preface**

Raising student achievement has been a frequently heard mantra in public education today and studies reveal many factors that affect student learning; from socio-economic status, to teacher quality, to school/community partnerships.

For school practitioners, the improvement options can be overwhelming and the decision making process daunting. Could it be that any change will positively affect student achievement or could new initiatives actually end up harming the climate of a school?

This program evaluation demonstrates the important role administrators and teachers play in the restructuring process. Administrators create the vision for success and convince communities to support bold change, while teachers implement new initiatives with fidelity. In addition, this program evaluation demonstrates the dramatic impact that a high-quality curriculum, effective instructional techniques, and intervention programming can have on achievement.

The responsibility for all educators is enormous. Since students have little control over which school they attend, it is vitally important that every child receives an education that provides them the greatest opportunity for future success.

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## **Section One: Introduction**

### **Overview**

This program evaluation studied the impact of initiatives implemented at an elementary school near a large city in Illinois using a case study methodology. The school, referred to as Hometown Elementary School for the purpose of this evaluation, was required to restructure during the 2013-2014 school year as a result of the performance mandates outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Student growth data for multiple grade levels and for each federal subgroup was analyzed to determine the academic impact of the restructuring initiatives. In addition, survey data was analyzed to determine the staff's perception of the effectiveness of the school before and after the implementation of the restructuring initiatives.

### **Population Served**

Hometown Elementary School was one of five elementary buildings in the district and served approximately 650 students in first through fifth grade. The school's ethnic subgroups were: 71.7% Hispanic, 7.1% Black, 16.5% White, 1.9% Asian, 0.3% American Indian, and 2.5% Two or More Races. Other subgroups break down as follows: 67.1% Low Income, 39.0% Limited English Proficiency, and 13.8% with Individualized Education Programs (Northern Illinois University [NIU], 2012).

### **History – Federal and State Requirements**

In January 2002, a bipartisan Congress passed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 into law. The overall goal of NCLB was to improve academic achievement so that every student in the United States would test proficient or higher on a yearly state assessment by 2014. This would be achieved by providing all students access to a high-quality education and by holding schools accountable for student growth and progress. Specifically, the law aimed to “ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (No

Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001, p. 15) by:

Holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of all students, and identifying and turning around low-performing schools that have failed to provide a high-quality education to their students, while providing alternatives to students in such schools to enable the students to receive a high-quality education. (NCLB, 2001, p. 16)

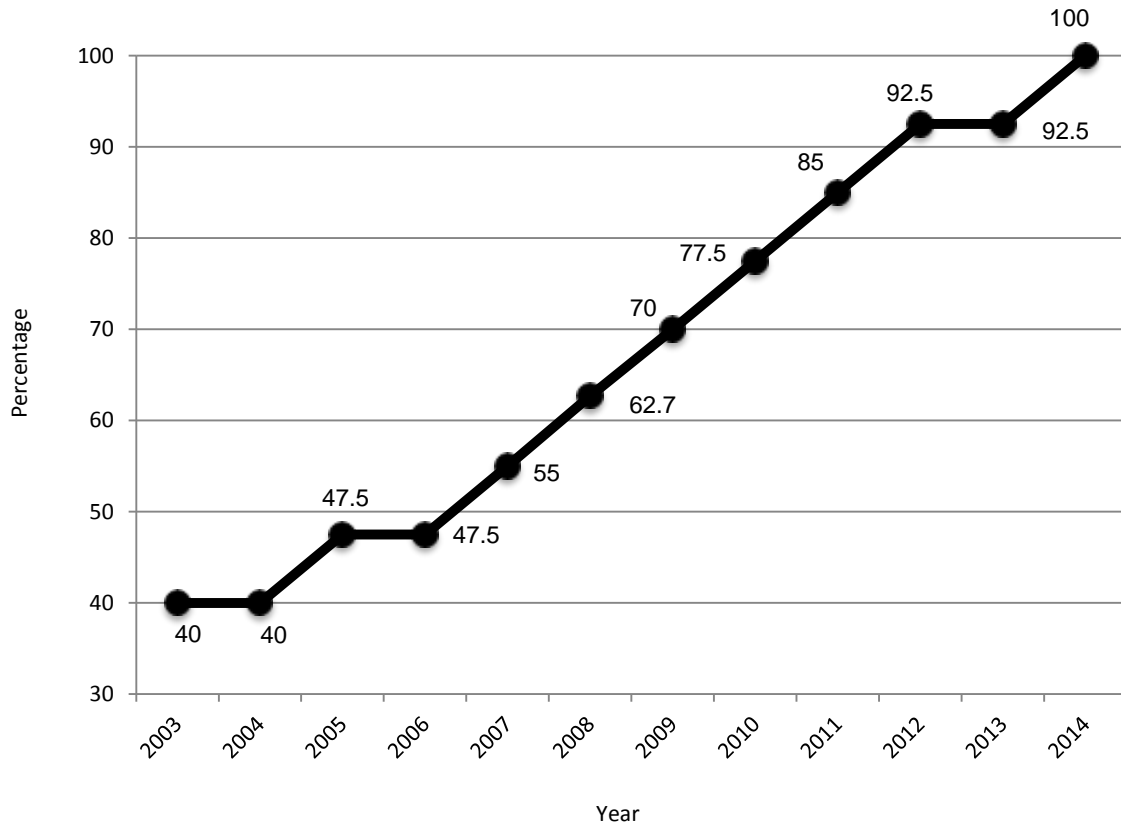
To hold schools accountable, NCLB required each state to establish academic standards, to administer a yearly assessment based on the standards, and to set cut scores for each level of proficiency. At the elementary level in Illinois, the 1997 Illinois Learning Standards (ILS) were adopted and the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) was selected as the assessment. The ISAT was administered to all students in third through eighth grade and tests for math and reading were given to all students, with fourth and seventh graders taking an additional test for science. ISAT results were reported on four levels of proficiency: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Below Standards, and Academic Warning. Individual results were provided to each child's family and to each school for instructional planning and accountability purposes. Collective results for each year were published on the Illinois School Report Card to provide information about each school's progress to the general public.

In addition to establishing standards and assessing students yearly, NCLB required each state to outline how it would progress toward the goal of 100% of students testing at proficient, or above, over the course of the next 13 years leading up to 2014. In Illinois, an Equal Steps Model (Figure 1) was adopted that generally increased the number of students required to meet or exceed standards by 7.5% each year (Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE], 2002).

According to NCLB, schools meeting these yearly proficiency targets would be listed as making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The intent was that as time passed, this public accountability would pressure schools to adjust their curriculum and



instruction to ensure that all students were receiving a high-quality education and achieving at high levels.



*Figure 1. Illinois Equal Steps Model – The percentage of students required to meet or exceed standards for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) from 2003 – 2014.*

In addition to publicly reporting school achievement results, NCLB outlined specific actions districts would be required to take for schools repeatedly failing to make AYP. The only way to escape the sanctions would be for schools to either make AYP for two consecutive years or to meet the criteria for Safe Harbor. Under the Safe Harbor provision, a specific subgroup could make AYP if the percentage of students making AYP within the subgroup increased by 10% or more from the prior year even though the percentage was below the yearly target.

As the years passed, and the AYP targets increased, it became increasingly difficult for schools to remove themselves from the roster of schools that did not make

AYP. In Illinois, the percentage of schools in Federal Improvement Status rose from 14.1% in 2002 to 41.5% in 2013 (ISBE, 2013b). As a result, the sanctions mandated by NCLB had a greater impact and received much more scrutiny in latter years than when the law was first passed.

In Illinois, the sanctions closely mirrored section 1111 (b) of the federal plan, which provided little flexibility for state adaptations. When a school did not make AYP for two consecutive years, the school was listed in Academic Early Warning Status and, for districts that received federal Title 1 funds, the school was also listed in federal School Improvement Status. While in School Improvement Status, the school had to develop a plan detailing the steps that would be taken to ensure that more students reached proficiency targets. Additionally, the school was mandated to offer School Choice, which required districts to inform parents that their children attended a school in status and that they had the opportunity to send their children to another school within the district that had made AYP (ISBE, 2010).

In the third consecutive year of not making AYP, schools were listed in Academic Watch Status (AWS) and Title 1 schools had to offer Supplementary Educational Services (SES) in addition to School Choice. SES were additional educational programs provided to students outside of regular school hours at no cost to parents. To comply with the law, districts providing SES had to fund the cost of these programs from their Title 1 allocation (ISBE, 2010).

After a second year of being in AWS, four consecutive years of not making AYP, schools entered Corrective Action status and, per Section 1116(b)(7)(C)(iv), had to take one or more of the following actions:

- Required implementation of a new research-based curriculum or instructional program;
- Extension of the school year or school day;
- Replacement of staff members relevant to the school's low performance;

- Significant decrease in management authority at the school level;
- Replacement of the principal;
- Restructuring the internal organization of the school;
- Appointment of an outside expert to advise the school. (ISBE, 2010, p. 51)

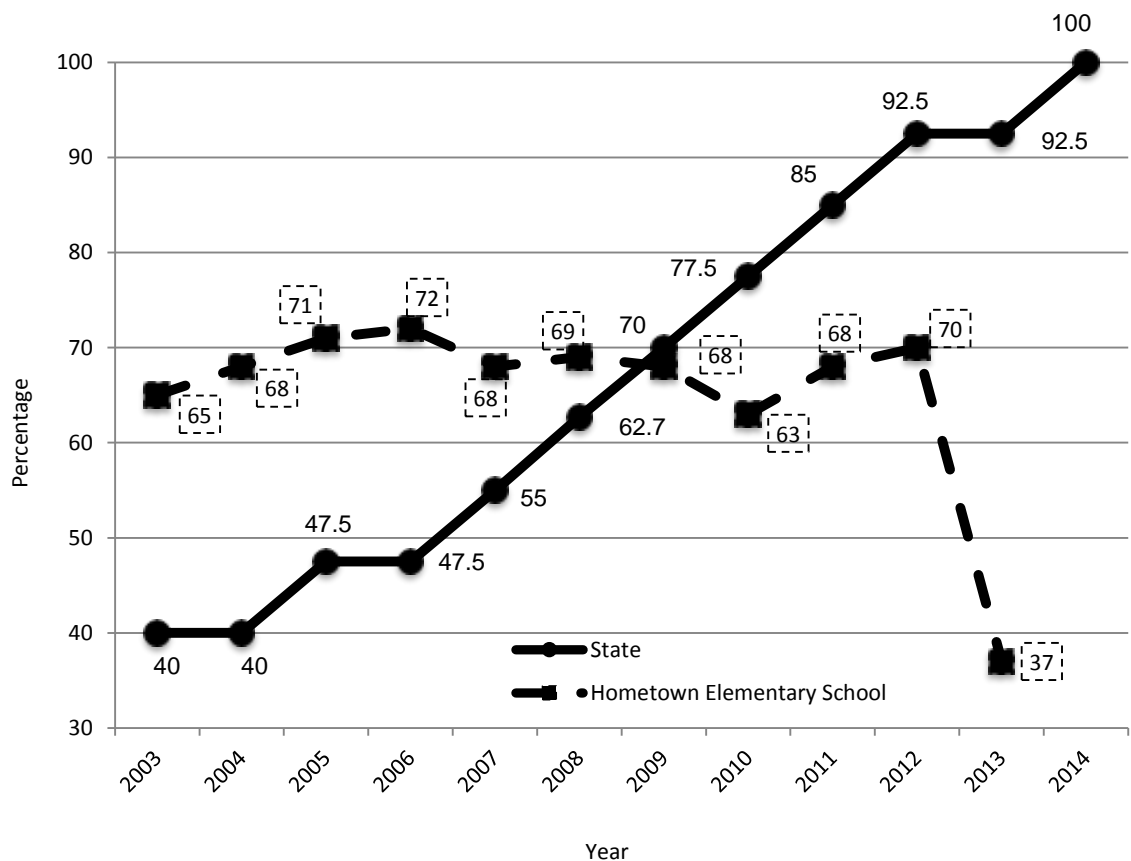
After five years of not making AYP, schools had to continue the corrective actions taken the prior year but were also listed in Restructuring Planning status and had to prepare a plan that will be implemented should the district not make AYP the sixth year. NCLB offers the following options to districts with schools in restructuring:

- Reopening the school as a public charter school;
- Replacing all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's inability to make AYP;
- Entering into a contract with an entity such as a private management company;
- Implementing any other major restructuring of the school's governance that makes fundamental reform in:
  - i. governance and management, and/or
  - ii. financing and material resources, and/or
  - iii. staffing. (ISBE, 2010, p. 51)

### **History – Hometown Elementary School**

According to the Illinois Interactive Report Card (NIU, 2012), Hometown Elementary School has not made AYP since 2009 (Figure 2). Therefore, in 2010, the school was listed in Academic Early Warning Status (AEWS) and offered School Choice to parents. Since the other elementary schools in the district had not made AYP since 2008, none of the other schools appeared to be a better option than Hometown Elementary School. In fact, Hometown Elementary School was receiving choice students from other schools.

In 2011, Hometown Elementary School did not make AYP for the third consecutive year so Supplemental Education Services were provided to students through a number of private educational organizations, specifically: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Horizons, Sylvan Learning Centers, Club Z, Brain Hurricane, and Academic Achievement. These programs were hosted in the district schools, which assisted with recruiting students. In 2013, 12.6% of Hometown's students participated in SES programs.



*Figure 2.* Hometown Elementary School's percentage of students meeting or exceeding AYP compared to state AYP benchmark.

In 2012, each of the subgroups at Hometown Elementary School made AYP under the Safe Harbor provision; however, the school did not make overall AYP. This marked the fourth consecutive year of not making AYP and, as a result, the school entered Corrective Action status. At the end of the year, the principal moved to another building within the district and a new principal was hired. While this largely happened

outside the realm of Corrective Action, the start of a new principal met the Corrective Action criteria.

In the fall of 2012, the other elementary buildings in the district had not made AYP for five consecutive years and were entering Restructuring Planning status. As a result, Hometown Elementary was included in the plan for restructuring, as it was reasonable to assume that Hometown would enter restructuring the next year anyway.

In the spring of 2013, the ISBE announced that new cut scores would be used for 2013 ISAT so that the results more closely aligned to the Common Core Standards (CCS). The release predicted that the average school's percentage of students that met or exceeded standards would drop 35-40% (ISBE, 2013a). As a result, it was evident that the restructuring plan would be implemented the next year. When the results were released, Hometown Elementary School experienced the predicted decrease (Figure 2).

### **Restructuring Process**

ISBE publically released the 2012 School Report Cards on October 31, 2012. Despite pockets of improvement and academic achievement within specific subgroups, the schools in Hometown Elementary School's district did not make AYP and advanced into Restructuring Status. Following this publication, the restructuring planning process commenced. In an interview reflecting on the process, the district superintendent stated:

Restructuring was a major undertaking, so it was important to me that our district had a comprehensive plan for the process. Ironically, the state provides various restructuring possibilities, but does not provide a roadmap for the process. I take academic achievement very seriously and was committed to finding a plan that would result in student learning that closed the achievement gap. Implementing a plan because it was easy or because it placated the state was unacceptable to me, as it would be a disservice to our children's future. As a district, we investigated each of the restructuring options comprehensively to determine which would best

address the identified needs of our students and have the greatest impact on student growth and achievement.

Along the way, all district stakeholders were included to ensure that every voice was heard and that the cumulative list of pros and cons regarding each option was factored into the decision making process. The Board of Education was committed to ensuring that the community embraced the final plan because they were part of the process and understood the rationale for the decision. For this reason, committees were convened to listen to each group of stakeholders and solicit their input. Additionally, frequent community forums were scheduled to update the whole community on the process and the progress made to date.

As the planning unfolded, it became clear that many community members, parents, and teachers were eager to participate in the process, but also that making significant change is very challenging, as many strong opinions and raw emotions were expressed at a number of meetings. As a district leadership team, we appreciated the community's commitment to children, and knew that working through some difficult topics was necessary to the process and important to the successful development of a final plan. As a result, the sense of ownership has been much stronger than if the leadership team had created a plan in isolation and had to defend the decision after the fact.

In the end, I am convinced that our restructuring plan works because the goal of increasing achievement has remained at the forefront, existing issues with academic programs have been addressed, and stakeholders have participated in the process and embraced the final plan.

### **Timeline**

The timeline below provides an overview of the various public milestones of the restructuring process.

- July 2012 - AYP status released to districts by ISBE.

- Fall 2012 - District administration investigation of restructuring options.
- October 31, 2012 - Public release of school report cards.
- December 17, 2012 - Restructuring memo sent to staff and board of education.
- January 10, 2013 - Elementary staff and parent collaboration meeting to overview restructuring process.
- January 14, 2013 - Restructuring presentation to board of education. Grade level centers and theme school models described.
- January 17, 2013 - Administration, certified staff and parents meet to develop pros and cons to the grade level center and theme school models.
- January 18, 2013 - School governance model development begins.
- January 22 and 23, 2013 - Additional informational and feedback meetings held to solicit further pros and cons to the grade level center and theme school models from parents and the Bilingual Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC).
- January 28, 2013 - Presentation of parent and staff survey results and pros and cons of grade level center and school governance models. Board of education votes to approve school governance model.
- February 4, 2013 - Restructuring update presented to board of education detailing guidance documents and details of school governance model.
- February 11, 2013 - Restructuring update presented to board of education detailing restructuring process and next steps.
- February 13, 2013 - Restructuring update presented at Community Forum.
- February 25, 2013 - Middle school and high school restructuring plans presented to board of education.
- March 14, 2013 - Elementary school restructuring plan presented to board of education.
- April 22, 2013 - Board of education approves restructuring staffing proposal for \$2,188,495.40.

- May 14, 2013 - Restructuring update presented to board of education detailing the progress on staffing, scheduling, the literacy adoption, and forthcoming trainings.

As previously stated, NCLB required that a district implement one of the following during the restructuring planning year: reopening as a charter school, replacing all or most of the school staff (including the principal), operating the school under private management, or making any other changes that fundamentally reform the school's governance, financing, and/or staffing (ISBE, 2010). Each of these options was thoroughly investigated during the restructuring planning process.

### **Charter School**

Reopening a school as a public charter school was the first option provided by NCLB. In Illinois, however, state requirements for the authorization of a charter school did not allow this possibility for Hometown Elementary School's district. Specifically, Article 27A of the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) limited the overall number of charter schools in the state and allowed each board of education to initiate and operate no more than one charter school within the school district. Since, at a minimum, three of the elementary schools had to be restructured, the charter school option was not possible.

### **Replace Staff**

The second option listed for schools in restructuring is to "replace all or most of the school staff, which may include the principal, who are relevant to the school's inability to make AYP" (ISBE, 2010, p. 51). In an interview reflecting on the consideration of this option, the district's Executive Director of Human Resources stated:

Initially, this option looked like it could be viable. The law mandates, however, that restructuring occur within the parameters of existing collective bargaining agreements, which generally include specific procedures for reduction in force. With the five elementary buildings undergoing restructuring at the same time, over two hundred teachers would have had to be placed on a reduction in force list. As groups were created based on years of experience and evaluation ratings,



the process proved problematic as a high percentage of teachers rated as proficient or excellent fell within the same group. For example, determining how to reduce more than 10 teachers from a group of 20, all with five years of experience and excellent ratings, would have generated grievances and produced costly litigation that would have been extremely time consuming. With the restructuring timeline provided, we needed to move expeditiously.

The second option considered to meet the mandate, was to transfer staff between buildings to achieve a majority of new staff. This option made more sense based on the fact that most teachers had good performance evaluations and because it was less likely to generate grievances and litigation. As the planning for the transfers continued it became apparent, however, that this process would have a negative impact on staff morale and that significant district resources would be spent moving teacher materials and instructional supplies between buildings rather than being used to impact student learning.

Even though this option would have met the NCLB guidelines, laying off or transferring staff was not seen as a viable or productive option as the district had committed to restructuring in order to improve student achievement rather than just fulfilling the mandate and was reticent to negate any advances the district had made with implementing Professional Learning Communities in prior years.

With regard to the option of replacing administrators, 85% of the district's principals have been hired within the past three years so replacing them to meet a state mandate would have set the district back by delaying changes that were already underway. During the restructuring planning year alone, two principals were new, one was in her second year, one was in her third year, and one was in her last year before retiring.

## **Private Management**

The third option provided by the NCLB mandate is for school districts to contract with a private management company, “with a demonstrated record of effectiveness,” to operate the school as a public school (ISBE, 2010, p. 51). In an interview reflecting on the consideration of this option, the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations stated:

Private management was not seen as an attractive option to anyone as the district recently regained control of its finances after nine years of state oversight. In 2002, the district experienced a financial crisis and was on the verge of dissolving when it was taken over by the state of Illinois. For many years the focus was on keeping the district afloat rather than maintaining the buildings, keeping up with curricular needs, and supporting student achievement. The Board of Education remained part of the process, but essentially had very little authority over many of the important and critical aspects of the district. In 2011, the district regained control from the state and the spotlight shifted toward teaching and learning with a focus on student achievement. Contracting with a private management company would relinquish control of the important work we have been doing since 2011. Since local control of the education of students is a cornerstone of the educational system, this experience was not one that the community and district wanted to experience again. For these reasons, this was not considered a viable or productive option.

## **Governance Model**

The last option provided for schools in restructuring was to, “implement any other major restructuring of the school’s governance that makes fundamental reform in governance and management, and/or, financing and material resources, and/or staffing” (ISBE, 2010, p. 51). To further understand these criteria, the district investigated the restructuring plans of other districts, communicated with the state, and with local

stakeholders. Three governance models emerged from this process, one was to open the schools as theme schools, the second was to open schools as grade level centers, and the third, which became known as the Governance Model, was to make other fundamental reforms to the school's financing and resources.

To gather feedback from district stakeholders, a survey was sent to all parents and staff members soliciting their preference for each of the three models. In addition, a planning meeting was held to more fully investigate the theme schools and grade level centers options.

**Theme schools and grade level centers.** On January 17, 2013 the planning meeting to identify the pros and cons of the theme school and grade level centers options was held and teachers, parents, and administrators discussed the ramifications of the models on the district, parents, staff, and students.

The theme schools plan had developed as a way to address the need for a broader range of academic, fine arts, and language options for students. The idea was to offer parents and students the choice of three themes: World Languages, Fine Arts, or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). These themes addressed a number of needs within existing programming and provided the district's diverse community a choice that would provide direction toward skills and careers that their children expressed an interest in.

Restructuring the schools as grade level centers developed as a way to address the NCLB mandate to replace the majority of a school's staff by transferring all first and second grade teachers to one building, all third and fourth grade teachers to another building, and all fifth grade teachers to their own building. Investigation showed that a number of neighboring districts were utilizing the grade level centers model effectively and were making AYP. Additionally, the grade level centers model would consolidate the wide range of services provided to students at the various schools across the district.

The following summary of the meeting outcomes was presented at the January 28, 2013 school board meeting. No differentiation between pros and cons was made because one stakeholder's pro was another's con. For example, parents viewed the individual themes as pros, but some teachers saw them as a con because they did not have specialized training for effectively teaching in a STEM, Fine Arts, or World Languages themed school. The following were identified as the main considerations for theme schools:

- Parents and students would have a choice of themes, which would pique student interest and provide skills related to their career path.
- Themes would allow teachers to teach to their strengths, however many teachers would need professional development in order to effectively provide instruction in a STEM, Fine Arts, or World Languages themed school.
- If parents were indifferent to a theme, their children could still attend their neighborhood school.
- Students may not be able to attend the school of their choice based on the popularity of the themes or the availability of space.
- Students would need to be transported across the district to the school of their choice.

The following were identified as the main considerations for grade level centers:

- Fitting the grade level models (K, 1-2, 3-4, 5, or K, 1-2, 3-5) into the existing building and classroom spaces would require that class sections be moved from building to building each year.
- The grade level center model would not require teachers to have professional development on specific STEM techniques.
- The grade level center model would require a significant transfer of teachers and materials between the buildings involved.

- More sections of a grade level in a building would provide increased opportunity for teachers to collaborate together.
- More sections of a grade level in a building provide the opportunity for more flexible grouping with students and the provision of more specific services.
- Students would attend up to six different schools between kindergarten and high school graduation. The frequent movement would make it difficult for schools to develop an identity and for parents to get to know a building or its teachers.
- Parents would have students attending multiple schools and would have to deal with multiple bus stops and times.
- Buses would have to transport students across the district and the neighborhood schools concept would be lost.
- Younger students would have fewer older students to look up to.
- Modifications to some buildings would be needed to accommodate younger children.

**School governance.** The school governance option provided the ability to restructure the schools by making “fundamental reform...to the financing and material resources” of the schools without moving staff or students (ISBE, 2010, p. 51). At the January 28, 2013 board meeting, results from the survey were presented. The survey asked respondents to select one or more of the models preferred and showed that a majority of parents preferred the school governance model while the majority of the staff showed a greater preference for the grade level centers model (Table 1). In addition, the presentation to the board projected the cost of the grade level centers model to exceed the school governance model by \$500,000, largely due to increased transportation costs and the transfer of staff between buildings.

At the end of the presentation, the school governance model was approved by the Board of Education and the administrators in the Teaching and Learning Department

were charged with putting the “meat on the bones” of the proposal. This planning, to determine the specific fundamental reform to the financial and material resources, continued throughout the spring with monthly presentations at community forums and board meetings.

Table 1

*Staff and Parent/Community Responses to Restructuring Survey*

<u>Options</u>	<u>Parent/Community (186 respondents)</u>	<u>Staff (160 respondents)</u>
Should District continue to offer extended-day Kindergarten?	Question not asked on exit slip	55.3% Yes 44.7% No
Theme Schools	34%	25.5%
Grade Level Centers	21%	72.8%
School Governance	45%	46.9%

At the elementary level, the restructuring proposal under school governance consisted of four new initiatives: a new English as a New Language (ENL) service delivery model, a daily intervention and enrichment block, a new literacy curriculum and new specials which provided additional collaborative time for teachers during the school day. Each of these initiatives was selected to address identified shortcomings of the school’s existing curriculum and programming.

*English as a new language (ENL) service delivery model.* Prior to restructuring, Hometown Elementary offered three tracks of classes: bilingual, English as a Second Language (ESL), and general education. The bilingual classes were self-contained and used a different curriculum than the ESL or general education classes. Students in the bilingual program had little opportunity to interact with

native English speakers, except during lunch, recess, and specials. In addition, many of the bilingual classrooms operated solely in Spanish as the teachers' native language was Spanish and they felt it important for the students to retain their native language. This however, was not in compliance with the district's transitional bilingual philosophy which provided guidelines for transitioning students from Spanish to English instruction throughout the year, and from year to year. Compounding the problem was the fact that students who needed minimal bilingual support were placed in a full-time bilingual class since the ESL and general education classes provided no native language support.

ESL classes utilized the general education curriculum but were also self-contained and provided few opportunities for students to interact with native English speaking peers except during lunch, recess, and specials. Like the bilingual placement, students needing minimal ESL support were placed in ESL classes because the general education classes provided no services to ESL students.

Over the years, the gap between the bilingual, ESL, and general education classes widened and it was increasingly difficult for students to transition between them. To exit the bilingual program students needed to be fairly proficient in English but did not receive sufficient instruction in English nor sufficient interaction with native English speakers to achieve a score on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) test that was high enough to exit the program. Likewise, students enrolled in the ESL classroom had to reach a very high level of English proficiency to be successful in the general education setting but did not receive on-level instruction nor interact with native English speaking peers regularly enough to achieve an ACCESS score high enough to exit the program. While successful bilingual programs provide effective bridging between languages to transition students within three years (Krashen, 1997), many students remained in the program until middle school.

As part of the restructuring plan, the bilingual and ESL classes were reorganized and a needs-based English as a New Language (ENL) service delivery model was developed. Instead of providing separate bilingual and ESL tracks for each grade level, the program provided separate bilingual classrooms for kindergarten and first grade only. For each of these classes, specific guidelines regarding the percentage of English instruction to be used each quarter was detailed and monitored for compliance by the ENL Coordinator. In second through fifth grade, students requiring language support were strategically placed in the general education classrooms so that each classroom had a cluster of either bilingual or ESL students. As much as possible, the ESL clusters were placed with teachers with an ESL endorsement. In addition, full time bilingual resource and ESL resource teachers were hired to provide push in or pull out language support to all grade levels. As a result, students receive only the amount of support needed and are able to transition between service levels without significant disruption to their placement.

To ensure implementation fidelity, the new service delivery model was supplemented with substantial amounts of professional development. The district's ENL Coordinator held monthly meetings with the bilingual teachers and observed their instruction three times a year. At the building level, the administration made a concerted effort to hire staff with a bilingual Spanish endorsement, an ESL endorsement, or a major or minor in Spanish. During faculty meetings, time was devoted to training about language acquisition and instructional strategies specific to new language learners, such as the use of visuals to build academic vocabulary.

*Intervention/enrichment block.* Prior to restructuring, intervention programming was limited and there were few opportunities for enrichment as 75% of students scored in the lowest quartile nationally. As a result, the school was primarily focused on addressing the gaps in students' skills and knowledge. To participate in the intervention programs however, students were removed from core instruction because there was no other time available in the schedule. Essentially,



this made the intervention programs a replacement to the core curriculum rather than a supplement to it.

The most effective intervention programs used at Hometown Elementary School were Scholastic's System 44 and READ 180, but only five percent of the student body participated. While the school also possessed site licenses for Compass Learning and Imagine Learning, the programs were not implemented with fidelity as many teachers did not know they had access to the programs, did not receive the training needed to use the program effectively, or did not have time during the day to utilize the programs. In addition, the reports from the programs were not helpful, as students that did use the programs did not log enough time to generate valuable feedback.

As part of the restructuring process, a daily 45 minute Intervention/Enrichment (IE) block was incorporated into the master schedule. During this time, all students participated in either an academic intervention or enrichment program based on their needs. Instructional groups were created using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores, classroom assessments, and reading levels. Each quarter, grade level teams adjusted the groups based on the progress the students made. During the IE block, the specials teachers were assigned to a grade level to allow for targeted small group instruction. On average, each grade level of five sections had four additional staff members assisting students during IE.

In addition, IE programming became more comprehensive as the art and music teachers were assigned to enrichment groups and extended their curriculum to include cross-curricular projects that inspired and motivated student creativity and expression. Intervention programming also improved as the number of students serviced increased and the curriculum supplemented, rather than supplanted, the core instruction. Numerous research-based programs were used to support the core instruction and to target specific student needs. For example, Jolly Phonics and Haggerty were used by first and second grade teachers to address phonemic awareness and System 44 and READ 180 use was

expanded for third through fifth grade students to address phonics and early reading skills. The Compass Learning and Imagine Learning site licenses were put to better use as well. At a minimum, each child worked with the programs during their weekly computer special, which ensured at least 30 minutes of online instruction per week. These were also used during the IE block and all students had home access to Imagine Learning through the Play@Home web portal.

*Collaboration.* Prior to restructuring, the collective bargaining agreement provided each teacher 40 minutes of daily plan time outside the student day. The administration was allowed to schedule meetings during this time three times a month. In general, those meetings consisted of a faculty meeting, and two grade level team meetings. While many teachers elected to collaborate with their peers more regularly during this plan time, the practice was not consistent and often did not include the whole team of teachers. During the school day, teachers received a 20 or 25 minute break when their students attended specials. With only two specials, Music and Physical Education, and four or five sections per grade level, it was not possible for the full team of teachers to collaborate during this time.

As part of the restructuring process, additional common preparation time was created during the school day. The addition of more specials allowed a whole grade level of students to attend specials at the same time, thus providing the team of teachers a common collaboration time during the school day. Many teams utilized the time to their advantage to discuss lessons, instructional techniques, and assessment strategies. However, the practice across the building was inconsistent, as contractually, the administration could not require the team to meet during this time.

*Literacy curriculum.* Prior to restructuring, the core literacy curriculum was over 10 years old. Some teachers used the basal exclusively while others supplemented their instruction with leveled readers. With the arrival of the Common Core Standards, the teachers received a course and sequence document and

professional development on how to unpack the standards but supplemental materials were not provided and teachers had to find or create their own lessons to address the standards. This created substantial inconsistency between, and within, grade levels regarding the use of textbooks and other supplemental materials, in addition to the separate curriculum being used by the bilingual programs.

As part of the restructuring plan, the district formed a literacy review committee that previewed four comprehensive, Common Core aligned, literacy programs that included supporting materials for English Language Learners (ELL) students. After presentations by each publisher and site visits to see each curriculum in use, Pearson's Reading Street was selected. Reading Street is a comprehensive literacy curriculum for kindergarten to sixth grade students that specifically targets the Common Core's literacy standards. The program provides a wide range of resources for teachers and students including textbooks, leveled readers, unit assessments, small group activities, and online materials (Pearson Education Inc., 2013).

*Specials.* Prior to restructuring, students were exposed to two specials, Music and Physical Education (PE), two or three times a week. First and second grade students attended each special for 20 minutes and third through fifth grade students for 25 minutes. In addition, students visited the library once a week but only returned and checked out books. Due to the lack of opportunity, teachers were taking instructional time to teach art and computer skills.

As part of the restructuring plan, the number of specials was increased. Art, Computer, Library, and Reading/Writing Lab were added to the existing options of Music and PE. With six different specials each week, students received a more comprehensive curriculum than ever before and learned many new skills.

### **Stakeholders Involved**

The restructuring process directly and indirectly involved stakeholders from the whole community. While school boards represent a community's hopes and dreams for

their children's education, the restructuring mandate came from the federal and state level rather than being a local, grassroots initiative. Thus, as elected officials, the stakes for the school board were high. While change was required, the board needed to closely monitor the use of the district's resources and the community's response to restructuring, as one election cycle could halt any progress.

As a result, the superintendent and board of education knew that informing the community about the restructuring process and obtaining their support for the restructuring initiatives were critical factors to successful change. For this reason, community members, business owners, parents, teachers, and students were all invited to forums where the mandate's options were outlined and the restructuring process explained. Then, representative groups of these stakeholders were invited to participate in planning sessions that identified the pros and cons for each of the plans being considered. The community was eager to participate as many sensed that restructuring was a significant event that could substantially impact student achievement and the reputation of the community.

The superintendent played a key role in championing the goal of the restructuring plan and charting a clear course for implementing it. With considerable resources allocated to the improvement effort, the community and board closely monitored progress and scheduled frequent updates on the impact on learning. If student growth and achievement did not improve, the superintendent would be held responsible!

District administrators, principals, and teachers were also key players during the restructuring planning and implementation. With the approval of the requested support for the initiatives, these groups made a commitment to implementing them despite the considerable time and effort involved. While this commitment benefits students, administrators and teachers had more at stake, as Illinois' 2010 Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) required a student growth component as part of the rating metric.

While students were the least involved in the restructuring process, they have been the most affected. Their futures and careers will be directly impacted by the success or failure of the restructuring initiatives.

### **Program Objectives**

The restructuring at Hometown Elementary School served two purposes. First, the implementation of new initiatives addressed the restructuring mandate of NCLB as a result of the school not making AYP for five consecutive years. Second, the restructuring addressed many well-known issues with the existing programs, curriculum, and master schedule that were limiting the ability of students to reach their full academic potential. Specifically, these were the service delivery model utilized for English Language Learners, the ability to effectively provide intervention and enrichment programming, the amount of time for teacher collaboration, the use of a rigorous curriculum aligned to the Common Cores Standards, and the opportunity to experience a wide range of specials.

While the restructuring process was daunting, time consuming, and emotionally draining for many stakeholders, the plan submitted to the state was embraced by teachers, parents, and administrators and the 2013-2014 school year started with a great deal of excitement.

### **My Role**

As the principal of Hometown Elementary School, I played an important role in the implementation of the restructuring initiatives and had a lot at stake as the evaluation tool for principals includes student growth as a component of the overall rating. My situation was unique as I started at Hometown Elementary School during the restructuring planning year, oversaw the initiative implementation, and was able to compare and contrast the pre- and post-restructuring years. During this time I developed a strong connection to the students, teachers, and parents and truly believed that the community deserved such significant investment. As previously discussed, balancing the budget was the highest priority for the district in the early 2000s and there was limited

support for teaching and learning concerns. The restructuring initiatives addressed these concerns and set the stage for providing the community a great educational opportunity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to evaluate the impact the restructuring initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School had on the academic achievement of students as well as the impact on the staff's perception of the effectiveness of the school.

Evaluating the academic impact was important, as this was the very purpose of the NCLB mandate to restructure. Prior to restructuring, 45-55% of the students at Hometown Elementary School attained their fall to spring growth targets on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests given in reading and math each year. This benchmark data was used to compare the academic impact of the new initiatives after the first year of implementation.

Evaluating the staff's perception of the pre- to post-restructuring change in the effectiveness of the school was also important because NCLB provided no guidance for the restructuring process and did not require a connection between the academic needs of the school and the changes made. As a result, schools that restructured just to comply with the mandate could unintentionally implement changes that are detrimental to the achievement of students or the overall effectiveness of the school. For example, a district that transfers teachers between buildings to comply with the "replace all or most of the staff" requirement could devastate the morale of the teachers and destroy the climate of the schools.

### **Relevance**

The conclusions of this case study provided accountability for the restructuring plan to the board of education and the community in general. All stakeholders deserved to know that the plan submitted to the state was implemented with fidelity and whether the significant financial resources committed to restructuring had a positive impact on

student learning and the perceived successfulness of the school.

As part of the larger body of studies conducted on restructuring plans implemented at various schools between 2002 and 2014, this study also assists in determining whether NCLB has accomplished its purpose of raising student achievement by improving schools. This information is important to consider as the nation continues to debate the reauthorization of NCLB, which expired in 2007, but continues to impact schools.

### **Questions and Sub Questions**

The following questions and sub questions assisted in determining the overall impact of the restructuring initiatives on student achievement and the perceived effectiveness of Hometown Elementary School.

- Has student achievement been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?
  - How was the achievement of students in the cores subjects (reading and math) affected?
  - How was the achievement of students in each of the federal subgroups affected?
  - How was the achievement of students in interventions and enrichments affected?
- How has the perceived effectiveness of the school been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?

### **Limitations**

The major limitation to this study was the fact that a number of initiatives were implemented at the same time. As a result, the student achievement data and teacher survey data only provided information about the overall impact of the restructuring plan rather than identifying specific initiatives that were responsible for the results.

Another limitation was determining whether the impact on achievement was due to the restructuring initiatives or the result of other practices the school was using to

improve student learning. For example, professional development was not a restructuring initiative but the administration emphasized the need for teachers to improve their instructional knowledge through various professional development activities and this could have accounted for a portion of the student growth results.

The third limitation of this study was the timeframe used for the data collection. While a full year of achievement results and teachers' perspectives on the pre- and post-restructuring status of the school was significant, three or four years of data would lend greater credibility to the long-term impact of the restructuring initiatives.

### **Summary**

Since NCLB was passed in 2002, districts have closely monitored student achievement on state assessments to monitor their AYP status. As the bar for meeting and exceeding standards increased over the years, the law's mandated sanctions impacted more and more schools. This section has detailed the history of NCLB leading up to restructuring, the AYP history of Hometown Elementary School, and the restructuring initiatives implemented as a result of not making AYP for five consecutive years. By implementing a new English as a New Language service delivery model, a new literacy curriculum, new specials, a daily intervention and enrichment block, and increased opportunity for teachers to collaborate during the school day, Hometown Elementary School met the restructuring requirements of the law and addressed existing curricular and programmatic needs. In addition, this section has set forth the purpose and relevance for studying both the academic achievement of students and the perceived impact on the effectiveness of the school.

The next section of this paper will explore the historical context for today's era of achievement and will detail the characteristics of effective schools that will be used to collect teacher perceptions. In addition, the research on each of the initiatives and the components of successful schools will be examined.



## **Section Two: Literature Review**

The purpose of this case study was to determine the impact of the restructuring initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School, due to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) restructuring mandates, on student achievement and on the staff's perception of the effectiveness of the school. The current context of achievement and accountability in the United States can be better understood by exploring the historical and political events that have produced this climate in today's public schools.

This literature review also examines the research-based characteristics of successful schools and the research related to the reliability and validity of teacher surveys. As schools across the nation initiate changes to improve achievement, be it termed *reform*, *improvement*, *turnaround*, or *restructuring*, it is important to understand what success looks like and whether the perceptions of the teachers should be considered by decision-makers. Lastly, research on each of the restructuring initiatives at Hometown Elementary School will be reviewed to determine its connection to the improvement of student achievement.

### **The Era of Achievement and Accountability**

The era of achievement and accountability in American public education began to emerge as compulsory education laws were passed and governmental agencies at the local and state level acquired greater oversight for public schools. The initial investigations of school standards identified a variety of curricula and teaching philosophies in effect. Some schools prepared children for post-secondary education while others emphasized the working trades. Other schools emphasized the memorization of facts, while others valued critical thinking (Hertzberg, 1988).

In 1892, a group of educators met to discuss the standardization of the American high school curriculum. The Committee of Ten recommended that all students attend 12 years of school, and that all students at the secondary level should receive similar

instruction and coursework in English, math, history or civics, and science instruction (National Education Association of the United States, 1894).

As the curriculum unified, standardized tests were developed to gauge student learning and to compare the achievement of like peers across the nation. In 1926, the first Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) test was given to 8,000 students primarily in private school students in northern states who were hoping to attend Ivy League colleges (Lawrence, Rigol, Van Essen, & Jackson, 2002). The popularity and importance of such testing continued to increase and by 2012, 1.6 million students took the SAT at testing centers in 170 countries (The College Board, 2012). The wealth of data released each year provided the opportunity to compare the achievement of students in the United States with those in other industrialized countries.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education published, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. The report asserted that America's public schools were failing and that students were not being adequately prepared for the work force, especially compared to other industrialized countries (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The report added fuel to the existing reform movement and renewed the focus on specific standards in the core subjects that would ensure each child reached his or her full potential and that the nation regained its prominence in the world. On the national level, the response was the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. Signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1994, the act identified world-class academic standards, determined methods for measuring student progress, and provided states and communities funding to support students in order to meet the standards (U. S. Department of Education [DOE], 1998).

To assist with accountability, the National Education Goals Panel was charged with assessing the completion of each goal prior to the 2000 deadline. The final report indicated that few of the goals had been accomplished but some improvements were found. Specifically, it showed that the pre-school and parenting programs resulted in

more students being ready to learn upon entering kindergarten and that elementary and middle school students demonstrated increases in math proficiency with slight increases in middle school reading proficiency. Two of the goals however, teacher quality and school safety, showed regression over the course of time as fewer teachers held college degrees and the use of illicit drugs among students increased (DOE, 1998).

The presidential election dominated the political landscape in 2000 and overshadowed any clamor regarding the failure of Goals 2000. Within a year of being sworn into office on January 20, 2001, however, George W. Bush brought education back into the national spotlight by signing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law. NCLB was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 but expanded the role of the federal government in public education by mandating that states adopt the requirements of NCLB in order to receive Title 1 funds (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003). The requirements included the development of state standards, the administration of an annual statewide assessment, and the creation of cut scores for various levels of proficiency of the standards.

As described in detail in Section One, NCLB required each state to determine the percentage of students that would meet or exceed the level of proficiency each year so that, by 2014, all students would achieve the standards. Schools repeatedly failing to make AYP would be required to progressively implement various sanctions, from the provision of School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services to Corrective Action and Restructuring. As early as 2004, a number of civil rights, education, disability advocacy, civic, labor and religious groups proposed major changes to NCLB. A joint organizational statement on NCLB by FairTest (2004), emphasized that the “law’s emphasis needs to shift from applying sanctions for failing to raise test scores to holding states and localities accountable for making the systemic changes that improve student achievement” (para. 3).

NCLB expired in 2007. Despite its well-intentioned goal, the detrimental sanctions remain in effect until the law is reauthorized, which has still not occurred over seven years later. As the unintended consequences of NCLB were realized, an existing push for national standards gained greater traction. Throughout the mid 1990s, a bipartisan group of governors and corporate leaders formed to raise academic standards, increase graduation requirements, improve assessments, and strengthen accountability in all states (Achieve Inc., 2013). With regard to curriculum, the group advocated for the creation of national standards that detailed what students needed to know and be able to do to be college and career ready. In 2004, the report, *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts* found that high school graduates did not have the skills and knowledge to be successful beyond high school, as colleges, universities, and work-force employers were demanding higher reading, writing, and technology skills from high school graduates than ever before. The report suggested that a common set of rigorous standards was the solution to ensure that students received a diploma with value (Achieve Inc., 2004).

In response, the National Governors Association convened a committee that developed the Common Core Standards (CCS). The CCS represent learning goals that “outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010, para. 1). At present, 45 states have adopted the CCS and member states are preparing for the first CCS aligned assessment that will provide a truer measure of college and career readiness (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

Also in 2009, the U.S. Department of Education announced the Race to the Top (RTTT) program. The competitive grants aimed to lay “the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to

improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness” (DOE, 2009, p. 2). Within a year, 18 states, representing 45% of the nation’s K-12 students, had been awarded grants (DOE, 2009) and the qualifying requirements for the grants resulted in some significant reforms to state laws on teacher evaluation (Dillon, 2010).

While no one knows what future programs or initiatives are in store for public education, it should be clear from this literature that the emphasis on achievement and accountability that NCLB, CCS, and RTTT have demanded, will not disappear in the near future.

### **Characteristics of Successful Schools**

As the era of achievement and accountability has developed, educational researchers have been studying the individual progress of schools to determine the specific characteristics tied to high student achievement. By reviewing standardized test data, studies have found that schools with similar demographics and similar per pupil funding display a wide range of results. For this reason, the successful schools have been closely studied to determine the characteristics responsible for their academic achievement (Williams, Kirst, & Haertel, 2005). In the era of achievement and accountability, identifying these characteristics is extremely important because they can then be used to improve other schools.

Much of the successful schools research was conducted in response to the *1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity* report, commonly known as the *Coleman Report*, which was the first major study identifying whether schools were able to overcome the economic and racial inequalities children brought to school (Coleman et al., 1966). One of the major findings of the report was that the usual measures of school quality, such as per pupil spending or the size of the school library, showed little association with levels of educational attainment when students of comparable social backgrounds were compared across schools. Differences in students’ family backgrounds however, did

show substantial association with achievement. This finding was largely misinterpreted to mean that “schools don’t matter” and that only family background was significant (Marshall, 1998, para. 3).

As a result, educators who believed that schools could significantly impact the achievement of economically and culturally disadvantaged children conducted studies to determine the actual impact of schooling. Ronald Edmonds, an African American educator and author, examined the achievement of elementary school children in a number of large cities and compared the schools with other successful or unsuccessful schools to pinpoint the characteristics specific to the success of economically and culturally disadvantaged students. Edmonds (1979) synthesized his research to the following characteristics of successful schools: strong administrative leadership, a focus on basic skills, high expectations for student success, frequent monitoring of student performance, and safe and orderly schools. In the ensuing years, many other researchers built upon the early research supporting the idea that “that all children can learn and that the school controls the factors necessary to assure student mastery of the core curriculum” (Lezotte, 2001, p. 1).

In 2005, Dr. William Daggett conducted a meta-analysis of seven studies on school reform to consolidate the findings of hundreds of projects. The comprehensive analysis of the research revealed common themes of successful schools.

1. A school culture that embraces the belief that all students need a rigorous and relevant curriculum and all children can learn.
2. The use of data to provide a clear unwavering focus to curriculum priorities that are both rigorous and relevant by identifying what is essential, nice to know, and not necessary.
3. The provision of real-world applications of the skills and knowledge taught in the academic curriculum.

4. A framework to organize curriculum that drives instruction toward both rigor and relevance and leads to a continuum of instruction between grades and between disciplines.
5. The existence of multiple pathways to rigor and relevance based upon a student's personal interest, learning style, aptitude, and needs.
6. The presence of high expectations that are monitored, and hold both students and adults accountable for student's continuous improvement in the priorities identified in #2 above.
7. Sustained professional development focusing on the improvement of instruction.
8. Parent and community involvement in schools contributes to success.
9. Safe and orderly schools are established and maintained.
10. Effective leadership development for administrators, teachers, parents, and community is offered. (p. 3-4)

These central findings of successful schools can be used as a basis for improvement at other schools.

### **Restructuring Initiatives Research**

As detailed in Section One, the restructuring plan was designed to improve achievement by: exploring the pros and cons of each restructuring option provided under the NCLB law, gathering input from all stakeholders, and implementing research-based initiatives that addressed existing needs. Four major changes were implemented at Hometown Elementary School as a result of the restructuring planning:

- The implementation of a new literacy series and new specials classes: Art, Computers, Library, and Reading/Writing Lab.
- The addition of collaborative time for teachers during the school day.
- A new English as a New Language service delivery model providing flexible amounts of language support.

- An intervention and enrichment block providing flexible programming to address gaps in student knowledge or expand learning opportunities.

This section provides a summary of the research related to each of the restructuring initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School.

**English as a new language (ENL) service delivery model.** For decades, the provision of bilingual educational services to English language learners has been controversial (Gold, 2006). Many have proposed that non-English speaking students should learn the language through immersion and that allowing instruction in a student's native language is counter productive to the naturalization of new citizens (de la Pena, 1991). Other studies however, have shown that bilingual education is effective for students' success academically and in language acquisition (Greene, 1998).

In the early 1980s, the U. S. Department of Education commissioned a report on the effectiveness of bilingual education. The eight-year analysis, *Longitudinal Study of Structured English Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit and Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual Education Programs for Language-Minority Children*, concluded that:

Students who were provided with a substantial and consistent primary language development program learned mathematics, English language, and English reading skills as fast or faster than the norming population used in this study. As their growth in these academic skills is atypical of disadvantaged youth, it provides support for the efficacy of primary language development in facilitating the acquisition of English language skills. (Ramirez et al., 1991, p. 653)

This finding was supported by a later meta-analysis of the effectiveness of bilingual programs by Greene (1998), whose study showed that students who receive some instruction in their native language have greater academic success than those who are in English only environments. Specifically:



Children with limited English proficiency who are taught using at least some of their native language perform significantly better on standardized tests than similar children who are taught only in English. In other words, an unbiased reading of the scholarly research suggests that bilingual education helps children who are learning English. (Greene, 1998, p. 2)

In 2006, the San Diego County Office of Education produced a report of six successful bilingual schools. The report illustrated that it is possible to implement successful bilingual education programs in which English Language Learners (ELL) acquire high levels of academic English proficiency that close the learning gap. The report found that a wide range of instructional and institutional factors that lead to improved achievement were common to all of the schools. For ELL students in particular, the report found that:

Staff demonstrated knowledge of language acquisition methodology and the theoretical rationale for instruction in the primary language. They provided high-quality academic instruction initially in the students' home language, without translation. In most cases, literacy was developed first in the students' home language and then in English. Academic instruction in English was made comprehensible using interactive strategies and techniques to build academic vocabulary and knowledge. Instruction to accelerate English language development occurred in a socio-culturally supportive environment. (Gold, 2006, p. 49)

This literature on bilingual education clearly supports the transitional, needs-based program implemented as part of the restructuring plan at Hometown Elementary School.

**The intervention/enrichment block.** DuFour and DuFour (2012) highlight the importance of shifting the focus of a school from teaching to learning and asking four important questions:

- What is it we want our students to know?
- How will we know if our students are learning?
- How will we respond when students do not learn?
- How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient? (p. 4-5)

The purposeful creation of an intervention/enrichment block is a key answer to the third and fourth questions because it provides targeted instruction to students who have not learned specific content and extends learning for students who have mastered the curriculum. By approaching learning as a constant and viewing time and support as variables, an intervention/enrichment block ensures that students are able to achieve at, or above, grade level norms (DuFour, Eaker, Karhanek, & DuFour, 2004). “It is disingenuous for any school to claim its purpose is to help all students to learn at high levels and then fail to create a system of interventions to give struggling learners additional time and support for learning” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 104).

To be most effective, DuFour outlines specific criteria schools should follow when implementing an intervention/enrichment block. First, the block must be systemic and school wide, including the participation of all students and staff. The process for identifying students, providing interventions or enrichments, and monitoring progress must be built into the routine operation of the school. Secondly, intervention and enrichment programs must be timely. Schools must utilize assessment data to identify students who need additional time and support, one way or the other, so they receive instruction tailored to their needs immediately. Providing this opportunity for early mastery of essential skills, or extensions of the curriculum, is more effective than waiting

for students to fail and then providing remediation like summer school or retention. Thirdly, interventions and enrichments must be frequently monitored to determine whether students need to remain in a specific group or can transfer to another one. Lastly, the intervention and enrichment block must be directive. If the mission of school is learning, addressing knowledge gaps or providing academic challenge should never be invitational or optional and students must be required to attend until they have acquired the necessary concepts (DuFour, 2004).

At Ann Fox Elementary School in Hanover Park, Illinois, the implementation of an intervention and enrichment block resulted in dramatic improvement in student achievement. To turn the school's performance around, teachers collaborated to analyze formative assessment data to identify students that were above and below grade level and created a 45 minute intervention and enrichment block. During this time, new instruction stopped and students were regrouped based on the instructional need data. Those needing additional time and support to master a skill or concept received structured, small-group intervention and those who had mastered grade-level skills were provided enrichment instruction such as literature circles or independent research projects that pushed them to higher levels of academic performance.

In 2008, the school experienced double-digit increases in student performance from the prior two years, as measured by the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, and exceeded the state average in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards in each tested area. In 2010, the school outperformed the state average on reading assessments in every grade, with performance in the third and fourth grades exceeding the state average by close to 20%. On math assessments, 100% of fourth graders met or exceeded the state standards (Myers, 2008).

*System 44 and READ 180.* System 44 and READ 180 are intensive reading intervention programs create by Scholastic to accelerate academic achievement for struggling readers. System 44 addresses the “foundational elements of the

English language, providing a strong base in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, morphology, and orthography” (Scholastic Inc., 2009, p. 2). Struggling readers demonstrating a 1.5 grade level of phonemic awareness and decoding will benefit from READ 180, which “offers guidance in mastering oral reading fluency, academic language, text comprehension, writing, and grammar skills” (Scholastic Inc., 2009, p. 2). Each program also provides “direct, systematic instruction through adaptive technology, individualized instruction, and high-interest materials, all of which support and engage students. The programs also offer motivational support that is truly effective in improving student confidence and attitudes toward reading” (Scholastic Inc., 2009, p. 27).

A review of research conducted by the What Works Clearinghouse in 2009 found that READ 180 had “potentially positive effects on comprehension and general literacy achievement” (DOE, 2009b, para. 1). Specifically, comprehension scores rose by an average of four percentile points and general literacy by 12 percentile points.

A formative research paper by Scholastic (2008), *Preliminary Evidence of Effectiveness: System 44*, studied the impact of the program on over 4,500 students in Miami, FL and a fifth grade special education classroom in Franklin, TN. Initial results found that “the improvement in reading fluency, displayed by all students through the measurement of accuracy and response latency, provides preliminary evidence of effectiveness to support the implementation and use of System 44 in a classroom of adolescent struggling readers” (p. 18).

*Compass Learning.* Compass Learning is a research-based, online learning program for primary and secondary students. The curriculum is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and provides students individualized, differentiated instruction based on their MAP scores in reading and math. A 2009 review of research on Compass Learning’s Odyssey Math program by the What Works Clearinghouse found one study that showed potentially positive effects in

math achievement. In this study, students using Odyssey Math in addition to regular coursework scored 17% higher on the mathematics section of Pennsylvania's standardized test than those students who did not use Odyssey Math (DOE, 2009a).

Other research details achievement gains in schools that use Compass Learning Odyssey programs in reading and math. At Burgess Elementary School in Myrtle Beach, SC, the school report card has improved from *Average* to *Good* to *Excellent* during the two years the school used the program (Reis, 2011).

*Imagine Learning.* Imagine Learning is a computer based language and literacy program that accelerates the acquisition of the English language by providing systematic instruction that adapts to each student's level. The program develops oral language, academic vocabulary, and instruction in each of the five components of reading. Support in 15 languages is provided and scaffolded practice is used to support English Language Learners (Imagine Learning, 2013).

JointStrategy Consulting conducted an independent assessment of the Imagine Learning program in 2008. The study analyzed the impact on ELL learners in the Chula Vista, CA school district and found that the mean increase of students using Imagine learning on the California Standards Tests was three times the mean increase of students not involved in the program. Additionally, students using Imagine Learning scored significantly higher on the listening, speaking, reading, and writing subtests of the California English Language Development Test (Nelson, 2008).

**Collaboration.** In *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Communities at Work* (2010), DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Manly describe a collaborative culture as one of the three *big ideas* that increase the academic success of students. When teachers have time during the contractual school day to systematically work together to understand the curriculum, plan lessons, and analyze student data, academic achievement will soon follow (DuFour, 2004).

Numerous studies show a connection between teacher collaboration and student achievement. In 2007, researchers Yvonne Goddard, Roger Goddard and Megan Tschannen-Moran conducted a study on collaboration in a large, urban, Midwest school district. The researchers questioned 452 teachers in 47 elementary schools to determine the extent to which they worked collaboratively to influence decisions related to school improvement, curriculum and instruction, and professional development. To establish the relationship between this collaboration and student achievement, the researchers analyzed reading and math achievement scores for 2,536 fourth graders and found a positive relationship between teacher collaboration and differences among schools in mathematics and reading achievement. Although the report recommended further research on collaborative practices, the preliminary results support the efficacy of efforts to improve student achievement by promoting teacher collaboration around curriculum, instruction and professional development (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Another study, more specific to planning, of 1,000 fourth and fifth grade teachers in the New York City public schools between 2005 and 2007, found that “students showed higher gains in math achievement when their teachers reported frequent conversations with their peers that centered on math, and when there was a feeling of trust or closeness among teachers” (Leana, 2011, p. 33).

**Literacy curriculum.** As previously described by Daggett (2005), a “rigorous and relevant curriculum” (p. 4) is a key component of successful schools. While it is too early to verify the efficacy of Pearson’s 2013 edition of Reading Street, the

Indiana Department of Education has reviewed the program and found that it meets or exceeds Indiana's standards in each of the five strands of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In addition, a two-year longitudinal study of the prior edition of Reading Street found that "early elementary Reading Street students significantly outperformed their comparison group peers on the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE) across the two study years while the late elementary cohort remained statistically equivalent" (Gatti Evaluation Inc., 2011, para. 9).

**Specials curriculum.** As described by Daggett (2005), the provision of "real-world applications of the skills and knowledge taught in the academic curriculum" (p. 4) and the existence of "multiple pathways to rigor and relevance based upon a student's personal interest, learning style, aptitude, and needs" (p. 4) are key components of successful schools. One of the best ways to provide these is through a fine arts curriculum that develops the cumulative intelligences of children. In 1983, Howard Gardner first published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, which identified eight categories of intelligence that are derived from the fine arts and exist in each student with varying degrees of proficiency:

- Linguistic (words and language);
- Logical-mathematical (numbers and reasoning);
- Spatial (pictures);
- Bodily-kinesthetic (the body);
- Musical (notes and rhythm);
- Interpersonal (people);
- Intrapersonal (the self); and
- Naturalist (nature).

Gardner believed that all of these intelligences are important to the comprehensive education of students and was critical of standardized exams that largely test only linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. While the multiple intelligences research showed positive connections between the arts and academic achievement (Berghoff, 1998), Gardner hoped that educators would be motivated to use the intelligences to hook students into learning rather than just raising test scores (Gardner, 1999).

Other benefits of the arts are well known as research findings show that the performing and visual arts challenge students “to use reasoning skills—both concrete and abstract—to draw conclusions and formulate ideas. Arts encourage creativity and imagination from concept to process to completion” (Gullatt, 2007, p. 211). Additionally, the arts foster involved and active learners, rather than passive and bored students (Hamblen, 1997).

### **Reliability and Validity of Teacher Surveys**

As previously detailed, NCLB requires schools to implement various sanctions but provides no process to follow nor that the changes address a school’s identified needs. As a result, new initiatives must be carefully monitored to determine whether they benefit, or harm, achievement and the effectiveness of the school. While achievement data is easy to collect and analyze, the measure of school effectiveness for this study was determined through a survey of teacher perceptions based on Daggett’s characteristics of successful schools. As a result, a review of the research surrounding the reliability and validity of teacher surveys is relevant to this literature review.

Porter et al. (1993) studied school policies and teacher practices of high school mathematics and science curriculums using records of instructional practices, interviews, and questionnaires. Pertinent to this study, Porter found that the validation results for the use of surveys to describe opportunities to learn were “very encouraging” (p. 9). In addition, Burstein et al. (1995) summarized research aimed at improving the information



gathered about school curriculum and found that surveys on curriculum and instructional practices can “provide a basis for assessing the extent to which survey items measure what is taught in classrooms and schools” (p. 1). This data is “important for determining whether or not teaching is changing in ways consistent with the expectations of curriculum reformers and policymakers” (p. 35).

The collection and analysis of teacher questionnaires and surveys is not universally supported however. The report, *Grading the Nation’s Report Card: Research from the Evaluation of NAEP*, notes that the consistency of responses by different teachers raises questions about the validity of the collected results and that a lack of shared language affects the reliability of responses (National Academy Press, 2000). The report notes, however, that the “reliability of constructs measured by surveys increases when multiple items are used” (National Academy Press, 2000, p. 238). As a result, the use of a survey aligned with research-based components of successful schools for this case study is appropriate because the results will be analyzed and interpreted in conjunction with the student achievement results.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Two aspects of this program evaluation require further research. First, the case study is based on the performance of students after the first year implementation. To add weight to the study, the achievement of students two, three, or four years after restructuring should be added to the analysis to determine the long-term effect of the changes. Does achievement increase or decrease as time goes on? If it increases, is there an initial jump that trails off or does it increase year after year as teachers and students adjust to the new initiatives?

Second, the restructuring process used at Hometown Elementary School requires further research as the successes or failures will be beneficial to other schools. If the initiatives are successful, can the process be replicated? If unsuccessful, what should

other schools avoid as they attempt restructuring? With children's futures at stake the information gleaned from the study will be important to share.

The purpose of this literature review has been to provide an historical and political framework for the current era of achievement and accountability. As college and career readiness has become the standard for all students, it is imperative that each child attends an effective school. One comprised of: strong administrative leadership, rigorous and relevant curriculum, a culture of safe and positive interpersonal relationships, a culture of high academic expectations, the use of data to monitor student progress and drive instruction, collaborative school, home, and community partnerships, and substantial professional development.

In addition, this literature review has shown that the initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School as a result of restructuring: the English as a New Language service delivery model, the intervention/enrichment block, the provision of collaborative time during the school day, and the adoption of the Reading Street literacy program are research-based programs that have positively impacted student achievement.

### **Section Three: Methodology**

As stated in Section One, the purpose of this case study was to evaluate the impact of the initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School as a result of the performance mandates of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, specifically, the impact on the academic achievement of students, and the impact on the staff's perception of the effectiveness of the school. During the restructuring planning year, 2012-2013, the existing programming was analyzed and the following initiatives were implemented during the 2013-2014 school year: a new ENL service delivery model, a daily intervention and enrichment block, a new literacy curriculum, and additional specials opportunities for students that created weekly collaborative time for teachers.

#### **Research Problem**

Numerous schools across the state of Illinois were negatively labeled as a result of NCLB. Schools not making AYP targets were initially listed with a status of Academic Warning, which progressed to Corrective Action, and finally, Restructuring. Each of these schools was also required to submit plans to fundamentally change the school's structure, curriculum, personnel, and/or financing. Since the stated purpose of NCLB was to improve student achievement, it is important to evaluate whether the changes schools made have positively affected student growth and achievement.

While one would anticipate that NCLB required schools in restructuring to implement initiatives linked to a school's identified academic or curricular needs, this is simply not the case. For schools in restructuring, NCLB merely required "fundamental reform" (ISBE, 2010, p. 49) in order to achieve compliance. The ISBE's restructuring guidance document even suggested the possibility that a school "change to a site-based management school rather than centralized administration, or to centralized administration of the school rather than site-based management" (ISBE, 2006, p. 4). Could it be that merely mandating any type of change could be the catalyst that jumpstarts learning? Or, is it possible that schools have made dramatic changes but test

scores show no change in the number of students meeting college and career readiness standards? Likewise, could it be that any type of change will improve the effectiveness of a school? Or, is it possible that changes meant for good end up decreasing the existing effectiveness of a school?

For this reason, as part of the cumulative body of studies conducted on restructuring plans implemented across the nation, it was important to monitor the post-restructuring student growth and achievement data in relation to the pre-restructuring results and to monitor the staff's perception on the effectiveness of the components of successful schools.

### **Research Questions**

To determine the impact of the restructuring initiatives, the following questions and sub questions were explored:

- Has student achievement been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?
  - How was the achievement of students in the cores subjects (reading and math) affected?
  - How was the achievement of students in each of the federal subgroups affected?
  - How was the achievement of students in interventions and enrichments affected?
- How has the perceived effectiveness of the school been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?

### **Methodological Approach**

To determine the impact of the restructuring initiatives, multiple data points were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitatively, the percentage of students that attained target growth on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in reading and math was analyzed to determine whether a significant change occurred between the restructuring planning year and the implementation year.

Qualitatively, teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of each of Daggett's components of successful schools were evaluated to determine the change between the restructuring planning and implementation year.

### **Research Instrument - Student Growth Data**

The data used to calculate the percentage of students making target growth was obtained from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests in reading and math. The MAP tests are a product of the Northwest Evaluation Associates (NWEA) organization and administered to millions of students across the United States multiple times a year. The computer-based tests are offered in math, reading, language arts, and science and are designed for a state's learning standards or the Common Core Standards. The system operates in an adaptive manner by instantly analyzing students' responses to each question and providing successive questions, either harder or easier, that pinpoint their instructional level of understanding. Scores are reported in Rasch Units (RIT), an equal interval scale that assesses student achievement on a continuum of learning regardless of the students' age or grade. Scores from across the country have been extensively analyzed to establish national norms so that students scoring at the 50th percentile are at grade level, regardless of whether they live on one end of the country or the other (Dahlin, 2013).

Hometown Elementary School has administered the MAP tests in reading, math and science since the fall of 2006 to all second through fifth grade students. Prior to the restructuring implementation year, the Illinois State Learning Standards version of the test was administered. During the implementation year however, the district administered the Common Core version of the test and added MAP for Primary Grades (MPG) for first grade students.

According to the NWEA, a number of schools have observed a drop in scores after switching to the Common Core version of the test. This would have been problematic for this research if the analysis compared performance between different

versions of the test. This was not the case however, as this study compared the percentage of students who met their growth targets each year and the NWEA's growth predictions make no distinction between the Illinois and Common Core versions of the test (Northwest Evaluation Associates [NWEA], 2014).

**Target growth.** In addition to standardized norms, the NWEA calculates a target growth score for upcoming tests based on students' prior scores. The growth target is the number of points each student is likely to increase from one testing session to the next, fall to winter, fall to spring, or fall to fall. The target growth number is based on the average growth, or 50th percentile, of the national population. Therefore, only 50% of students across the nation achieve their growth target even though almost all students will make some growth (NWEA, 2013).

Consequently, the percentage of students achieving growth targets each year is an important measure of a school's progress. For example, a school with 90% of its students scoring at the 90th percentile will have a great deal to celebrate. If however, only 20% of those students make target growth, these impressive achievement numbers will erode over time unless a concerted effort is made to address the amount of growth students are making. Likewise, a school whose students score at the 20th percentile but has 90% exceeding their growth targets will close the achievement gap as the years progress and has equal reason to celebrate.

**Growth data sample.** According to the 2014 School Report Card, Hometown Elementary School had a 14.7% mobility rate during the restructuring implementation year. To ensure the reliability and validity of data, growth was only calculated for students with fall and spring test results for reading and math during the planning and implementation years. Since the MAP test was only given to second through fifth graders during the planning year, three cohorts of students were studied. The 2023 cohort consisted of 113 students that will graduate from

high school in 2023. These students were second graders during the restructuring planning year and third graders during the implementation year. The 2022 cohort consisted of 111 students that will graduate from high school in 2022 and were third graders during the planning year and fourth graders during the implementation year. The 2021 cohort consisted of 123 students that will graduate from high school in 2021 and were fourth graders during the planning year and fifth graders during the implementation year.

### **Research Instrument – Staff Survey**

To gain further insight into the impact of restructuring, a survey of the instructional staff at Hometown Elementary School was conducted to collect data regarding their perceptions of how effective the school was prior to, and after, restructuring. The components of effective schools contained in the survey were based on Daggett's (2005) meta-analysis of the research on successful schools. They are: a rigorous, standards based curriculum in literacy and math, a comprehensive curriculum, the provision of academic intervention and enrichment, the provision of language support, high-quality instruction, analysis of assessment data for planning and instruction, teacher collaboration, professional development, school leadership, safe school climate, home/school connection, community partners, and commitment to school initiatives.

**Survey sample.** All staff involved in instructing students at Hometown Elementary School were invited to participate in the survey. Regardless of the staff's certification, their perspective on the effectiveness of the school was valuable to consider as they taught students directly and had important first hand experience with the implemented initiatives. The group was comprised of approximately 40 people including: classroom teachers, specials teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, teacher assistants, special services personnel, and administrators.

**Survey items.** To solicit perceptions about the components of successful schools,

the staff was asked the degree to which they agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. Students received a rigorous, standards-aligned literacy curriculum.
2. Students received a rigorous, standards-aligned mathematics curriculum.
3. Students received a well-rounded curriculum that provided learning in science, social studies, physical education, music, art, drama, and technology education.
4. Students received academic interventions that resulted in closing the achievement gap.
5. Students received academic enrichments that resulted in increased achievement.
6. The English as a New Language (ENL) service delivery model positively affected student achievement.
7. Teachers utilized a wide range of research-based instructional strategies that positively affected student achievement.
8. Analysis of student achievement data significantly impacted the instructional planning for students.
9. Teacher collaboration positively affected student achievement.
10. Teachers received professional development that positively affected student achievement.
11. The principal provided strong leadership that positively affected student achievement.
12. The school provided a safe, positive, nurturing environment that positively affected student achievement.
13. The home/school connection positively affected student achievement.
14. The school's community partners positively affected student achievement.
15. I have embraced the restructuring efforts.

**Survey response options and rationale.** For each statement on the survey, respondents were asked to select a level of agreement or disagreement for both



the planning year and the implementation year using a seven point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. This process required respondents to reflect on each year and to draw a comparison between the effectiveness of each component from one year to the next.

Interval rating scales have been used since the early 20th century, but Rensis Likert's 1932 work identifying the extent of a person's beliefs, attitudes, and feelings toward international affairs resulted in his name being attached to the method (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). Since then, Likert scales have utilized a wide number of response options (from three to one hundred), and gathered evidence on other levels such as: *favor/oppose*, *like/dislike*, and *difficult/easy*.

A great deal of debate and research has surrounded two aspects of Likert scale creation and use. The first is the optimal number of responses. Research has shown that having too few choices provides data that is too coarse and that more discrimination can be found using a greater number of options. Conversely, too fine a scale may go beyond a rater's powers of discrimination (Garner & Hake, 1951). Many researchers have agreed that five to seven point scales are optimal (Green & Rao, 1970; Likert, 1932; Symonds, 1924) and reduce the usage of neutral responses that can affect the reliability of responses (Matell & Jacoby, 1972).

The second subject of debate and research around Likert scales is whether to use an even or odd number of responses. In studies measuring preference toward one extreme or the other, even numbered scales have been advocated because they force respondents to choose one side or the other. Other research however, has found that four point scales appear to push more respondents toward the positive end of the scale thus skewing the validity of the data (Worcester & Burns, 1975).

The most significant research related to this program evaluation's survey concludes that the optimal number of scale categories is content specific and a function of the conditions of measurement (Komorita, 1963; Matell & Jacoby, 1971). As a result, a

survey that fits the contextual situation and provides a solid rationale for the number of categories can deliver useful information.

For this reason, the survey of teachers' perceptions of the influence of the restructuring initiatives on student learning utilized a seven point Likert scale, using the following ratings:

- *Strongly Disagree – 1*
- *Disagree – 2*
- *Somewhat Disagree – 3*
- *Neither Agree nor Disagree – 4*
- *Somewhat Agree – 5*
- *Agree – 6*
- *Strongly Agree – 7*

This seven point scale was selected for a number of reasons. First, an odd number of options was selected because some initiatives may have had no impact on student achievement and forcing respondents to choose between agreeing or disagreeing with an even numbered scale was not helpful in determining this. Second, the seven point scale allowed for more diverse and more nuanced differences in agreement between the two years. For some statements, the difference between the two years was quite clear-cut and selecting the *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* options on a five point scale would have sufficed. For example, the addition of four new specials during the implementation year provided a stark contrast to the two provided during the planning year so it would seem logical that responses to the prompt, “students are receiving a well-rounded curriculum that provided learning in science, social studies, physical education, music, art, drama, and technology education,” would show a marked increase in the level of agreement.

On the other hand, the impact of other initiatives may not have been so clear and the opportunity to select more incremental measures of agreement or disagreement helped to determine the overall effect of the initiative. For example, having more time to

collaborate during the implementation year would likely garner more agreement than during the planning year but teachers might recognize that there was still need for improvement with regard to the frequency with which the team met and the level of participation of each teammate. For this reason, they would likely be reticent to mark the extreme end of the scale, *Strongly Agree*. If a five point scale was used, the teachers would only be left with the *Agree* option for both years even though they felt that the second year was better than the first. With a seven point rating scale however, teachers were able to rate the incremental improvement while maintaining the belief that there was additional room for improvement by selecting *Somewhat Agree* and *Agree* for each year respectively.

### **Data Analysis Process**

An analysis of the data provided by the MAP tests and the survey results was necessary to answer the questions posed in this evaluation. To determine whether student achievement was impacted by the restructuring initiatives, the percentage of students in each of the three cohorts that achieved target growth on the MAP test in reading and math during the restructuring implementation year was compared with the percentage that attained target growth during the planning year.

As summarized in Table 2, this analysis was performed by comparing the spring target RIT scores for students in each of the cohorts with their actual spring RIT scores. The number of students making target growth was divided by the total number of students to determine the percentage that achieved target growth. This calculation was completed for the reading and math results from both the planning and implementation year for comparison purposes.

To determine the effect of the restructuring initiatives on each of the federal subgroups, data on each child's ethnicity, disability status, language proficiency, and economic status was gathered, grouped, and analyzed using the same target growth calculations described above. At Hometown Elementary School, this data is collected

from parents each year as part of the registration process and was easily accessed through the district's student management software. Likewise, data on whether students have participated in intervention and enrichment programming was separately calculated and analyzed. At Hometown Elementary School, over 75% of the students typically score in the lowest quartile academically. Those who scored at or below the 33rd percentile were placed in intervention programming and students scoring above that level participated in enrichment offerings.

Table 2

*Process for analyzing data to answer the questions and sub questions posed in this evaluation.*

<u>Questions and Sub Questions</u>	<u>Process</u>
<p>Has student achievement been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the achievement of students in the cores subjects (reading and math) affected?</li> <li>• How was the achievement of students in each of the federal subgroups affected?</li> <li>• How was the achievement of students in interventions and enrichments affected?</li> </ul>	<p>A comparison of the percentage of students making target growth in reading and math between the planning and implementation years was conducted. The process was completed for each cohort, federal subgroup, and intervention and enrichment group.</p>
<p>How has the perceived effectiveness of the school been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?</p>	<p>The average rating for each statement on the survey, from the planning to the restructuring year, was compared. A paired t-test to determine whether the changes are statistically significant was calculated.</p>

To determine the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the components of successful schools from the planning year to the implementation year, the average rating

of each survey statement was calculated for both the planning and implementation years. The difference between the two yearly averages was calculated and a two-tailed, paired t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference between the two sets of data was statistically significant.

### **Limitations**

This study presented a number of limitations that must be considered to evaluate the impact the restructuring initiatives had on student achievement and the perceived effectiveness of the school. Primarily, the pre- and post-restructuring data from the analysis of achievement and staff survey only provided an overarching picture of the cumulative impact of the restructuring initiatives. Since many initiatives were implemented at the same time, identifying specific initiatives that were chiefly responsible, or moderately responsible for the change, was difficult.

Secondly, the number of students that comprised each of the federal subgroups, and the fact that many of the subgroups contained high percentages of the same students limited the study's samples and the uniqueness of each subgroup's data. In addition, the survey sample was limited to the number of staff in the school that provided direct instruction to students and to those who elected to participate in the survey.

The two year timeframe bounding the collection and analysis of data was a third limitation to the study. The conclusions of the program evaluation would be more influential if longitudinal data from three to five years prior to restructuring was compared with three to five years of data subsequent to the implementation of the restructuring initiatives.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The methodological approach used to analyze the impact of the restructuring initiatives on student achievement and the perceived effectiveness of the school had few ethical considerations as the MAP data used to measure student growth is routinely gathered and analyzed by the school staff. In addition, this study analyzed data on the

school as a whole and individual results were not reported. The information mirrors ISAT data that is publically available for every school in Illinois.

With regard to the survey, the data collection process was submitted to, and approved by, the Institutional Research Review Board (IRRB). All respondents received full disclosure of the purpose of the survey, the voluntary nature of participation, and the anonymity of individual survey results. Informed consent forms were received from all respondents.

In conclusion, this methodology served the overall purpose of the program evaluation well. The qualitative and quantitative analyses of MAP test results and the teacher perception survey provided a multi-faceted view of the impact the restructuring initiatives had on the overall student achievement and the overall effectiveness of the school.

## **Section Four: Presentation of Data**

Throughout the restructuring implementation year, vested stakeholders closely monitored the implementation of the new initiatives and carefully scrutinized the early data produced. At Hometown Elementary School, the MAP tests were given in the fall, winter, and spring and student growth targets were generated from fall to winter as well as from fall to spring. While it was quickly identified that students were being challenged by the rigor of the new literacy curriculum, the winter MAP results revealed that a significantly higher percentage of students achieved target growth in reading than previous years. While this fall to winter data was helpful for tweaking the implementation and identifying intervention students and programming, the data provided in this analysis represented a full year of growth, the fall to spring data, which matched the timeframe of the comparison data from the planning year.

In addition to the increased challenge the students experienced with the new literacy curriculum, the teachers faced a great deal of change as they incorporated each of the other new initiatives: the ENL service delivery model, the daily intervention and enrichment block, the weekly collaborative time, and the new specials. For this reason, the staff was invited to participate in the survey seven full months into the school year. This allowed a more accurate comparison with the previous year and provided the teachers an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the new initiatives at a time when they were established in the daily routine.

### **Sample Size Analysis**

Once the Spring 2014 MAP testing was complete, the cohort groups were determined by identifying students with fall and spring scores, for reading and math, for the planning and implementation years. The demographic data for each of the nine federal subgroups was then collected and merged with the MAP data. Table 3 illustrates the number of students in each cohort and each subgroup. The reader should be reminded that many subgroups represent large amounts of the same students since the composition

of the school is 71.7% Hispanic, 67.1% Low Income, and 39.0% Limited English Proficiency.

Table 3

*Number of students in each cohort and each federal subgroup.*

<u>NCLB Subgroups</u>	<u>2023 Cohort</u>	<u>2022 Cohort</u>	<u>2021 Cohort</u>	<u>All</u>
White Non Hispanic	18	14	19	51
Black or African American	3	7	5	15
Hispanic or Latino	83	86	96	265
Asian or Pacific Islander	4	0	2	6
Multi-Racial	5	3	1	9
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	1	0	1
Economically Disadvantaged	97	99	106	302
Students with Disabilities	20	13	26	59
Limited English Proficiency	65	24	31	120
Total	113	111	123	347

### **Cohort Group Results**

Table 4 illustrates the percentage of students in each cohort that achieved target growth in reading and math during the planning and implementation years and the percentage of gain or loss between the two years. The national norm has been included with the data to remind the reader that on a national level, only 50% of students typically achieve target growth.

Overall, each cohort's performance is consistent with the others and it is quickly clear that the percentage of students making target growth in reading and math increased from the planning year to the implementation year for each cohort. During the planning year, the results were just below or slightly above the national average but during the implementation year, the results significantly surpassed the national norm. In math each cohort gained between 8-10% and exceeded the national norm by 11-19%. In reading,



each cohort gained 12-31% and exceeded the national average 21-27%. It should be noted that the cohorts with the greatest increases had the lowest percentage of growth during the planning year.

Table 4

*Percentage of students achieving target growth in reading and math during the planning (P Year) and implementation (I Year) years - Cohort groups*

<u>Cohort</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Reading</u>			<u>Math</u>		
		<u>P Year</u>	<u>I Year</u>	<u>+/-</u>	<u>P Year</u>	<u>I Year</u>	<u>+/-</u>
2023	113	46.9%	77.0%	30.1%	52.2%	61.1%	8.9%
2022	111	47.7%	74.0%	26.3%	59.5%	68.5%	9.0%
2021	123	58.5%	71.0%	12.5%	52.8%	62.6%	9.8%
All	347	51.3%	73.9%	22.6%	54.7%	64.0%	9.3%
Nation		50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%

### **Federal Subgroup Performance**

Table 5 shows the percentage of students in each of the federal subgroups that achieved target growth in reading and math during the planning and implementation years and the increase or decrease between the two years. The national norm is included with the data to remind the reader that on the national level, only 50% of students typically achieve target growth.

Due to the small sample size of the Black or African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Multi-Racial, and American Indian or Alaskan Native subgroups, it was unreliable to draw conclusions from the data as the results would likely be skewed by specific students rather than being representative of the whole group. Aside from these subgroups, each of the others had a greater percentage of students making target growth during the implementation year as compared with the planning year in reading and math. A number of observations must be noted from the data. Specifically:

- The increase in reading was substantially higher than the increase in math for each subgroup.
- The Limited English Proficiency subgroup outperformed all other subgroups in reading and math.
- Students involved in interventions outperformed students in enrichments in reading and math.

Table 5

*Percentage of students achieving target growth in reading and math during the planning (P Year) and implementation (I Year) years - All students by subgroup*

<u>Subgroup</u>	<u>Reading</u>			<u>Math</u>		
	<u>P Year</u>	<u>I Year</u>	<u>+/-</u>	<u>P Year</u>	<u>I Year</u>	<u>+/-</u>
White Non Hispanic	46.9%	60.8%	13.9%	54.9%	64.7%	9.8%
Black	33.3%	80.0%	46.6%	60.0%	53.3%	-6.7%
Hispanic or Latino	53.2%	76.6%	23.4%	54.3%	63.8%	9.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	50.0%	66.7%	16.7%	66.7%	83.3%	16.7%
Multi-Racial	55.6%	66.7%	11.1%	44.4%	66.7%	22.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	51.4%	72.8%	21.5%	53.7%	63.2%	9.6%
Students with Disabilities	55.9%	81.3%	25.4%	67.8%	69.5%	1.7%
Limited English Proficiency	45.8%	83.3%	37.5%	50.0%	68.3%	18.3%
Intervention	51.7%	79.1%	27.3%	52.2%	65.4%	13.1%
Enrichment	50.7%	66.2%	15.5%	58.4%	62.0%	3.5%
All Cohorts	51.3%	73.9%	22.6%	54.7%	64.0%	9.3%
Nation	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%

### Staff Survey Data

The survey sample consisted of staff members that worked with students on an instructional basis at Hometown Elementary School during the restructuring planning and implementation years. At Hometown Elementary School, 38 staff members worked with students on an instructional basis during the restructuring planning year and the majority

of these staff members were still on staff during the implementation year. Nineteen elected to participate in the survey, for a response rate of 50%.

Table 6 displays the average rating for each of the components of successful schools that comprised the survey statements comparing the planning year with the implementation year. The ratings are based on a seven point Likert scale with responses ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (7)*.

Overall, the staff rated almost every component higher during the implementation year than during the planning year, only the math curriculum was rated slightly less effective. This is interesting, as the math curriculum did not change between the two years. It would appear that, with the implementation of a new, standards-aligned, literacy curriculum, the staff recognized the deficiencies of the existing math curriculum and rated it lower because the textbooks were outdated and not aligned to the Common Core Standards.

The difference between the enrichment and specials programming yielded the greatest gains. Clearly, the staff perceived the addition of Art, Computer, Library, and Reading/Writing Lab as a significant improvement over the planning year as well as enrichment programming that was scheduled into the day. While other restructuring initiatives, like the new literacy curriculum, resulted in a substantial increase, it was surprising that these two components showed the greatest growth. On the other hand, it made sense because the programming in each of these areas went from minimal to extensive opportunity. With the literacy curriculum, a program was already in place but was outdated and not aligned to standards so ratings were marginally higher.

Other increases appeared to be linked to the restructuring initiatives. For example, the literacy curriculum, intervention programming, ENL service delivery model, and collaboration all increased more than components like Home/School connection that were not part of restructuring.

Table 6

*Average rating of each effective schools component comparing the planning year (P Year) and implementation year (I Year) using a seven point Likert scale with ratings of 1-Strongly Disagree to 4-Neutral to 7-Strongly Agree*

<b><u>Component</u></b>	<b><u>P Year</u></b>	<b><u>I Year</u></b>	<b><u>Difference</u></b>
Literacy Curriculum	4.1	5.7	1.6
Math Curriculum	3.8	3.7	-0.1
Specials	3.1	5.3	2.3
Academic Interventions	4.2	5.7	1.5
Academic Enrichments	3.1	5.3	2.3
ENL Service Delivery Model	3.8	4.6	0.8
Instructional Strategies	4.9	5.3	0.4
Data Analysis	4.9	5.5	0.5
Collaboration	5.2	5.6	0.4
Professional Development	4.0	4.5	0.5
Leadership	5.0	5.5	0.5
School Environment	5.1	5.1	0.1
Home/School Connection	4.6	4.7	0.1
School/Community Partnerships	4.0	4.1	0.1
Commitment	5.5	6.1	0.6

Table 7 illustrates the statistical significance of the teachers' responses to the components of effective schools utilizing a paired t-test with a 0.05 confidence level. The analysis compared each component's rating of the planning year and the implementation year based on the null hypothesis that the effectiveness of each of the components of successful schools was unaffected by the restructuring initiatives.

The table shows that the null hypothesis must be rejected, meaning that the change in the teachers' perceptions was statistically significant, for the literacy curriculum, specials, interventions, enrichments, leadership, and professional development components.

The null hypothesis must be accepted, meaning that the teachers' ratings comparing the planning and implementation years were not significantly different, for the math, ENL service delivery model, instructional strategies, data analysis, collaboration,

commitment, school environment, home/school connection, and community partnerships components.

Table 7

*Statistical significance of response data for each component of effective schools with null hypothesis conclusion.*

<b><u>Component</u></b>	<b><u>Paired T-Test</u></b>	<b><u>Null Hypothesis</u></b>
Literacy Curriculum	0.004831	Reject
Math Curriculum	0.716231	Accept
Specials	0.000025	Reject
Academic Interventions	0.000076	Reject
Academic Enrichments	0.000016	Reject
ENL Service Delivery Model	0.091700	Accept
Instructional Strategies	0.202344	Accept
Data Analysis	0.086115	Accept
Collaboration	0.217479	Accept
Professional Development	0.013826	Reject
Leadership	0.008317	Reject
School Environment	0.804083	Accept
Home/School Connection	0.541631	Accept
School/Community Partnerships	0.748634	Accept
Commitment	0.075958	Accept

## **Section Five: Judgments and Recommendations**

This program evaluation set out to determine whether the initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School as a result of NCLB's restructuring mandate impacted student achievement and the staff's perception of the pre- and post-restructuring effectiveness of the school.

### **Judgments**

To better understand the impact on achievement, the first question and sub questions posed in this program evaluation asked:

- Has student achievement been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?
  - How was the achievement of students in the cores subjects (reading and math) affected?
  - How was the achievement of students in each of the federal subgroups affected?
  - How was the achievement of students in interventions and enrichments affected?

To answer these questions, the percentage of students achieving target growth on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests during the restructuring implementation year was compared with the percentage making target growth during the planning year. As shown in Section Four, the analyzed data shows a marked increase in achievement. In reading, the overall percentage of students making target growth increased from 51.3% during the planning year, to 74.9% during the implementation year. In math, the overall increase was from 54.7% to 64.0%. These results are mirrored in the performance of each cohort group and clearly indicated that the restructuring initiatives positively impacted student achievement.

While the percentage of students that made target growth in reading and math both increased, the reading results were 13.3% higher than math results. Since a new literacy curriculum was one of the restructuring initiatives, it is reasonable to conclude

that the relationships between the new literacy curriculum and the increased achievement should be further investigated to determine whether there is a causal link between the two.

It is important to note however, that the other restructuring initiatives also contributed to the achievement results, as the math curriculum did not change during the implementation year but the math results still increased by 9.3%. Much of this can be attributed to the intervention and enrichment block that was used to target core math skills during the spring semester. After the winter MAP testing, the staff realized that the new literacy curriculum was paying positive dividends but that math achievement was unchanged from prior years. In response, an increased focus was placed on math and students were placed in interventions that provided targeted instruction to fill the gaps in their mathematical knowledge and skills.

With respect to the federal subgroups, every subgroup's achievement increased from the planning year to the restructuring year, as shown in Table 5. It is important to note that the Limited English Proficiency subgroup achieved the highest gains in reading and math. While the staff survey data presented in Section Four did not indicate a significant increase in the perceived effectiveness of the ENL service delivery model the dramatic increase in achievement of the LEP students indicates a need for further investigation into the impact of the new ENL service delivery model.

With regard to the intervention and enrichment block, Table 5 also shows that the performance of students involved in interventions was higher than those in enrichments. This indicates a strong relationship between academic success and the specific targeting of instruction to the knowledge and skills students are lacking. While the students involved in enrichments did not perform as well, the programming consisted of additional opportunities in music and art that did not contain as much of an academic focus. While these provided valuable experiences they did not affect achievement on standardized tests.

The second question posed in this program evaluation sought to identify the instructional staff's perceptions of how effective the school was prior to, and after, restructuring. Specifically,

- How has the perceived effectiveness of the school been affected as a result of the restructuring initiatives?

To answer this questions the data from the survey of instructional staff presented in Section Four was analyzed. Overall, the results indicated that teachers perceived the effectiveness of the school increased from the planning year to the implementation year. While the staff rated the majority of the survey items higher for the implementation year, the responses found to have the greatest statistically significant gains were for the literacy curriculum, specials, interventions, enrichments, leadership, and professional development aspects of the restructuring plan. A number of these components correspond to the restructuring initiatives and should be further investigated to determine whether a causal link between them exists.

Most significant to the purpose of this program evaluation, is the fact that the achievement data and survey results strongly supported each other. Both indicated that restructuring proved academically successful to students and increased the perceived effectiveness of the school.

### **Recommendations**

This evaluation of the restructuring initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School revealed two key recommendations to the lawmakers involved in the reauthorization of NCLB. First, NCLB should be amended to support school improvement efforts rather than imposing sanctions and negatively labeling schools. Back in 2001, NCLB's goals of providing each child access to high-quality education and holding schools accountable for increased achievement were well intentioned. Today however, these promising ambitions have been overshadowed by the unintended consequences of the law's sanctions that have disadvantaged to students. For example,



between 2007 and 2012 the percentage of districts not making AYP increased from 28.1% to 82.3% but the yearly ISAT achievement results remained fairly constant (ISBE, 2012). The result of this negative labeling has damaged community perceptions about public education and created confusion about students' true academic performance.

While it is important to recognize that NCLB served as the catalyst for change in many schools and that student progress should be assessed on state standards and compared to national norms, lawmakers must ensure that NCLB adopts a positive and collaborative approach to restructuring schools. To do so, NCLB should label schools by what is being done to *address* achievement rather than their academic performance. Talking about schools based on the amount of support they receive to achieve a level "playing field" will take the public focus off achievement. High achieving schools that need little support would be classified as *Independent*, those needing moderate support as *Monitored*, and those receiving significant interventions, *Supported*.

The second recommendation for lawmakers is to ensure that future versions of NCLB provide schools guidance and support through the restructuring process. While NCLB's mandates forced many schools to change, the law left the decision making process to schools, almost assuming that any type of change would be for the better. Unfortunately, this approach resulted in compliance with the law rather than a real change in learning. As illustrated above, numerous schools, between 2007 and 2012, complied with the mandates and submitted plans detailing the actions that would be taken to improve but the changes failed to increase achievement.

This program evaluation found that to provide the necessary guidance, NCLB must require schools to conduct a needs analysis and to implement initiatives that address the identified needs. To provide the necessary support, NCLB must require a more equitable distribution of state and federal funds to ensure that the neediest schools have the resources to implement the necessary programs. This approach, as illustrated in this

case study, has proven successful at Hometown Elementary School and can be replicated in other schools to benefit a greater number of students.

### **Summary**

This case study evaluated the impact of the initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School as a result of NCLB's restructuring mandate. During the planning year, each restructuring option outlined in the law was thoroughly investigated and evaluated by groups representing every stakeholder of the district. The final restructuring plan under the governance option included a new English as a New Language service delivery model, the implementation of a daily intervention and enrichment block, a new literacy curriculum aligned with the Common Core Standards, and new specials opportunities that created weekly collaborative time for teachers. By the end of the implementation year, the percentage of students achieving typical growth in reading and math increased 22.6% and 9.3% respectively from the planning year. The results for each cohort of students and for each federal subgroup mirrored the dramatic success of the overall group.

In addition, this case study monitored the staff's perceptions of the school's effectiveness based Daggett's components of successful schools. The analysis of the teacher survey data indicated that the effectiveness of the school increased as a result of the restructuring initiatives. In addition, the relationship between various components of effective schools, the restructuring initiatives, and the academic performance of students revealed a relationship that necessitates further investigation.

In conclusion, it was clear that both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered to evaluate the restructuring initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School indicated a successful restructuring effort and a positive impact on student achievement at multiple grade levels and within each of the federal subgroups.

## **Epilogue**

### **Year Two Restructuring Initiatives**

Another year has passed since the initial evaluation of the initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School during the 2013-2014 school year. While these were the result of the NCLB restructuring mandate, additional changes were made to expand the initiatives and further impact student achievement.

First, the district continued with its plan to improve curriculum by implementing a new math curriculum during the 2014-2015 school year. After presentations from various vendors, Pearson's EnVisionMATH was selected because it is aligned with the Common Core standards and provides extensive materials, both online and on paper, that cover the core curriculum and provide intervention programming. In addition, professional development was negotiated as part of the contract so that teachers would receive instructional support throughout the year to implement the curriculum with fidelity.

Second, the district sustained the restructuring efforts by providing the staff necessary to support the new initiatives. At Hometown Elementary School, a math coach was hired to assist with the implementation of the new math curriculum, an MTSS (Multi-Tier System of Support) paraprofessional was hired to assist with intervention programming, and an additional bilingual resource teacher was hired to better service the language support needs of students.

Third, the district continued to upgrade the instructional experience for both teachers and students by purchasing interactive whiteboards for every classroom. After presentations by various manufacturers, TeamBoard's product was selected. The TeamBoard allowed teachers to effectively utilize the wealth of online resources provided by the Pearson curriculum and increased student engagement with its interactive and multimedia components.

## Year Two Growth and Achievement Data

While improving the instructional environment with curricular and technological supports for teachers, Hometown Elementary School's district gathered data to monitor the impact of restructuring on student growth and achievement. In addition to the percentage of students achieving target growth outlined in this program evaluation, the district monitored the percentage of students achieving at, or above, grade level. While it is well known that students surpassing their growth target are achieving at higher levels, this combined approach confirms that the achievement gap is closing.

To monitor student growth and achievement, two specific measures were used. Table 8 illustrates the percentage of students who attained Fall-Fall target growth in Reading and Math on the MAP tests for the pre-restructuring year (2012-2013), the implementation year (2013-2014), and the second year of restructuring (2014-2015). Table 9 illustrates the percentage of students who scored at, or above, the 50th percentile in Reading and Math on the Fall MAP tests for the pre-restructuring year (2012-2013), the implementation year (2013-2014), and the second year of restructuring (2014-2015).

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Table 8

*Percentage of students achieving target growth in reading and math during the planning year, implementation year, and second year of restructuring.*

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Reading</u>		<u>Math</u>	
	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>Nation</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>Nation</u>
Planning (2012-2013)	38.8%	50.0%	33.8%	50.0%
Implementation (2013-2014)	62.0%	50.0%	56.6%	50.0%
2nd Year (2014-2015)	59.3%	50.0%	69.3%	50.0%

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This data indicates that the percentage of students achieving target growth post-restructuring increased and exceeded the national norm. While the percentage of students achieving target growth in reading dipped slightly during the second year of

restructuring, the percentage of students making target growth was still significantly higher than the percentage prior to restructuring and higher than the national average.

Table 9

*Percentage of students at, or above, the 50th percentile in reading and math during the planning year, implementation year, and second year of restructuring.*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Reading</u>		<u>Math</u>	
	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>Nation</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>Nation</u>
Planning (2012-2013)	24.6%	50.0%	17.7%	50.0%
Implementation (2013-2014)	32.6%	50.0%	20.9%	50.0%
2nd Year (2014-2015)	34.0%	50.0%	30.9%	50.0%

This data indicates that the percentage of students who scored at, or above, the 50th percentile increased significantly from the planning year to the implementation year to the second year of restructuring and that the gap in achievement compared to the national norm closed.

### **Factors Affecting the Academic Results**

Since the goal of NCLB was to improve student learning, this program evaluation sought to identify the impact the restructuring initiatives had on academic growth. In addition, the program evaluation monitored the initiatives impact on the staff's perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the school. This is important because NCLB lists restructuring options but provides no guidance for the restructuring process. As a result, it is important for stakeholders to know whether restructuring has increased or decreased the overall successfulness of the school.

By monitoring growth data and the staff's perceptions of the effectiveness of the school, this program evaluation successfully answered the question, "What were the impacts of the restructuring initiatives?" The data clearly showed an increase in student learning and an increase in the staff's perception of the effectiveness of the school.

Determining *why* the restructuring initiatives were successful and *which* of the restructuring initiatives were most responsible for the results was beyond the scope of the guidelines for the *evaluation* of a program. In addition, there were so many initiatives implemented during restructuring that made it practically impossible to identify individual factors that were responsible for the results *in the moment*. The longitudinal results displayed above, however, demand that these questions be addressed! Could one or more of the restructuring initiatives be responsible for the achievement results? Is there a casual link between the perceived increase in the effectiveness of the school and the achievement results?

### **Survey**

To explore the causal link between the restructuring initiatives and the observed results, an additional staff survey was conducted in the fall of 2015 to ascertain perceptions about which of the restructuring initiatives and which of the components of successful schools were most responsible for the academic results. Responses to the following prompts were collected using a scale ranging from No Impact, to Moderate Impact, to High Impact. In addition, each question was followed with an open-ended response so participants could make further comments.

- To what extent was the literacy curriculum responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was the mathematics curriculum responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was the specials curriculum responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent were interventions responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent were enrichments responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was the ENL services responsible for the achievement results?

- To what extent were instructional strategies responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was data analysis responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was collaboration responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was professional development responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was the school leadership responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was school climate responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent was the home/school connection responsible for the achievement results?
- To what extent were community partnerships responsible for the achievement results?

### **Survey Results**

Fourteen staff members from Hometown Elementary School responded to the survey invitation. The majority, nine of the 14, stated that they had four or more years of experience at Hometown Elementary School, indicating that their responses reflected a knowledge of the pre- and post-restructuring programming. Table 10 illustrates a tally of the responses to each of the survey prompts above. The tallied responses indicate that a majority of the staff, nine of 14, perceived that interventions and collaboration had the highest impact on student growth and achievement. For a number of characteristics the staff was equally split between the initiative having a Moderate and High Impact, specifically: the ENL services, instructional strategies, data analysis, professional development, leadership, climate, and home/school connection. Lastly, the majority of the staff indicated that the literacy curriculum, math curriculum, specials, enrichments, and community partnerships had a Moderate Impact on the observed growth and achievement.

Table 10

*Tally of staff responses regarding the level of impact of each characteristic of effective schools.*

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>No Impact</u>	<u>Moderate Impact</u>	<u>High Impact</u>
Literacy	0	11	3
Math	0	11	3
Specials	0	12	2
Interventions	0	5	9
Enrichments	0	11	3
ENL	0	7	7
Instructional Strategies	0	7	7
Data Analysis	0	7	7
Collaboration	0	5	9
Professional Development	0	7	7
Leadership	0	7	7
Climate	0	7	7
Home/School Connection	0	7	7
Community Partnerships	1	10	3

The survey comments painted a more complete picture of the impact of the restructuring initiatives and the overlap and interplay between them. The following summaries and quotes are instrumental to an overall understanding of the survey data and for drawing conclusions about why restructuring was successful and which initiatives were most responsible for the academic achievement.

- ‘Utilizing a research-based curriculum, aligned to the Common Core standards, was key to the achievement gains.’
- The math and literacy curriculums were challenging for students and the pacing guide was frustrating for teachers and students.
- Dedicated teachers and collaborative planning opportunities were instrumental to the effective implementation of the curriculum. “The teachers are a huge



component of any success our students and school experience,” and, “It is great to meet and discuss but there is never enough time!”

- Bridging the pre-requisite knowledge the curriculum required was difficult. Interventions played an important role in filling the knowledge gaps due to language acquisition, learning abilities, or background knowledge.
- “After more than two decades...we are finally addressing the needs of all our students.”
- The whole group and small group literacy blocks in the master schedule provided all students above level, on-level, and below-level lessons to increase skills.
- The needs-based ENL model allows the targeted use of ENL strategies and is “far more effective than our previous Bilingual/ESL self-contained classes.”
- Exposure to native English speakers and primary language support are essential for academic and social language acquisition.
- Data analysis is important for monitoring progress but must include student observations and is a “means to an end” when planning instruction.
- “Winning a game will not happen with some individual playing on their own. It takes cooperation and collaboration to create unity to achieve a target.”
- “Professional development is key for learning the curriculum. It also allows for teachers to come together to share teaching ideas that have worked in the classroom.”
- “Knowing that the school leadership is on the same page as the teachers has a huge impact. Also, the professional development provided by school leadership is extremely important.”
- “Teacher and student happiness is extremely important, especially because there's not just a sense of requirement to do well, there's an actual desire to do well.”
- “Home and school should always be a team. A child needs to hear the same message from the two places.”

## Conclusions

The purpose of this epilogue was to investigate *why* the restructuring initiatives were successful and *which* of the restructuring initiatives or components of successful schools was most responsible for the observed results. The staff survey, and the longitudinal achievement results from the pre-restructuring and two post-restructuring years, provided further data to address these questions.

While the reflection on the pre- and post-restructuring data elicited insightful comments on the restructuring initiatives and characteristics of effective schools, a common theme throughout the narratives revealed that the four restructuring initiatives (math and literacy curriculum, ENL service delivery model, intervention/enrichment block, and scheduled collaborative opportunities) were successful because they addressed identified deficiencies in the school.

Regarding the new curriculum, there was common consensus that after 13 years with the same series, the new math and literacy curriculum met a significant need. Prior to restructuring, individual teachers had created units and supplemented the curriculum to the point that there was little instructional consistency between classrooms. While each new series was a major undertaking, a researched based curriculum aligned with the Common Core standards was a needed change. In addition, the wealth of resources and the pacing guide ensured that every student at each grade level was being exposed to the same content throughout the year.

Regarding the ENL service delivery model, the addition of more resource teachers significantly increased the service minutes the resource team could provide. Given the high percentage of ELL students at Hometown Elementary School, this was a desperately needed service. In addition, the change from separate tracks of bilingual, ESL, and general education classes to integrated classes with push-in or pull-out resource support based on the needs of students was viewed as a dramatic improvement.

Regarding intervention programming, the provision of a daily 30 minute block dedicated to filling specific gaps in student knowledge was a common theme in the survey responses. Providing interventions as a supplement to the core curriculum, rather than a replacement, was viewed as especially successful as all students received grade level instruction and targeted instruction for specific knowledge gaps.

Regarding collaborative opportunities, the creation of weekly collaborative time during the school day by adding more specials to the daily schedule was viewed as a major success of restructuring. While this was costly to the district, the teachers clearly viewed the common collaboration time as invaluable to their planning and instruction.

The second purpose for this epilogue was to identify *which* of the restructuring initiatives or characteristics of successful schools were most responsible for the increased academic achievement observed from the pre-restructuring to the two post-restructuring years. To address this question, the student achievement and staff survey data were analyzed to gain a fuller understanding of the complex dynamics in operation during the restructuring years at Hometown Elementary School.

An analysis of the student achievement data indicated that the greatest increase in math and reading achievement occurred during the first year of implementation of the new curriculum. In literacy, the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile increased 8% after the first year of implementation and 1.4% after the second year. In math, the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile increased 3.2% with no change in curriculum during the first year of restructuring but increased 10.0% when the new curriculum was implemented during the second year of restructuring. While this data implied that the new curriculum played a key role in the restructuring success, the fact that achievement increased prior to, and after, the initial implementation of the reading and math curriculum indicated that the curriculum was not wholly responsible for the observed results.

The staff survey revealed that the dynamics of change were much more complex as teachers perceived that collaborative opportunities and intervention programs had the highest impact on the achievement results closely followed by most of the other characteristics of successful schools. The math and literacy curriculum, in fact, were rated as having only a Moderate Impact by the majority of the staff.

While it would be nice and simple to isolate a specific initiative or characteristic that was largely responsible, reality is a little more complicated. As the survey results show, each of the initiatives and characteristics played a role in the academic success and worked in tandem with each other. With regard to the curriculum for example, a research-based, standards aligned series might seem like the “magic bullet” needed to turn achievement around but adopting a series is only the start of the process. To complete the implementation of a new curriculum with fidelity, *people* are vitally important. Thus a quality curriculum can succeed when teachers are incorporated in the process and provided the appropriate professional development but fail if these are not done.

In conclusion, the academic success achieved by the students at Hometown Elementary School was the result of the implementation of initiatives that targeted identified needs of the school and the cumulative impact of intentional efforts to increase the effectiveness of each component of successful schools.

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IMPROVING INSTRUCTION USING THE DANIELSON FRAMEWORK FOR  
TEACHING AS THE EVALUATION MODEL

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## **Abstract**

This change leadership paper outlines a plan to transform a building of teachers to a collaborative group of high functioning professionals who significantly impact student achievement. The plan integrates the evaluation system, professional development process, and teaching strategies to increase each teacher's instructional capacity.

## **Preface**

The principal's job is never done. Between bus incidents, cafeteria issues, parent phone calls, and teacher meetings, a day's worth of work is generated within the first few hours each morning! As a result, a principal must allocate his or her time purposefully, and intentionally delegate tasks to coworkers in the office. To do an excellent job, one that ensures students receive the greatest opportunity and attain the highest achievement, the bulk of a principal's time must be focused on increasing the instructional capacity of teachers. To do so, the evaluation process, professional development, and student achievement must be viewed as an interdependent system rather than separate entities. Through the evaluation process, areas of improvement should be identified for each teacher and then addressed through professional development. By increasing each teacher's instructional capacity, student achievement will rise.

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## **Section One: Introduction**

### **Background**

In 2002, Hometown Elementary School's district experienced a fiscal crisis and was on the verge of dissolving when the state assumed control of the district's finances. For many years, the Board of Education had little authority over the budget and keeping the district financially afloat was a higher priority than curricular or instructional needs. In 2011, the district regained financial control and the newly hired superintendent shifted the district's focus to teaching and learning as the schools had not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for many years and were mandated to restructure as a requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act (Black, 2011).

After nine years of state control, opportunities for fruitful academic change were ripe. The elementary math and literacy curriculums were each over a decade old and had been supplemented by so many other materials that instruction between classrooms and between grade levels was inconsistent. Likewise, the teacher evaluation instrument was outdated and the evaluation process was implemented differently from building to building based on each principal's preferences and style. With regard to technology, many teachers still had overhead projectors in their classrooms and those with LCD projectors or document cameras were part of pilot programs or had purchased these themselves.

By the 2013-2014 school year, the district had created and implemented a restructuring plan to comply with the mandates of the No Child Left Behind law. The changes addressed many of the identified curricular, programming, and technological needs in order to increase student achievement and reverse the trend of not making AYP (Susnjara, 2013). At Hometown Elementary School, the restructuring consisted of four new initiatives: a new English as a New Language (ENL) service delivery model, a daily intervention and enrichment block, new curriculum for literacy and specials, and the addition of weekly collaborative time for teachers. These initiatives had an immediate

impact on academic growth and achievement. By the end of the first year, grade level cohort achievement increased between 8-10% over the prior year in math and exceeded the national growth average by 11-19%. In reading, each cohort gained 12-31% over the prior year and exceeded the national growth average 21-27% (Roberts, 2014). During the 2014-2015 school year, the district continued to support teaching and learning needs by adopting a new mathematics curriculum, hiring math coaches for each building, and purchasing interactive whiteboards for each classroom.

In addition to these programmatic, curricular, and technological changes, the evaluation system was also updated to comply with the requirements of Illinois' 2010 Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA). Under PERA, every district in Illinois was required to adopt a research-based evaluation tool and to use multiple measures of student growth and professional practice to assign one of four ratings: Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory, based on student growth and instructional performance. PERA developed various timelines to implement the changes. By 2016, all districts had to adopt the necessary changes but those performing in the lowest twenty percent of the state, like Hometown Elementary School's district, had to begin in 2015 (PERA, 2010).

In Hometown Elementary School's district, Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* was selected as the evaluation tool and criteria for incorporating student growth into the rating were developed in conjunction with the bargaining unit. The new evaluation rubric was implemented during the 2013-2014 school year and the student growth component was added to ratings during the 2015-2016 school year.

### **Problem Statement**

The new model requires a dramatic shift in the teachers' view of the evaluation system and presents a number of challenges. Teachers are familiar with an outdated evaluation process that does not reflect current knowledge of effective teaching, and does little to improve teachers' professional practice.

Even prior to PERA, Hometown Elementary School needed an effective evaluation model to improve teacher performance. Largely due to the aforementioned fiscal crisis experienced by the district, the evaluation process and instruments had not substantially changed in over fifteen years. The old evaluation document (Appendix B) provides the quickest clues regarding its outdated nature. In a time when interactive whiteboards and a vast array of online resources are available to both teachers and students, the technology portion of the document merely expected teachers to be able to “access the phone system, add/change greeting, and change security code” and to “send and receive emails with and without attachments” among other low-level practices.

More significantly, the old process consisted of a summative rating based on just one or two classroom observations during the course of the year rather than on a teacher’s cumulative performance. While each observation involved a pre-conference to discuss the purpose of the lesson and a post-conference to reflect on how the lesson went, there was little emphasis on the continual collection of evidence that encompasses the full range of effective teacher practice. Once an observation was complete, teachers generally received their summative rating and the evaluation process effectively ended until the next cycle.

Lastly, the old evaluation system has not been used as a means to improve the instructional capacity of teachers. While restructuring resulted in forward progress in the areas of curriculum and programming, the perceived purpose of the teacher evaluation process is still the determination of a rating rather than the improvement of classroom instruction. This is evidenced by the fact that tenured teachers have had the option to select alternative evaluation projects, like journaling, that are largely unrelated to the effectiveness of their daily performance.

Another issue that limited the professional conversation about teaching was a provision in the collective bargaining agreement stating that the pre- and post-conference templates only served to guide the discussion. As a result, teachers gave little forethought

to the documents and the administrator's need to complete the form during the meeting detracted from the quality of the discussion.

### **Rationale**

The rationale for this change leadership plan is based on the premise that schools must provide students the greatest opportunity, and that more can always be done to improve the quality of teachers' instruction in order to increase student achievement. Regardless of their background, students deserve the best curriculum, programs, and instruction, as they will be the future leaders of our communities, states, and nation. In an age of digital and social media, students cannot afford to be given photocopied worksheets day after day. All teachers have a responsibility to fully engage students with high-quality curriculum and research-based strategies that mimic the project based nature and communication skills of today's workforce.

In a similar manner, teachers deserve the best materials, guidance, and support from their administration. Principals must make instructional leadership a higher priority than building management. As a result, the time spent conducting the evaluation process, providing professional development, and analyzing student achievement data must trump all other responsibilities.

I started as the principal at Hometown Elementary School during the restructuring planning year and was responsible for implementing the new initiatives the following year. Witnessing the immediate and significant growth in our students' learning was exciting but the credit really belonged to the superintendent and district administrators who decided that dreams of student achievement could be a reality, to the community members who helped develop the plans, to the board of education who approved and financed the plan, and to the teachers who committed to implementing it with fidelity.

As the academic accomplishments of the restructuring initiatives of each building were celebrated, I wondered what accounted for the different levels of success between each school and researched the activities that have the highest impact on student learning.

While curriculum that is closely aligned to standards has been shown to increase student achievement on national assessments (Popham, 2001), I learned that the most sustainable variable in learning is the quality of instruction students receive on a daily basis (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2003). As a result, I realized that our teachers have the opportunity to create, and own, further success by increasing the value of each lesson presented to students during each hour of the day.

## **Goals**

The goal of this change leadership plan is to increase the quality of instruction students receive on a daily basis through the implementation of the Danielson framework for teacher evaluation. In order to provide the highest quality instruction, teachers need a sound understanding of what comprises excellent teaching. This description is provided by the Danielson framework which outlines four domains that encompass the full range of teaching responsibilities: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Each domain consists of five or six components that further describe each one (Appendix D). For example, Domain 2: Classroom Environment, details a teacher's ability to "create an environment of respect and rapport, establish a culture of learning, manage classroom procedures, manage classroom behaviors, and organize physical space" (Danielson, 2014, p. 1).

The real power of the Danielson framework is demonstrated when utilized in conjunction with the evaluation process. In addition to providing a clear picture of what comprises good teaching, the framework distinguishes between four levels of performance: *Excellent*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, and *Unsatisfactory*, and provides rubrics for each component within the four domains providing detailed descriptions of each performance level (Danielson, 2013).

To ensure a valid rating, it is important that a cumulative portfolio of artifacts and evidence is collected and discussed. For administrators, this means conducting frequent formal and informal observations followed by meetings to discuss what was observed and

which components are supported. For the teacher, this means collecting evidence and artifacts of practice, especially in the “behind the scenes” domains, Planning and Preparation and Professional Responsibilities, which administrators do not always observe when visiting classrooms.

Frequent discussion and reflection on the collected evidence and artifacts will generate new ideas and identify areas for improvement for which targeted professional development can be provided to address the deficient areas and increase a teacher’s instructional effectiveness.

In short, creating an understanding of the interconnected nature of the evaluation process and effective instruction will generate a culture of continuous improvement that will elevate each teacher’s instructional capacity. This in turn, will raise each child’s educational achievement and increase future educational and career opportunities.

### **Demographics**

Hometown Elementary School is one of five elementary buildings in a district near a large city in Illinois and serves approximately 650 students in first through fifth grade. In 2014, the school population consisted of the following ethnic subgroups: 75.2% Hispanic, 7.1% Black, 13.7% White, 1.2% Asian, 0.8% American Indian, and 2.0% Two or More Races. Other subgroups were as follows: 81.8% Low Income, 42.1% Limited English Proficiency, 15.6% with Individualized Education Plans, and 0.5% Homeless. The attendance rate was 95.3%, the chronic truancy rate was 4.7%, and the mobility rate was 14.7% (Northern Illinois University [NIU], 2014).

With regard to academics, the percentage of students making target growth during the 2013-2014 school year surpassed the national average by 23.9 points in reading and 14.0 points in math on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests, but only 37.1% of students met or exceeded the state’s proficiency target for achievement on the ISAT (NIU, 2014).



## **Section Two: Assessing the 4 Cs**

To further develop the implementation of the Danielson framework for teacher evaluation as a means of impacting the quality of instruction, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of the school's setting within the community. Wagner et al. (2006) have created a framework that approaches change by "thinking systematically about the challenges and goals" (p. 98) through an analysis of four arenas: context, culture, conditions, and competencies. Specifically, the 4 Cs, as they are colloquially known in the educational community, are defined as follows:

- Competencies are, "the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning."
- Conditions are, "the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources."
- Culture is, "the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school."
- Context is, "skill demands all students must meet to succeed as providers, learners, and citizens and the particular aspirations, needs, and concerns of the families and community that the school or district serves" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 98).

The 4 Cs provide an outline for comprehensively studying a situation, the "As Is", in order to create action plans that will result in the successful implementation of new initiatives, the "To Be".

### **Evidence Base**

The following assessment of the "As Is" at Hometown Elementary School is based on the insights I gained as the building principal for three years and a survey that is detailed in Section Four. The insights are drawn from numerous first hand interactions with staff members on teacher institute days, at school improvement meetings, during

faculty or grade level team meetings, and in informal conversations with teachers in the hall or formal conversations during evaluation meetings.

The survey collected the staff's knowledge and perceptions about evaluation models, the evaluation process, professional development, and the nexus between these and instructional improvement. Perceptions of barriers to student learning and the factors that most influence student learning were also collected. While the attitudes and beliefs of individual staff members varied widely, this assessment captured the overall perceptions that the building leadership encounter on a regular basis and take into consideration when planning and making decisions.

### **Context**

A fuller understanding of the cultural, political, and economic factors that influence Hometown Elementary School is revealed by reviewing recent history and the school's state report card. As previously mentioned, regaining financial control from the state in 2011 and restructuring due to the mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) combined to create a powerful force for change. The district's priorities swung from fiscal stability to neglected teaching and learning needs in order to address the dismal academic performance of students.

At Hometown Elementary School, a new reading curriculum was implemented during the 2013-2014 school year and a new math program was adopted for the 2014-2015 school year. In addition, new staff members were hired to offer additional specials to students and to provide additional intervention and enrichment programming based on student need.

Culturally and economically, Hometown Elementary School students were predominantly Hispanic, low income, and English Language Learners. The 2014 Illinois School Report Card listed the following breakdown: 75.2% Hispanic, 81.8% Low Income, and 42.1% English Language Learners (NIU, 2014).

## **Culture**

The internal culture of Hometown Elementary School presents the greatest opportunity for accomplishing the goals of this change plan by adjusting the staff's underlying assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and behaviors. While both the teachers and administrators are dedicated and caring professionals, unconscious beliefs toward evaluation, instruction, student achievement, and professional development undermine our collective ability to attain the greatest impact on student learning.

**Evaluation process.** In Hometown Elementary School's district, the evaluation process for non-tenured teachers consisted of a pre-conference, observation, and post-conference in the fall and spring with a performance rating provided for each one. Tenured teachers were observed twice a year and evaluated once a year, every other year, but could elect to complete a project or reflection paper instead of being observed by an evaluator. As a result, a great deal of time and effort was put into the observed lessons and the overall process was viewed as an additional obligation rather than being closely tied to one's daily practice and continual improvement. In addition, most teachers historically received an Excellent rating. Thus, the process of being evaluated provided little motivation for improvement and was viewed as irrelevant to job security.

**Instruction and achievement.** Teachers at Hometown Elementary School have been dedicated professionals that spend many hours in the classroom above and beyond the contractual day. Despite this, the school had a long history of not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). As neighboring districts consistently outperformed Hometown Elementary School, the perception that teachers have a limited affect on student growth and achievement has seeped into the school psyche. Socio-economic status and parental support are viewed as greater reasons for poor performance. Students, it is believed, would meet standards if parents took greater responsibility for reading to their children at home and held them

accountable for completing homework. Overall, teachers have felt they are doing a good job and that professional development for instructional improvement would have a minimal impact on student learning.

To be fair, it is important to acknowledge that, as the principal, I have shared a role in the cultural reality of our building. Despite a strong belief that principals should spend 51% of their time on instructional leadership and a strong desire to work closely with teachers on curriculum, lesson planning, and data analysis, I have found a high percentage of my time being consumed by the managerial aspects of the job, such as building schedules, student discipline, and personnel matters.

**Professional development.** As a result of consistently not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Hometown Elementary School was required to make curricular and programmatic changes. Prior to the restructuring initiatives, these efforts were haphazard and inconsistent. Plans presented at the beginning of the year were not developed throughout the year and rarely incorporated teacher input on their wants and needs. Unfortunately, the district did not always support meaningful professional development activities due to the financial constraints under state control and did not remove initiatives when new ones were added. As a result, teachers felt unheard, overwhelmed, and had a “this too shall pass” attitude toward trainings. The link between professional development, the improvement of daily instruction, and student learning was very weak.

### **Conditions**

To evaluate the conditions impacting the implementation of the Danielson framework, the time, space, and resources of the school and staff were explored. The new evaluation process required no additional space as all observations and meetings occurred within existing classrooms and offices in the building. Second, all of the necessary resources were already in place. With PERA giving districts two years to prepare for the new evaluation model, the district had purchased Charlotte Danielson’s *A Framework*

*For Teacher Evaluation Instrument* for staff, the evaluation documents had been created, and the summative rating calculation had been developed by the joint committee.

The greatest challenge regarding the conditions has been time. While leadership teams from each building attended trainings on Danielson during the implementation planning years, the majority of the staff was unfamiliar with the framework. This includes: the domains, the components that make up each domain, the rating rubrics for each component, the sample evidence and artifacts supporting each domain, the evaluation documents (pre-conference, observation, post-conference, and summative forms), and the summative rating calculation. Clearly, a comprehensive explanation of all this was going to require a great deal of time.

During this time, the collective bargaining agreement only allowed the administration to schedule three meetings per month during the 40 minute planning period before school and one 30 minute meeting with each grade level team each week, while their students attended specials. The district calendar provided three institute days at the beginning of the school year and three additional school improvement days during the course of the year. While this may appear like an adequate amount of time, existing trainings for the new literacy and math curriculum already accounted for the majority of the time. As a result, adding the Danielson training required careful planning and coordination of resources.

### **Competencies**

Reflecting on the competencies, the skills and knowledge that affect student learning, an exploration of the existing situation at Hometown Elementary School revealed a number of shortcomings and some areas that demonstrated growth potential.

By their own admission, the teachers' familiarity with the Danielson model was limited. For some, excellent teaching was defined by solid classroom management procedures, for others, student achievement data was the mark of successful teaching. The comprehensive nature of excellent teaching detailed by Danielson's four domains:

Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities, was lacking. In addition, teachers felt their performance rating was based more on the administration's discretion than an objective assessment of performance. In addition, the determination of a rating based on evidence and artifacts that align with specific performance criteria was a newer concept rather than a familiar practice.

Lastly, the link between the evaluation process and the identification of professional development needs was disconnected. While teachers were familiar with a wide range of instructional strategies and sought out professional development, these concepts were disjointed rather than a seamless progression of professional practice.

On a more positive note, the staff and administration have been open to change and dedicated to best practice. Having come through the restructuring process, which included a number of dramatic changes being implemented at the same time, the staff has realized that change results in many positive outcomes despite the initial anxiety they cause.

## **Section Three: Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

To gain an accurate and in-depth understanding of the existing context, culture, conditions, and competencies, data enumerating the teachers' knowledge of the existing evaluation system and the Danielson framework for evaluation was collected to determine the action steps that form the basis of this change leadership plan. In addition, teachers' perceptions of the nexus between the evaluation system, professional development, and their effectiveness as teachers were gathered to ascertain whether the staff viewed these as independent entities or as an interdependent system.

Based on my three years of experience with the staff, this data supported and quantified Section Two's "As Is" description of the existing situation and clearly conveyed the urgency of instituting change that would establish the "To Be" as the new norm.

### **Participants**

To gain an objective understanding of the "As Is", quantitative data was collected from all certified and non-certified staff members that worked directly with students on an instructional basis. At Hometown Elementary School, this group was comprised of approximately 55 staff members, spanning the full range of recent college graduates, to mid-career, to those near retirement. While primarily white and female, 9% of the staff was male, 11% was Hispanic, and 4% was Asian.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Staff members were invited to anonymously participate in a survey and provided with a hyperlink to a Google form that contained the survey items. The survey collected data on the teachers' years of experience and their perceptions about the evaluation system, professional development process, and instructional practices. Creswell (2012) discusses how priority ranking statements or indicating a level of agreement or disagreement produces valid trends in opinions or perceptions of the participants. As a

result, the staff was asked to respond to the following statements using a five point Likert scale.

- Please indicate the number of years you have working with children in schools.
- Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, I had a thorough understanding of the Danielson framework for teacher evaluation.
- In my cumulative experience, teacher evaluation systems have incorporated EACH of the Danielson domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.
- In my cumulative experience, the evaluation process has been a high priority for district and building level administrators.
- In my cumulative experience, the main purpose of the teacher evaluation process has been to...
  - Determine a performance rating.
  - Identify professional development needs.
  - Increase instructional effectiveness.
- In my cumulative experience, the evaluation process, professional development opportunities, and instructional improvement have been separate entities rather than closely connected.
- In my cumulative experience, teachers have played a limited role in determining district and building level professional development topics.
- In my cumulative experience, professional development topics have been developed throughout the year and from year to year.
- In my cumulative experience, the time allocated for training on professional development topics has been adequate.
- In my cumulative experience, professional development trainings have significantly increased the effectiveness of teachers.
- In my cumulative experience, professional development has been a high priority



for district and building level administrators.

- In my cumulative experience...
  - Teachers possess the necessary skills to impact learning.
  - Teachers must continually learn new skills to impact learning.
- In my cumulative experience, the greatest barriers to learning are...
  - Student factors (prerequisite knowledge, language acquisition, homework completion, family situations, etc.)
  - School factors (curriculum, quality of instruction, scheduling, etc.)
- In my cumulative experience, teachers' daily instruction has been most determined by...
  - The curriculum.
  - Student growth and achievement data.
- In my cumulative experience, the use of student growth and achievement data to drive instruction has been a high priority for district and building level administrators.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Responses to the survey statements were analyzed to determine trends in the overall perception of the staff at Hometown Elementary School. Each statement's average rank or its rating on the five point Likert scale was calculated and the number of responses that fell on each side of the agree/disagree continuum was totaled. Since the survey consisted of statements that represent descriptors of the "As Is" and the "To Be" it was important to establish whether the teachers indicated strong levels of agreement with the "As Is" statements and high levels of disagreement with the "To Be" statements.

## **Section Four: Relevant Literature**

The goal of this change leadership plan has been to implement an evaluation model that clearly describes excellent teaching and increases the instructional capacity of teachers. To achieve this change, three components must work in tandem: the change person, the change plan, and the change process. This section will review the historical context that connects teacher evaluation and student performance, Tony Wagner's approach to creating change leaders (the person), the professional literature about Charlotte Danielson's framework for teacher evaluation (the plan), and Wagner's guide to transforming schools (the process).

### **The Change Context**

Over the last 15 years, student achievement has become a major educational focus of American public schools as a result of national assessments of student performance and international rankings of industrialized countries across the world. The College Board's 2013 SAT report on college and career readiness states that only 48% of all SAT takers graduated from high school academically prepared for the rigors of college-level course work. This number has remained virtually unchanged for the last five years, highlighting the need to dramatically increase the number of K-12 students who acquire the knowledge and skills critical to college readiness (The College Board, 2013).

At the same time, reports have shown that students in other industrialized nations are scoring significantly better than their American counterparts. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), has measured the performance of 15-year-old students in mathematics and reading literacy every three years since 2000. Of the 34 participating countries in 2012, the United States ranked 17th in reading and 27th in math (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2014).

In response to this focus on achievement, laws have been enacted that require districts to change their schools' programming, staffing, and structure to increase results. Most notably, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 required each state to

establish targets for the percent of students attaining Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) so that by 2014, all students would achieve academic proficiency. The Center on Education Policy (CEP) has been monitoring national AYP results dating back to the 2005-2006 school year and has reported that, despite corrective actions and restructuring mandates, the percent of schools not meeting AYP has risen from 29% in 2006 to 48% in 2011 (Center on Education Policy, 2012).

Such reports on the outcome of the NCLB sanctions have done little to bolster the nation's support of public education and have fettered student confidence. In response, the pendulum has swung from legislation mandating school improvement, to initiatives focused on supporting best teaching practice as research has demonstrated that the single most important variable in student achievement is the quality of instruction they receive on a daily basis (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2003). In Illinois for example, the 2010 Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) required districts to implement evaluation models incorporating student achievement and required four ratings, rather than three, to provide greater discrimination in teacher performance.

The need to emphasize the connection between teacher performance and student achievement is highlighted by the report, *A Rush to Judgment*, which found that only 14 states required yearly teacher evaluations and that current supervisory and evaluative practices are, "superficial, capricious, and often don't even directly address the quality of instruction, much less measure students' learning" (Toch & Rothman, 2008, p. 1).

Despite this, the opportunity to increase the link between teacher effectiveness and student achievement is great. Two recent studies have shown a causal relationship between student performance and the use of a well-designed teacher evaluation model. In 2009, a review of evaluations from the Cincinnati Public Schools found that teachers are "more effective at raising student achievement during the school year when they are being evaluated than they were previously," and even more in subsequent years (Taylor & Tyler, 2012, p. 80).

The second study compared the performance of students in schools using different teacher evaluation models. In 2008, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) piloted the Excellence in Teaching Project (EITP), a system based on Charlotte Danielson's framework for evaluation. The project dramatically changed how teacher evaluations were conducted in CPS as the framework's clear descriptors of each performance level provided teachers and principals a concrete base for comparison and served as a guide for discussions on ways to improve the teachers' instructional practice. The study found that schools participating in the EITP pilot increased student achievement by 5.4% in math and 9.9% in reading and continued to increase in subsequent years (Matthew & Sartain, 2015).

Based on the evidence of these studies, it is clear that student achievement can be affected by using an evaluation model based on highly structured classroom observations of teacher performance and conferencing focused on the improvement of planning, the classroom environment, instruction, and teachers' professional responsibilities. For this reason, Charlotte Danielson's framework, the evaluation instrument used in both of the studies, deserves a closer examination.

### **The Change Plan**

In 1996, Charlotte Danielson set out to define teaching, "in all its complexity" (Danielson, 2007, p. 19). Her research describes the comprehensive nature of teaching through four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Each domain is comprised of five or six components that further develop each one (Appendix D). For example, Domain 1 – Planning and Preparation details a teacher's ability to demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstrate knowledge of students, set instructional outcomes, demonstrate knowledge of resources, design coherent instruction, and design student assessments (Danielson, 2007).

The components of Domains 2 and 3, Classroom Environment and Instruction, form the *on stage* performance of teachers that the layperson typically associates with the job of teaching and are typically observed by principals during a classroom observation. The Danielson framework, however, understands that this observable work is the result of a great deal of behind the scenes preparation. As a result, the *off stage* work of lesson planning, grading, and communicating with families that is associated with Domains 1: Planning and Domain 4: Preparation and Professional Responsibilities, is equally valued and emphasized.

In addition to providing a succinct and comprehensive categorization of the work of teaching, Danielson established a rating system to clearly describe Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory levels of performance. For each component within each domain, a rubric provides detailed descriptions of performance for each of the ratings, a list of critical attributes, and possible examples.

Most relevant to this change leadership plan is the fact that the Danielson framework connects instructional improvement and professional development within the context of the evaluation system. Linking these provides teachers the motivation to participate and the process to improve. This is first done by creating a structure of self-assessment and reflection in light of Danielson's clear descriptions of practice. Danielson states:

It is not only through conversation, however, that teachers can use a framework for teaching to strengthen their practice. Clear descriptions of practice enable teachers to consider their own teaching in light of the statements. Indeed, the statements, particularly when accompanied by descriptions of levels of performance, invite teachers to do so. It is virtually impossible for teachers to read clear statements of what teachers do, and how those actions appear when they are done well, and not engage in a thought process of "finding themselves" in the descriptors. It is natural, then, to read the statement at the next-higher level and to

think to oneself, “Oh, I can do that.” (2007, p. 6)

The second step of the plan is to identify areas for professional development. As stated above, teachers will naturally reflect on evidence and artifacts of practice that align with each component as they read and reflect on each one. Tracking which components have extensive amounts of evidence and those that do not will allow teachers to identify specific professional development needs. In addition to self-identification, conversations with an evaluator using the shared language and definitions of the rating rubrics can assist in improving deficient areas. “When a teacher is struggling in the classroom, when a lesson is ineffective, or when students are not engaged, a comprehensive framework is useful in identifying the source of the difficulty and therefore in guiding improvement efforts” (Danielson, 2007, p. 12).

While the Danielson model describes the comprehensive nature of teaching, provides four levels of performance, and serves to identify the professional development needs, the process used to implement the plan is just as important to the overall creation of a culture of continual improvement that will lead to high student achievement.

### **The Change Process**

“Improving schools” and “raising student achievement” are common mantras in educational circles and related literature is replete with case studies about individual success stories and turnaround programs. Unfortunately, this has been the case for many years as the academic performance challenges facing schools were published over thirty years ago in the federal *Nation at Risk Report* (1983). Clearly, transforming schools is no quick fix. Rather than assuming that the approach taken in one successful school will necessarily work at another school, educators must adopt a more systematized, long-term approach to improving schools.

Wagner et al. (2006) detail such a process in *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools*. To better understand the difficulty of the task, Wagner compares the work of transforming schools to that of rebuilding an aircraft,

“while keeping it in the air, loaded with passengers” (p. xv). His approach offers a new systems change framework for education and a new set of tools for leaders who have traditionally been trained to fly schools rather than to rebuilt them (Wagner, et al., 2006).

Wagner’s process creates a change plan by comparing the existing situation with the ideal situation and determining strategies that will bridge one to the other. To start, one must first conduct a thorough analysis of the context, culture, conditions, and competencies of the current model. Wagner terms this the 4 Cs of the “As Is”. Secondly, the 4 Cs of the “To Be” should be detailed to provide a clear description of the ideal future scenario. Then, action steps for transforming a school from the “As Is” to the “To Be” are developed and implemented (Wagner, et al., 2006). As a result of this, it should be no surprise that this change plan is based on Wagner’s framework.

### **The Change Person**

A solid plan and a researched process provide a great start to significant organizational change but are not enough to ensure that the goal is achieved successfully. The person leading the change is an essential element that, all other things being equal, can influence success or failure. While Wagner (2006) acknowledges that more time and money can help improve the challenges schools face, his group has witnessed stagnant schools even though they have received grants or increased planning and collaborative time. In short, leaders remain the “biggest resource for change” (p. 83) and developing their change capacity is even more important than the plan or the process.

To start, Wagner makes a distinction between the desire to change and the ability to change. Leaders, he has found, often have sincere intentions to change and are passionate about implementing new programs and procedures but are unaware that powerful dynamics are at work within one’s own psyche that prevent these good intentions from coming to fruition.

To identify and confront this *immunity to change*, Wagner’s colleagues, Kegan and Lahey, have developed a four-step self-awareness activity to help leaders understand

the motivation behind their behavior and beliefs that actually inhibit change from occurring.

The first step of the exercise is to identify a commitment that is “important and insufficiently accomplished” (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 252). The crafted statement should specifically implicate the leader, be stated positively, and reflect future growth potential. In the second step, participants seek to recognize counterproductive behaviors by identifying things they are doing or not doing that keep the commitment from being fully realized. In the third step, competing commitments are identified. Participants imagine what it would be like to do the exact opposite of the behaviors listed in Step 2 and identify the fears that arise as a result of what would happen. These fears, as opposed to the identified commitments in Step 1, represent hidden, competing commitments that subconsciously produce an immunity to change. The fourth step of the activity is to identify *Big Assumptions* that underlie the competing commitment. The assumption is a rule or prediction that illustrates the motivation behind the competing commitment. Upon completion of this four step process, a participant must determine how best to move forward. While many participants likely want to tackle the things they were not doing in Step 2, the activity will hopefully illustrate how much more important it is to identify the underlying motivations of the big assumptions that are generating their inaction. By first tackling the big assumptions, change leaders are able to overcome their competing commitments and significantly increase the successful implementation of the change plan (Wagner, et al., 2006).

This literature review has detailed the relevant professional information surrounding the successful implementation of a change leadership plan. By focusing on the leadership attributes of a change person, utilizing a researched based plan, and implementing a carefully thought out process, change will be successfully instituted.



## Section Five: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Fifty-five certified and non-certified staff members that worked instructionally with students were invited to take the survey detailed in Section Four. The quantitative results of the survey strongly supported the qualitative description of the “As Is” in Section Two. In addition, the results provided a needs assessment that shapes the “To Be” of Section Seven and serves as a launching point for the strategies in Section Eight.

Table 1 illustrates the staff response rate for the survey. Of the 55 staff members invited to take the survey, 27 staff responded, representing a response rate of 49.1%. Given that all responses falling on each side of the agree/disagree continuum were combined for analysis purposes, these figures represent a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of  $\pm 10$ .

Table 1

### *Staff Response Rate*

# Invited	# Responses	Response Rate
55	27	49.1%

Table 2 illustrates the number of years of experience the survey respondents have worked with children in an instructional capacity either as a certified or non-certified staff member. Approximately half of the respondents reported 1-10 years of experience working with children and approximately half reported 11 or more years. These responses closely mirrored the experience of the whole staff.

Table 2

### *Respondent Years of Experience*

Experience	<i>n</i>
1-2 Years	2
3-5 Years	4
6-10 Years	7
11 or More Years	14

Table 3 illustrates the respondents' level of understanding of the Danielson framework for teacher evaluation. Only 29.6% of the staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while the vast majority either disagreed or strongly disagreed (48.1%), or reported a neutral (22.2%) position. This data supports the "As Is" perception that the staff had a limited knowledge of the Danielson evaluation model. Training staff on the framework's domains and components, describing the rating rubrics, and discussing the types of evidence and artifacts that support each rating descriptor will initiate the process of bridging the "As Is" to the "To Be".

Table 3

*Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, I had a thorough understanding of the Danielson framework for teacher evaluation.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	11.1%
Agree	5	18.5%
Neutral	6	22.2%
Disagree	10	37.0%
Strongly Disagree	3	11.1%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 4 illustrates the percentage of staff that felt the prior evaluation systems incorporated the areas of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities that comprise the Danielson framework. Interestingly, over 70% of the staff felt that these domains had been incorporated within these systems. Contrasting this information with Table 3 however, it is clear that even though the same areas are evaluated, a need for additional training on the Danielson framework is essential. Again, the evidence based nature of Danielson and the clear descriptors of performance levels represent a significant shift from prior systems that relied on single observations and the evaluator's sole judgment.

Table 4

*In my cumulative experience, teacher evaluation systems have incorporated EACH of the Danielson domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	11.1%
Agree	16	59.3%
Neutral	5	18.5%
Disagree	3	11.1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 5 illustrates the staff’s perceptions of the priority that district and building level administrators placed on the evaluation process. While a majority (66.6%) of staff agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, a solid number (18.5%) reported a neutral response and an almost equal amount (14.8%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. To create the “To Be” culture of constant improvement, it is essential that all staff members have a uniform understanding of the administration’s commitment to the evaluation process and how this affects each staff member’s continual growth.

Table 5

*In my cumulative experience, the evaluation process has been a high priority for district and building level administrators.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	5	18.5%
Agree	13	48.1%
Neutral	5	18.5%
Disagree	2	7.4%
Strongly Disagree	2	7.4%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 6 illustrates the staff’s perceptions of the purpose for the evaluation process. While the majority (63%) felt that improving instructional effectiveness was the

main purpose, there was a strong perception (33.3%) that the determination of a performance rating was the main purpose for being evaluated.

Table 6

*In my cumulative experience, the main purpose of the teacher evaluation process has been to...*

Response	1st Choice		2nd Choice		3rd Choice	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
...determine a performance rating	9	33.3%	4	14.8%	14	51.9%
...identify professional development needs	1	3.7%	16	59.3%	10	37.0%
...improve instructional effectiveness	17	63.0%	7	25.9%	3	11.1%

Ideally, all staff members would have selected the improvement of instruction as their first choice, the identification of professional development as their second choice, and the determination of a performance rating as their third choice. Clearly this was not the case. As a result, the data supports the prior description of the “As Is” culture as one where the performance rating was a significant part of the evaluation process and that the evaluation process was disconnected from the improvement of instruction. As a result, creating an understanding that the primary purpose of the evaluation system is to improve instruction through the identification of needs and the provision of professional development will create the “To Be” culture of continual improvement.

Table 7 illustrates the staff’s perceptions of the integrated nature of the evaluation system, professional development, and instructional improvement. A majority (55.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the three topics were separate entities rather than closely connected systems. Only 25.9% fell on the disagree side of the continuum, and many expressed a neutral (18.5%) opinion. These mixed results strongly support the “As Is” culture which viewed professional development as “one and done” activities that were

not developed throughout the year. Implementing action steps that create an integrated view of the evaluation process, professional development activities, and the improvement of instruction will be important components that will generate the buy-in and ownership of the culture of the “To Be”.

Table 7

*In my cumulative experience, the evaluation process, professional development opportunities, and instructional improvement have been separate entities rather than closely connected.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	2	7.4%
Agree	13	48.1%
Neutral	5	18.5%
Disagree	6	22.2%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.7%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 8 illustrates the staff’s perceptions of their role in the determination of professional development topics. A majority of the staff (66.7%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they played a limited role. Only 14.8% disagreed, while the remainder (18.5%) remained neutral. This data supports the described culture of the “As Is” toward professional development. Teachers perceive that they have had little input into the determination of professional development topics and that those provided were unrelated to their wants and needs. Soliciting teacher input regarding professional development and developing leadership among the staff will be important strategies for creating the culture of the “To Be”, one in which staff feel an affinity to new training because their input has been solicited and the information is relevant to their needs.

Table 8

*In my cumulative experience, teachers have played a limited role in determining district and building level professional development topics.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	1	3.7%
Agree	17	63.0%
Neutral	5	18.5%
Disagree	4	14.8%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 9 illustrates the staff's perceptions regarding the development of professional trainings throughout the year and from year to year. While 70.4% of the staff agreed that this occurred, an appreciable number (7.4% who disagreed and 22.2% who remained neutral) indicated that the commitment to, and long-term development of, initial trainings needed improvement. This data supports the described culture of the "As Is" toward professional development as teachers perceived that professional trainings have not been developed throughout the year and from year to year. As a result, a "this too shall pass" mentality has developed. Selecting a limited number of initiatives and planning their development from the beginning of the year to the end, will be important for creating the culture of the "To Be", where a high percentage of the staff understand the value of the training and know the district is committed to its full implementation.

Table 9

*In my cumulative experience, professional development topics have been developed throughout the year and from year to year.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	0	0.0%
Agree	19	70.4%
Neutral	6	22.2%
Disagree	2	7.4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 10 illustrates the staff's perceptions about the adequacy of time allocated for training on professional development topics. While a certain amount (33.3%) agreed that the time was adequate, a much greater percent felt the time was inadequate (40.7% who disagreed and 3.7% who strongly disagreed) or remained neutral (22.2%). This supports the "one and done" culture toward professional development described in the "As Is". Dedicating significant amounts of time to train staff on new initiatives will be essential to creating the culture of the "To Be", one in which the staff are not just exposed to a new topic but inculcate it into their daily instruction.

Table 10

*In my cumulative experience, the time allocated for training on professional development topics has been adequate.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	0	0.0%
Agree	9	33.3%
Neutral	6	22.2%
Disagree	11	40.7%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.7%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 11 illustrates the staff's perceptions of the impact of professional development on the effectiveness of teachers. While almost half of the staff strongly agreed (3.7%) or agreed (44.4%) that trainings have increased their effectiveness, a considerable number disagreed (25.9%), strongly disagreed (3.7%), or remained neutral (22.2%). This data strongly supports the described culture of the "As Is" toward professional development as many staff perceive a disconnect between the professional development offered and their wants and needs. Aligning professional development with the wants and needs of teachers will be essential to create the culture of the "To Be", one in which a high percentage of staff feel that what they are learning is having a significant

impact on their daily classroom instruction.

Table 11

*In my cumulative experience, professional development trainings have significantly increased the effectiveness of teachers.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	1	3.7%
Agree	12	44.4%
Neutral	6	22.2%
Disagree	7	25.9%
Strongly Disagree	1	3.7%
Total	27	100.0%

Table 12 illustrates the staff's perceptions of the district and building level administrators commitment to professional development. While a majority agreed (40.7%) or strongly agreed (11.1%) that this was a high priority for administrators, a sizeable number remained neutral (37%) or disagreed (11.1%). This data supports the culture of the "As Is" toward professional development as many staff members perceived a lack of commitment and follow through from the administration. Strong leadership that emphasizes the importance of professional development and prioritizes the allocation of the necessary time and finances will assist in creating the culture of the "To Be", one in which a high percentage of the staff feel that administrators value new learning and will do whatever it takes to increase the instructional capacity of their staff.

Table 12

*In my cumulative experience, professional development has been a high priority for district and building level administrators.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	11.1%
Agree	11	40.7%
Neutral	10	37.0%
Disagree	3	11.1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%



Table 13 illustrates the staff’s beliefs about teachers possessing the necessary skills to impact learning versus the necessity of continually learning new skills in order to impact student learning. While a majority of the staff (77.8%) indicated that teachers must continually learn new skills, a strong core (22.2%) indicated that teachers already possess the necessary skills to impact learning. This supports the perception of the “As Is” that teachers play a limited role in student achievement and can only do “so much” to impact learning. Strengthening the understanding that new instructional and technological skills are necessary to increase student achievement is essential for *one hundred percent* of the staff.

Table 13

*In my cumulative experience...*

Response	1st Choice		2nd Choice	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
...teachers possess the necessary skills to impact learning.	6	22.2%	21	77.8%
...teachers must continually learn new skills to impact learning.	21	77.8%	6	22.2%

Table 14 illustrates the staff’s beliefs about the greatest barriers to student learning. A large percentage of the staff (81.5%) indicated that student factors are an important factor and a minority (18.5%) indicated that school factors have a greater impact on learning. This data supports the “As Is” perceptions that teachers play a limited role in student learning and that achievement is limited by socio-economic status and language acquisition level. As a result, persuading and assuring the staff that the curriculum and their instructional efforts do significantly impact student achievement will be an important component of transforming the “As Is” to the “To Be”.

Table 14

*In my cumulative experience, the greatest barriers to learning are...*

Response	1st Choice		2nd Choice	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
...student factors (prerequisite knowledge, language acquisition, homework completion, family situations, etc.)	22	81.5%	5	18.5%
...school factors (curriculum, quality of instruction, scheduling, etc.)	5	18.5%	22	81.5%

Table 15 illustrates the staff's belief about what most determines teachers' daily instruction. A majority of the staff (81.5%) indicated that the curriculum plays the greatest role and only 18.5% stated that student data drives instruction. This supports the disconnected view of the teachers' role in instruction. Emphasizing professional development that links daily instruction with the students' growth and achievement data will help to bridge the gap between the "As Is" and the "To Be".

Table 15

*In my cumulative experience, teachers' daily instruction has been most determined by...*

Response	1st Choice		2nd Choice	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
...the curriculum	22	81.5%	5	18.5%
...student growth and achievement	5	18.5%	22	81.5%

Table 16 illustrates the staff's perceptions of the priority district and building level administrators place on the use of student achievement data to drive instruction. A strong majority (85.1%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and no staff members disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This perception serves as a

solid launching point for change as it clearly indicates an existing understanding that making improvements by analyzing data is a priority for the administration.

Table 16

*In my cumulative experience, the use of student growth and achievement data to drive instruction has been a high priority for district and building level administrators.*

Response	<i>n</i>	Percent
Strongly Agree	12	44.4%
Agree	11	40.7%
Neutral	4	14.8%
Disagree	0	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	27	100.0%

In conclusion, the quantitative results from the staff survey clearly support the “As Is” assessment of the existing context, conditions, culture, and competencies at Hometown Elementary School. The next section, the description of the “To Be”, will provide a contrast to this data that the strategies outlined in Section Eight will bridge.

## **Section Six: A Vision of Success**

In Hometown Elementary School's district, the stage for dramatic change is set. While student achievement has been historically low, the recent focus on teaching and learning that envelopes the overall context of the "As Is" and the "To Be" invites a promising vision of a high performing group of teachers whose instruction significantly impacts student learning. The following points manifest the culture, conditions, and competencies of the "To Be".

First, the utopia of the "To Be" will be evidenced by dedicated teachers who have a comprehensive understanding of Danielson's framework. The rating rubrics, describing Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory performance for each of the components within each of the four domains will be so well known that the use of the framework for the evaluation model will seem natural. Rather than believing that everyone is an Excellent teacher and has somehow "arrived", this knowledge will result in a realistic view of the range of abilities within a building and will cultivate an environment of continuous improvement.

Second, the teachers will possess an integrated view of the evaluation process, professional development activities, and the improvement of instruction. The routine collection of evidence and artifacts will be viewed as a natural means of tracking one's performance in relation to the rating rubrics for the purpose of instructional improvement. By reflecting on this alignment, teachers will identify areas for improvement that can be addressed with targeted professional development. In the "To Be", the determination of workshops and trainings will be based on teacher input and developed throughout the year. Thus, growth opportunities will be welcomed by the staff and incorporated into their daily instruction.

Third, the teachers will demonstrate ownership of student achievement. As professional development continues to increase teacher capacity and standardized tests evidence the impact on student learning, teachers will increasingly believe that their role

in learning is more significant than anything else and that socio-economic or language acquisition barriers cannot limit the potential of any child.

In addition, the utopia of the “To Be” will be evidenced by a principal who creates, models, and expands the culture of continual improvement. The majority of the principal’s time will be spent on instructional leadership by working with teachers to: implement the curriculum pace lessons appropriately, evaluate teachers to identify professional development needs, and provide the necessary training to meet those needs. As the capacity of teachers increases, the principal will seek out teacher leaders to further develop trainings to enhance the overall quality and expertise of the staff.

## **Section Seven: Strategies and Actions for Change**

While the context surrounding Hometown Elementary School remains fairly static, reflecting on Section Two's description of the "As Is" and comparing it with the ideal of the "To Be" reveals a broad gap in the culture, conditions, and competencies that will take great effort to bridge. Despite the work involved, the change is both possible and necessary. Possible, because prior restructuring initiatives have already commenced the transformation process, and necessary because the knowledge and skills required for the world of work have risen dramatically in the last decade and closely mirror those of higher education. Teachers can no longer maintain the status quo; they must embrace a philosophy of continual improvement and frequently analyze their performance as well as student data to drive their instruction and to evaluate their effectiveness. The analysis and interpretation of the survey data in Section Six produced a number of action steps that will bridge the "As Is" to the "To Be".

As discovered in Section Five's literature review however, successful change consists of more than just a plan. The person leading the change and the process used to implement the change are equally, or more, important to success than the action steps themselves. This idea, that the change leader, change plan, and change process must work in tandem, provides the overarching guidance for the principal at Hometown Elementary School as the following strategies are implemented.

### **Strategy 1 – Lead the Change**

To effectively implement the use of the Danielson framework as the evaluation tool, the principal of Hometown Elementary School must personally prioritize the change plan and repeatedly communicate this to staff. As discussed in Section Five, principals are being held more and more accountable for the instructional leadership in their buildings. From an outsider or academician's point of view, the studies make sense, as curriculum, instruction, and assessment comprise the bulk of a principal's job description. From the practitioner's view however, these studies cause a great deal of internal turmoil

as those in the trenches know that significant amounts of time are spent managing student behavior, dealing with parents, and attending meetings that have little or no direct impact on student learning. This presents a difficult dilemma. Ignoring these managerial aspects of the job, on the one hand, undermines the teachers' ability to perform successfully, but focusing solely on them, on the other hand, creates an impression of a school without goals or direction.

To be effective in such a dichotomous situation, the principal must realize that while both aspects of the job are necessary, the purposeful allocation of time is essential and at least fifty-one percent of one's time should be spent on instructional leadership. For example, a principal will often be entering a meeting with a team of teachers when students who were fighting at recess are brought to the office. While the student conflict must be dealt with, the principal must consider his approach carefully. Attending the meeting after taking a few minutes to talk with the students to ensure that the situation has deescalated, but completing the final resolution between the students after the meeting, will set a very different tone than the principal who apologizes to the teacher for having to cancel their meeting to deal with the unexpected discipline issue. As a result, honoring the overarching commitments of the building by effectively allocating one's time will create a culture that prioritizes instructional leadership over managerial matters.

Secondly, it is important for the principal to actively communicate a commitment to instructional leadership. As discussed in Section Six's analysis of the survey results it is essential that all staff members have a uniform understanding of the administration's commitment to the evaluation process and how this affects each staff member's continual growth. Teachers, for example, may have some great ideas for increasing student learning but won't voice these if they feel the principal is too busy putting out the daily fires that arise in the office.

Since leaders remain the "biggest resource for change" (Wagner, et al., 2006, p. 83), it is also important for Hometown's principal to thoroughly understand his own

motivations and how these can impact the change plan. To learn these, he must complete Wagner's Personal Immunity Map to uncover his commitments, hidden fears, and big assumptions. While most principals will not have any trouble identifying their commitments, it is important to discover hidden fears, competing commitments, and big assumptions that can unconsciously undermine successful change. To illustrate, a principal whose competing commitment is a fear of conflict, will struggle with informing a teacher that their performance is unsatisfactory or needs improvement and this competing commitment could completely derail the process of improving evaluation feedback.

Third, to effectively lead change Hometown's principal must solicit staff input and develop internal leadership to attain the staff's support and to generate ownership of student learning. As shown in the analysis of the survey results in Section Six, the staff indicates little affinity to training when their voice has not been taken into consideration and when it is not connected to their needs. To address this, the principal must provide multiple opportunities for teachers to express their wants and needs on a wide range of topics. Open door policies and casual lunches with staff, for example, will allow the informal sharing of ideas that will help the principal get an accurate gauge on the whole staff, especially from quiet members that would never speak at a full faculty meeting. In addition, the staff should be given more formal opportunities to discuss issues at open forums or through anonymous surveys.

To develop internal leadership, the principal must identify staff members with leadership capacity that can be sent to workshops and return to train their peers. Such a leadership team will produce the buy in necessary for the new initiative to be truly successful as implementation questions can be answered as they arise and follow up sessions can be conducted throughout the year. With the necessary leadership components in place, a principal can focus on the implementation of any particular initiative.



## **Strategy 2 – Define Excellent Teaching**

The goal of this change leadership plan is to increase the quality of teachers' daily instruction using the Danielson framework as the evaluation system. To ensure successful implementation, significant training about the framework and how it will be used as the evaluation system must be provided to the staff. To do so, the principal must establish a detailed schedule of trainings, from the opening teacher institute days to the last faculty meeting of the year, that scaffold the roll out from initial overviews to in-depth question and answers sessions.

To start, the four Danielson domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities must be introduced along with detailed descriptions of each component within each of the domains. Interactive sessions that give teachers the opportunity to contemplate the critical attributes and to compare and contrast the possible examples with their own practice will begin the process of internalizing the framework in each teachers' consciousness.

Once the staff is familiar with the domains, components, critical attributes and possible examples provided by the framework, training sessions must shift to the evidence and artifacts of teacher performance that align with each domain and component. The principal must provide the staff with lists that show examples of practices from both the onstage and offstage domains. For example, lesson plans would be listed as an example for Domain 1 – Planning and Preparation and chairing the Student Council would be listed as an example for Domain 4 – Professional Responsibilities.

The third step of the training process is to acquaint the staff with the rating descriptors for each component. To gain a deep understanding of the rubrics, time must be spent comparing and contrasting the descriptors in each performance level to identify the verbs and adjectives that separate one level of performance from the next. When staff, for example, identify that Excellent descriptors generally require students to initiate

processes and procedures and that Needs Improvement descriptors frequently mention a lack of consistency, the principal will know that teachers understand the differences.

Once the rating rubrics have been well developed, the process of aligning evidence and artifacts to the rating descriptors should be modeled for the staff. While this is primarily an administrator's responsibility during the evaluation process, it is important that teachers experience the process as a learning exercise and continue to reflect on how their performance relates to the rubrics.

### **Strategy 3 – Evaluate to Improve Instruction**

The third strategy for bridging the “As Is” to the “To Be” is for the principal to evaluate staff in a manner that improves the quality of daily instruction at Hometown Elementary School. As discussed in the analysis of Section Two's “As Is” and Section Six's survey results, the prior evaluation process has consisted of little more than one or two observations a year, Excellent ratings have been common, and professional development is disconnected from daily practice. As a result, the principal must begin the year by emphasizing this instructional purpose of the evaluation system, providing a strong rationale for the selection of the Danielson model, and stressing the interconnected nature of the evaluation process, professional development, and continual improvement. By consistently reiterating this message, the staff will soon be able to state that the purpose of the evaluation system is to improve instruction, that the Danielson framework is the best tool for this, and that all teachers have room to improve.

Once this philosophy has been introduced, the principal must develop the more practical aspects of the evaluation system and implementation process, starting with the district's new evaluation documents tied to the Danielson framework. The evaluation report (Appendix C) and its rating tables must be carefully explained and sample ratings should be given to teachers so they can practice working with the criteria for each performance level and calculating final ratings.

Next, the principal must outline the evaluation activities for the year so each staff member has a clear understanding of what needs to be done from the outset. While staff will be familiar with pre-conference meetings, observations, and post-conference meetings, the collection of evidence and artifacts will create new tasks that teachers will be unfamiliar with. Informal walkthroughs, student work samples, and parent communications are possible examples that will further both the evaluator's knowledge of the teacher and the teacher's understanding of the domains.

To ease the process for the numerous components within each domain, the principal will introduce quarterly segment meetings to discuss two or three components from various domains and the types of documents and activities that align with their rating descriptors. For example, a segment meeting about Component 2d: Managing Student Behavior, would include discussions of the teacher's classroom management plan, reward and consequence systems, and how each of these is communicated to students and whether each is consistently utilized. Maintaining a focus on discussion and reflection will result in professional learning and trigger new ideas for improvement.

Subsequently, the principal will need to discuss expectations for the product teachers will need to create to present their collected evidence and artifacts. This could be done by having teachers collect physical examples of artifacts and evidence in a binder, or by sharing a Google doc with each staff member that will allow the principal and teacher to jointly list examples of practice for each component. Either way, a comprehensive collection of evidence and artifacts aligned to each of the domains will ensure that the final rating represents a complete picture of the teacher's practice.

By this time, it should be evident that new procedures will require extra time and effort. As a result, the principal must anticipate potential backlash in advance and brainstorm how to make new tasks more desirable and to incorporate new training into the available time. To achieve this, more time must be created and prior initiatives taken off of teachers' plates. At Hometown Elementary School, the master schedule provides

an opportunity for more time as the specials offerings can be rearranged to provide each team of teachers a double special once a week. This will provide the group an additional 30 minutes of collaborative time in addition to their contractual plan time.

As teachers reflect on their practice in light of the rubrics and gather various evidence samples, they will become increasingly aware of areas of strength in their performance and areas of growth. In response, the principal must be prepared to provide the training aligned to the areas that need improvement. To achieve success, available workshops connected to each of the Danielson domains must be researched and provided to teachers in advance so that issues with performance can be immediately addressed. In addition, the necessary budgetary resources must be allocated to finance these improvement efforts as nothing will derail a change leadership plan quicker than the inability to provide answers to teachers' questions nor the support for their development.

In conclusion, approaching the improvement of each teacher's instructional capacity by considering the interrelated nature of the change leader, the change plan, and the change process will usher in the "To Be" as the new reality at Hometown Elementary School. A purposeful change leader who uses the Danielson framework to define excellent teaching and evaluates to improve the daily teaching in each child's classroom will significantly impact the conditions, competencies, and culture at the school.

### **Effect of the Strategies on Bridging "As Is" to the "To Be"**

While the context of Hometown Elementary School remains fairly static, the culture, conditions, and competencies surrounding the building and staff will be significantly affected by the strategies of this change leadership plan.

**Culture.** The strategies' clear descriptors of excellent, proficient, needs improvement, and unsatisfactory performance for each component of each domain will radically transform the culture of the building. Rather than assuming that everyone is an excellent teacher, the group will recognize that the school contains a wide range of teaching abilities and that everyone has the capacity to

improve.

Secondly, the strategies will have a dramatic impact on professional development and its connection to improved instruction. Rather than being unrelated to teachers' needs and quickly forgotten once the year gets underway, the topics will be closely linked to instructional needs and developed throughout the year. In addition, trainings tied to topics identified during the evaluation process will establish that the purpose of the evaluation system is to improve instruction rather than just determining a teacher's rating.

Third, student achievement will be positively affected by increasing the instructional capacity of teachers. As teachers witness the connection between their efforts and student learning, they will realize that achievement is not as limited by socio-economic status and language acquisition level as they originally thought. Significant gains in achievement will dramatically affect the culture of the building, as teachers will view themselves as change agents rather than victims of circumstance. With this renewed sense of ownership, the staff will acknowledge the interconnected nature of instruction, professional development, and achievement and will embrace the evaluation model as the vehicle for improvement.

**Conditions.** The cumulative effect of the strategies will also improve the conditions at Hometown Elementary School as the available space, resources, and activities will be viewed and approached from a different perspective, in a different manner. For example, staff meetings that have largely consisted of announcements and housekeeping issues will now be comprised of high-quality presentations on the Danielson framework or other trainings identified by either the principal or teachers during the evaluation process.

With regard to resources, the strategies will adjust the building's financial priorities. Monies that were previously allocated to field trips, t-shirts, or celebrations will now be used to send staff to workshops and to purchase books and materials related to instruction.

Likewise, the strategies will change the vision of how space within the school is viewed and assigned. To appropriately support instruction the principal will have to be creative. At Hometown Elementary School for example, the workroom photocopier could be moved to the hallway to make space for small intervention groups to meet and multiple staff could share an office to create more space opportunities for student programming or for teachers to hold team meetings for collaboration and professional development.

**Competencies.** The strategies will also help to bridge the “As Is” and the “To Be” by increasing the competencies of the staff. First, a comprehensive knowledge of the Danielson framework will provide teachers the ability to identify and distinguish between the Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory levels of performance. Rather than viewing everyone’s practice as acceptable, the staff will reflect on the rating rubrics to guide their judgment of their own performance and that of their colleagues.

Secondly, the Danielson model for evaluation will give the staff the capacity to identify individual areas for growth and to pursue professional development to address those needs. This self-empowerment provides a stark contrast to the prior model of evaluation. Rather than planning special lessons twice a year when the principal is present and hoping that he or she finds the lesson acceptable, teachers will be participating in a continual improvement process.

To conclude, while the context at Hometown Elementary School will not significantly change, these strategies will dramatically affect the conditions of the building, the competencies of the staff, and the culture of the school so that the “To Be” becomes a reality.

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## Appendix A: “As Is” and “To Be” Side by Side Comparison

As Is	To Be
<b>Context</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new focus on teaching and learning as a result of NCLB's restructuring mandate and re-acquisition of financial control from the state</li> <li>73.6% Hispanic, 76.2% Low Income, 45.7% English Language Learners</li> </ul>	<b>Context</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new focus on teaching and learning as a result of NCLB's restructuring mandate and re-acquisition of financial control from the state</li> <li>73.6% Hispanic, 76.2% Low Income, 45.7% English Language Learners</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b> <b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone is an Excellent teacher</li> <li>Purpose of evaluation process is to determine a rating</li> </ul> <b>Professional Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little consistency and follow through with topics, “this too shall pass”</li> <li>Unrelated to teachers’ wants and needs</li> </ul> <b>Student Achievement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers play a limited role</li> <li>Limited by socio-economic status and language acquisition level</li> </ul>	<b>Culture</b> <b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone has the capacity to improve. Some teachers are Excellent, but others are Proficient, Needs Improvement, or Unsatisfactory</li> <li>Purpose of evaluation process is to improve instruction</li> </ul> <b>Professional Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent themes developed throughout the year</li> <li>Incorporates topics solicited from teachers</li> </ul> <b>Student Achievement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers play a key role</li> <li>Socio-economic status and language acquisition level barriers will be overcome</li> </ul>
<b>Conditions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate space and resources</li> <li>Limited time for training about Danielson Framework</li> <li>Other priorities trump the time the principal has for evaluations</li> </ul>	<b>Conditions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate space and resources</li> <li>Sufficient time for training about Danielson Framework</li> <li>Evaluation process will be a main priority for the principal</li> </ul>
<b>Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disconnected views of instruction, professional development, and achievement</li> <li>Limited knowledge of effective evaluation frameworks</li> <li>Dedicated staff experienced with change</li> </ul>	<b>Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated view of instruction, professional development, and achievement</li> <li>Complete knowledge of Danielson Framework’s domains and components</li> <li>Staff embrace improvement through evaluation model</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Old Evaluation Report

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Building: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade/Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Years(s) in District: \_\_\_\_\_

Status: 1<sup>st</sup> Year \_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> Year \_\_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup> Year \_\_\_\_ 4<sup>th</sup> Year \_\_\_\_ Tenured \_\_\_\_ Part-Time \_\_\_\_

The criteria listed below are to be used as guidelines in evaluating teacher performance.

<b>CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT (20%)</b>								
The teacher employs classroom techniques and procedures that result in an atmosphere for teaching and learning.								
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Establishes clear limits of behavior.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Students are in control of their behavior.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. There is purposeful activity in the classroom.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Carries out classroom duties promptly and accurately.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Maintains conditions for health and safety.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Responds constructively to students' needs and concerns.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Interacts with students in a mutually respectful/friendly manner
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Maintains a positive learning environment.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>								
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>								

While they are descriptive of qualities of the effective teacher and can be readily observed or measured, they should not be considered as all inclusive.

<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILL (25%)</b>
The teacher plans effectively both for the present and future with respect to establishing teaching strategies which are goal oriented and purposeful.

E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Prepares in advance of the class to be taught.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Revises plans on an ongoing basis considering students' needs and ability levels.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Relates plans to clearly defined objectives.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Utilizes materials and equipment that are available.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Maintains smooth transition time.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Accomplishes goals set for the class.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Sets realistic teaching goals.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Provides clear plans to enable substitute teachers to maintain continuity of instruction.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Develops and maintains written lesson plans according to building policy.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>								
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>								
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL KNOWLEDGE (26%)</b>								
The teacher guides students in logical, well-defined direction toward approved instructional goals. He/she demonstrates appropriate use of instructional material and evidences the ability to motivate students to maximum potential.								
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Designs activities that address individual student differences.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Uses clarity in presentations.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Develops lessons based on District curriculum, objectives, and state standards.
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	P	<input type="checkbox"/>	NI	<input type="checkbox"/>	U	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Demonstrates knowledge of subject matter.

E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	5. Relates subject matter with other disciplines (curriculum integration).
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	6. Uses a variety of methods/techniques to present materials to meet students' needs and to meet state standards.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				
<b>THE TEACHER AS A PROFESSIONAL (29%)</b>				
<b>A. RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION (10%)</b>				
<b>Students:</b> The teacher demonstrates empathy and compatibility with students while maintaining mutual respect.				
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Gives students an opportunity to express themselves appropriately.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Has a reasonable understanding of the student's background when and where appropriate.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	3. Demonstrates understanding of students' learning characteristics.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	4. Creates an atmosphere where students feel free to express their views appropriately.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	5. Encourages respect for the rights, opinions, property, and contributions of students.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	6. Is readily available to students during work hours.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	7. Communicates with students at their level of comprehension.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	8. Promotes positive self-image in students through use of positive reinforcement.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	9. Shows a receptive attitude in a response to verbal/written feedback.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				

<b>Staff:</b> The teacher establishes rapport and understanding and cooperates well with colleagues.				
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Respects the rights, feelings, and differences of colleagues.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Collaborates with grade level, student services, and departmental colleagues.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				
<b>Parents:</b>				
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Initiates regular communications with parents.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Interacts positively with parents.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				
<b>B. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES (10%)</b>				
The teacher fulfills the requirements of punctuality, reliability, and responsibility with regard to building and Board policies and District procedures.				
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Complies with building and Board policies/District procedures.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Maintains accurate student records.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	3. Is prompt in arrival to school, classes, and meetings, and observes other required time schedules.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	4. Submits required reports in appropriate form and such other information as requested by the administration within designated time limits.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	5. Offers suggestions for program/building/District improvement.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	6. Contributes to the solution of building/program problems.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				

<b>C. PREPARATION AND SCHOLARSHIP (5%)</b>				
Teacher avails self of opportunities for professional improvement/development in compliance with building/ District goals and priorities.				
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Avails self of opportunities for professional growth and improvement.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Takes advantage of courses, in-service training, and conferences.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	3. Participates in a professional education organization.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				
<b>D. TECHNOLOGY CORE SKILLS (4%)</b>				
The teacher should be able to use the phone system and computers (hardware and software) to perform the basic functions of his/ her job, including the following:				
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	1. Create, edit, retrieve, format, and print a document using District software.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	2. Access and navigate through the Internet.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	3. Retrieve, save, and archive voice mail messages.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	4. Access phone system, add/change greeting, and change security code.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	5. Send and receive emails with and without attachments.
E <input type="checkbox"/>	P <input type="checkbox"/>	NI <input type="checkbox"/>	U <input type="checkbox"/>	6. Use student information system to record and transfer grades, progress reports, and attendance data.
<b>COMMENTS:</b>				
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>				
<b>GENERAL COMMENTS AND SIGNATURE</b>				
Use this space to make general comments. If additional space is needed, add narrative on separate sheet(s) of paper:				

<b>Overall Performance Rating:</b>	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
<i>I have seen this evaluation and have received a signed copy. It does not necessarily indicate agreement with the overall performance rating.</i>				
<i>Date:</i> _____ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <span><i>Teacher's Signature</i></span> <span><i>Administrator's Signature</i></span> </div>				

*cc. Personnel File*

## Appendix C: Danielson Evaluation Report

**Employee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment:** \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> yr. ☐ 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> yr. ☐ Tenured

**Evaluator Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date(s) of formal observation(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Overall Rating:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Final Meeting Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Each employee must be evaluated annually, except as otherwise required by contract. The original completed performance evaluation must be forwarded to Human Resources for inclusion in the employee's personnel file. The employee must receive a copy of the evaluation. When completing the evaluation, administrators must choose the rating for each factor listed below. If a factor is less than proficient, include an explanation.

### DOMAIN 1 - PLANNING AND PREPARATION

#### 1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
In planning and practice, teacher makes content <i>errors</i> or does not correct errors made by students. The teacher displays little understanding of prerequisite knowledge important to student learning of the content. The teacher displays little or no understanding of the range of pedagogical approaches suitable to student learning of the content.	The teacher is familiar with the important concepts in the discipline but displays lack of awareness of how these concepts relate to one another. The teacher's indicates some awareness of prerequisite learning, although such knowledge may be inaccurate or incomplete. The teacher's plans and practice reflect a limited range of pedagogical approaches to the discipline or to the students.	The teacher displays solid knowledge of the important concepts in the discipline and how these relate to one another. The teacher demonstrates accurate understanding of prerequisite relationships among topics. The teacher's plans and practice reflect familiarity with a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches in the subject.	The teacher displays extensive knowledge of the important concepts in the discipline and how these relate both to one another and to other disciplines. The teacher demonstrates understanding of prerequisite relationships among topics and concepts and understands the link to necessary cognitive structures that ensure student understanding. The teacher's plans and practice reflect familiarity with a wide range of effective pedagogical approaches in the discipline, and the ability to anticipate student misconceptions.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

#### 1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students

<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent
The teacher displays minimal understanding of how students learn and little knowledge of their varied approaches to	The teacher displays generally accurate knowledge of how students learn and their varied approaches to learning,	The teacher understands the active nature of student learning and attains information about levels of development for groups of	The teacher understands the active nature of student learning and acquires information about levels of development for individual



learning, knowledge and skills, special needs, and interests and cultural heritages-and does not indicate that such knowledge is valuable.	knowledge and skills, special needs, and interests and cultural heritages, yet may apply this knowledge not to individual students but to the class as a whole.	students. The teacher also purposefully acquires knowledge from several sources about groups of students' varied approaches to learning, knowledge and skills, special needs, and interests and cultural heritages.	students. The teacher also systematically acquires knowledge from several sources about individual students' varied approaches to learning, knowledge and skills, special needs, and interests and cultural heritages.
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**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

### 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The outcomes represent low expectations for students and lack of rigor, and not all of these outcomes reflect important learning in the discipline. They are stated as student activities, rather than as outcomes for learning. Outcomes reflect only one type of learning and only one discipline or strand and are suitable for only some students.	Outcomes represent moderately high expectations and rigor. Some reflect important learning in the discipline and consist of a combination of outcomes and activities. Outcomes reflect several types of learning, but the teacher has made no effort at coordination or integration. Outcomes, based on global assessments of student learning, are suitable for most of the students in the class.	Most outcomes represent rigorous and important learning in the discipline and are clear, are written in the form of student learning, and suggest viable methods of assessment. Outcomes reflect several different types of learning and opportunities for coordination, and they are differentiated, in whatever way is needed, for different groups of students.	All outcomes represent high-level learning in the discipline. They are clear, are written in the form of student learning, and permit viable methods of assessment. Outcomes reflect several different types of learning and, where appropriate, represent both coordination and integration. Outcomes are differentiated, in whatever way is needed, for individual students.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

### 1d: Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The teacher is unaware of resources to assist student learning beyond materials provided by the school or district, nor is the teacher aware of resources for expanding one's own professional skill.	The teacher displays some awareness of resources beyond those provided by the school or district for classroom use and for extending one's professional skill but does not seek to expand this knowledge.	The teacher displays awareness of resources beyond those provided by the school or district, including those on the Internet, for classroom use and for extending one's professional skill, and seeks out such resources.	The teacher's knowledge of resources for classroom use and for extending one's professional skill is extensive, including those available through the school or district, in the community, through professional organizations and universities, and on the Internet.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

### \* 1e: Demonstrating Coherent Instruction

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
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Learning activities are poorly aligned with the instructional outcomes, do not follow an organized progression, are not designed to engage students in active intellectual activity, and have unrealistic time allocations. Instructional groups are not suitable to the activities and offer no variety.	Some of the learning activities and materials are aligned with the instructional outcomes and represent moderate cognitive challenge, but with no differentiation for different students. Instructional groups partially support the activities, with some variety. The lesson or unit has a recognizable structure; but the progression of activities is uneven, with only some reasonable time allocations	Most of the learning activities are aligned with the instructional outcomes and follow an organized progression suitable to groups of students. The learning activities have reasonable time allocations; they represent significant cognitive challenge, with some differentiation for different groups of students and varied use of instructional groups.	The sequence of learning activities follows a coherent sequence, is aligned to instructional goals, and is designed to engage students in high-level cognitive activity. These are appropriately differentiated for individual learners. Instructional groups are varied appropriately, with some opportunity for student choice.
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**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

### 1f: Designing Student Assessments

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
Assessment procedures are not congruent with instructional outcomes and lack criteria by which student performance will be assessed. The teacher has no plan to incorporate formative assessment in the lesson or unit.	Assessment procedures are partially congruent with instructional outcomes. Assessment criteria and standards have been developed, but they are not clear. The teacher's approach to using formative assessment is rudimentary, including only some of the instructional outcomes.	All the instructional outcomes may be assessed by the proposed assessment plan; assessment methodologies may have been adapted for groups of students. Assessment criteria and standards are clear. The teacher has a well-developed strategy for using formative assessment and has designed particular approaches to be used.	All the instructional outcomes may be assessed by the proposed assessment plan, with clear criteria for assessing student work. The plan contains evidence of student contribution to its development. Assessment methodologies have been adapted for individual students as the need has arisen. The approach to using formative assessment is well designed and includes student as well as teacher use of the assessment information.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

### Domain Ratings

- **Excellent** - *Excellent* ratings in at least three (3) of the components of the domain, with the remaining components rated no lower than *Proficient*.
- **Proficient** - No more than one (1) component rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining components rated at *Proficient* or higher. However, if the one *Needs Improvement* is an anchor\* the overall component rating cannot be *Proficient*.
- **Needs Improvement** - More than one (1) component rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining components rated as *Proficient* or higher; or one (1) *Needs Improvement* in an anchor.
- **Unsatisfactory** - Any component rated as *Unsatisfactory*.

Domain 1 for Teachers – <i>Planning and Preparation</i>				
Domain	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Excellent
1a				
1b				
1c				
1d				
1e*				
1f				
<b>Final Domain Rating</b>				

DOMAIN 2 - CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT				
2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport				
<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	
Patterns of classroom interactions, both between teacher and students and among students, are mostly negative, inappropriate, or insensitive to students' ages, cultural backgrounds, and developmental levels. Student interactions are characterized by sarcasm, put-downs, or conflict. The teacher does not deal with disrespectful behavior.	Patterns of classroom interactions, both between teacher and students and among students, are generally appropriate but may reflect occasional inconsistencies, favoritism, and disregard for students' ages, cultures, and developmental levels. Students rarely demonstrate disrespect for one another. The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior, with uneven results. The net result of the interactions is neutral, conveying neither warmth nor conflict.	Teacher-student interactions are friendly and demonstrate general caring and respect. Such interactions are appropriate to the ages, cultures, and developmental levels of the students. Interactions among students are generally polite and respectful, and students exhibit respect for the teacher. The teacher responds successfully to disrespectful behavior among students. The net result of the interactions is polite, respectful, and businesslike, though students may be somewhat cautious about taking intellectual risks.	Classroom interactions between teacher and students and among students are highly respectful, reflecting genuine warmth, caring, and sensitivity to students as individuals. Students exhibit respect for the teacher and contribute to high levels of civility among all members of the class. The net result is an environment where all students feel valued and are comfortable taking intellectual risks.	
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>				
*2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning				
<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	

The classroom culture is characterized by a lack of teacher or student commitment to learning, and/or little or no investment of student energy in the task at hand. Hard work and the precise use of language are not expected or valued. Medium to low expectations for student achievement are the norm, with high expectations for learning reserved for only one or two students.	The classroom culture is characterized by little commitment to learning by the teacher or students. The teacher appears to be only "going through the motions," and students indicate that they are interested in the completion of a task rather than the quality of the work. The teacher conveys that student success is the result of natural ability rather than hard work, and refers only in passing to the precise use of language. High expectations for learning are reserved for those students thought to have a natural aptitude for the subject.	The classroom culture is a place where learning is valued by all; high expectations for both learning and hard work are the norm for most students. Students understand their role as learners and consistently expend effort to learn. Classroom interactions support learning, hard work, and the precise use of language.	The classroom culture is a cognitively busy place, characterized by a shared belief in the importance of learning. The teacher conveys high expectations for learning for all students and insists on hard work; students assume responsibility for high-quality by initiating improvements, making revisions, adding detail, and/or assisting peers in their precise use of language.
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**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

#### 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
Much instructional time is lost due to inefficient classroom routines and procedures. There is little or no evidence of the teacher's managing instructional groups and transitions and/or handling of materials and supplies effectively. There is little evidence that students know or follow established routines.	Some instructional time is lost due to partially effective classroom routines and procedures. The teacher's management of instructional groups and transitions, or handling of materials and supplies, or both, are inconsistent, leading to some disruption of learning. With regular guidance and prompting, students follow established routines.	There is little loss of instructional time due to effective classroom routines and procedures. The teacher's management of instructional groups and transitions, or handling of materials and supplies, or both, are consistently successful. With minimal guidance and prompting, students follow established classroom routines.	Instructional time is maximized due to efficient and seamless classroom routines and procedures. Students take initiative in the management of instructional groups and transitions, and/or the handling of materials and supplies. Routines are well understood and may be initiated by students.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

#### 2d: Managing Student Behavior

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
There appear to be no established standards of conduct, or students challenge them. There is little or no teacher monitoring of student behavior, and response to students' misbehavior is repressive or disrespectful of student dignity.	Standards of conduct appear to have been established, but their implementation is inconsistent. The teacher tries, with uneven results, to monitor student behavior and respond to student misbehavior	Student behavior is generally appropriate. The teacher monitors student behavior against established standards of conduct. Teacher response to student misbehavior is consistent, proportionate, and respectful to students and is effective.	Student behavior is entirely appropriate. Students take an active role in monitoring their own behavior and/or that of other students against standards of conduct. Teacher monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive. The

			teacher's response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs and respects students' dignity.
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**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

## 2e: Organizing Physical Space

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The classroom environment is unsafe, or learning is not accessible to many. There is poor alignment between the arrangement of furniture and resources, including computer technology, and the lesson activities.	The classroom is safe, and essential learning is accessible to most students. The teacher makes modest use of physical resources, including computer technology. The teacher attempts to adjust the classroom furniture for a lesson or, if necessary, to adjust the lesson to the furniture, but with limited effectiveness.	The classroom is safe, and students have equal access to learning activities; the teacher ensures that the furniture arrangement is appropriate to the learning activities and uses physical resources, including computer technology, effectively.	The classroom environment is safe, and learning is accessible to all students, including those with special needs. The teacher makes effective use of physical resources, including computer technology. The teacher ensures that the physical arrangement is appropriate to the learning activities. Students contribute to the use or adaptation of the physical environment to advance learning

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

### Domain Ratings

- **Excellent** - *Excellent* ratings in at least three (3) of the components of the domain, with the remaining components rated no lower than *Proficient*.
- **Proficient** - No more than one (1) component rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining components rated at *Proficient* or higher. However, if the one *Needs Improvement* is an anchor\* the overall component rating cannot be *Proficient*.
- **Needs Improvement** - More than one (1) component rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining components rated as *Proficient* or higher; or one (1) *Needs Improvement* in an anchor.
- **Unsatisfactory** - Any component rated as *Unsatisfactory*.

### Domain 2 for Teachers – Classroom Environment

Domain	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Excellent
2a				
2b*				
2c				

<b>2d</b>				
<b>2e</b>				
<b>Final Domain Rating</b>				

### DOMAIN 3 - INSTRUCTION

#### 3a: Communicating with Students

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The instructional purpose of the lesson is unclear to students, and the directions and procedures are confusing. The teacher's explanation of the content contains major errors and does not include any explanation of strategies students might use. The teacher's spoken or written language contains errors of grammar or syntax. The teacher's academic vocabulary is inappropriate, vague, or used incorrectly, leaving students confused.	The teacher's attempt to explain the instructional purpose has only limited success, and/or directions and procedures must be clarified after initial student confusion. The teacher's explanation of the content may contain minor errors; some portions are clear, others difficult to follow. The teacher's explanation does not invite students to engage intellectually or to understand strategies they might use when working independently. The teacher's spoken language is correct but uses vocabulary that is either limited or not fully appropriate to the students' ages or backgrounds. The teacher rarely takes opportunities to explain academic vocabulary.	The instructional purpose of the lesson is clearly communicated to students, including where it is situated within broader learning; directions and procedures are explained clearly and may be modeled. The teacher's explanation of content is scaffolded, clear, and accurate and connects with students' knowledge and experience. During the explanation of content, the teacher focuses, as appropriate, on strategies students can use when working independently and invites student intellectual engagement. The teacher's spoken and written language is clear and correct and is suitable to students' ages and interests. The teacher's use of academic vocabulary is precise and serves to extend student understanding.	The teacher links the instructional purpose of the lesson to the larger curriculum; the directions and procedures are clear and anticipate possible student misunderstanding. The teacher's explanation of content is thorough and clear, developing conceptual understanding through clear scaffolding and connecting with students' interests. Students contribute to extending the content by explaining concepts to their classmates and suggesting strategies that might be used. The teacher's spoken and written language is expressive, and the teacher finds opportunities to extend students' vocabularies, both within the discipline and for more general use. Students contribute to the correct use of academic vocabulary.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

#### 3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The teacher's questions are of low cognitive challenge, with single correct responses, and are asked in rapid succession. Interaction between the teacher and students is predominantly recitation style, with the teacher mediating all questions and	The teacher's questions lead students through a single path of inquiry, with answers seemingly determined in advance. Alternatively, the teacher attempts to ask some questions designed to engage students in thinking, but only a few	While the teacher may use some low-level questions, he poses questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding. The teacher creates a genuine discussion among students, providing adequate time for students to respond and	The teacher uses a variety or series of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, advance high-level thinking and discourse, and promote metacognition. Students formulate many questions, initiate topics, challenge one another's

answers; the teacher accepts all contributions without asking students to explain their reasoning. Only a few students participate in the discussion.	students are involved. The teacher attempts to engage all students in the discussion, to encourage them to respond to one another, and to ex-plain their thinking, with uneven results.	stepping aside when doing so is appropriate. The teacher challenges students to justify their thinking and successfully engages most students in the discussion, employing a range of strategies to ensure that most students are heard.	thinking, and make unsolicited contributions. Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion.
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**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

**\*3c: Engaging Students in Learning (linked to 1e)**

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The learning tasks/activities, materials, and resources are poorly aligned with the instructional outcomes, or require only rote responses, with only one approach possible. The groupings of students are unsuitable to the activities. The lesson has no clearly defined structure, or the pace of the lesson is too slow or rushed.	The learning tasks and activities are partially aligned with the instructional outcomes but require only minimal thinking by students and little opportunity for them to explain their thinking, allowing most students to be passive or merely compliant. The groupings of students are moderately suitable to the activities. The lesson has a recognizable structure; however, the pacing of the lesson may not provide students the time needed to be intellectually engaged or may be so slow that many students have a considerable amount of "downtime."	The learning tasks and activities are fully aligned with the instructional outcomes and are designed to challenge student thinking, inviting students to make their thinking visible. This technique results in active intellectual engagement by most students with important and challenging content and with teacher scaffolding to support that engagement. The groupings of students are suitable to the activities. The lesson has a clearly defined structure, and the pacing of the lesson is appropriate, providing most students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.	Virtually all students are intellectually engaged in challenging content through well-designed learning tasks and activities that require complex thinking by students. The teacher provides suitable scaffolding and challenges students to explain their thinking. There is evidence of some student initiation of inquiry and student contributions to the exploration of important content; students may serve as resources for one another. The lesson has a clearly defined structure, and the pacing of the lesson provides students the time needed not only to intellectually engage with and reflect upon their learning but also to consolidate their understanding.

**Comments/Supporting Documentation:**

**3d: Using Assessment in Instruction**

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
Students do not appear to be aware of the assessment criteria, and there is little or no monitoring of student learning; feedback is absent or of poor quality. Students do not engage in self- or peer assessment.	Students appear to be only partially aware of the assessment criteria, and the teacher monitors student learning for the class as a whole. Questions and assessments are rarely used to diagnose evidence of learning. Feedback to students is general, and	Students appear to be aware of the assessment criteria, and the teacher monitors student learning for groups of students. Questions and assessments are regularly used to diagnose evidence of learning. Teacher feedback to groups of students is	Assessment is fully integrated into instruction, through extensive use of formative assessment. Students appear to be aware of, and there is some evidence that they have contributed to, the assessment criteria. Questions and assessments

	few students assess their own work.	accurate and specific; some students engage in self-assessment.	are used regularly to diagnose evidence of learning by individual students. A variety of forms of feedback, from both teacher and peers, is accurate and specific and advances learning. Students self-assess and monitor their own progress. The teacher successfully differentiates instruction to address individual students' misunderstandings.
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>			
<b>3e: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The teacher ignores students' questions; when students have difficulty learning, the teacher blames them or their home environment for their lack of success. The teacher makes no attempt to adjust the lesson even when students don't understand the content.	The teacher accepts responsibility for the success of all students but has only a limited repertoire of strategies to use. Adjustment of the lesson in response to assessment is minimal or ineffective.	The teacher successfully accommodates students' questions and interests. Drawing on a broad repertoire of strategies, the teacher persists in seeking approaches for students who have difficulty learning. If impromptu measures are needed, the teacher makes a minor adjustment to the lesson and does so smoothly.	The teacher seizes an opportunity to enhance learning, building on a spontaneous event or students' interests, or successfully adjusts and differentiates instruction to address individual student misunderstandings. Using an extensive repertoire of instructional strategies and soliciting additional resources from the school or community, the teacher persists in seeking effective approaches for students who need help.
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>			
<b>Domain Ratings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Excellent</b> - <i>Excellent</i> ratings in at least three (3) of the components of the domain, with the remaining components rated no lower than <i>Proficient</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Proficient</b> - No more than one (1) component rated <i>Needs Improvement</i>, with the remaining components rated at <i>Proficient</i> or higher. However, if the one <i>Needs Improvement</i> is an anchor* the overall component rating cannot be <i>Proficient</i>.</li> <li>• <b>Needs Improvement</b> - More than one (1) component rated <i>Needs Improvement</i>, with the remaining components rated as <i>Proficient</i> or higher; or one (1) <i>Needs Improvement</i> in an anchor.</li> <li>• <b>Unsatisfactory</b> - Any component rated as <i>Unsatisfactory</i>.</li> </ul>			



Domain 3 for Teachers – <i>Instruction</i>				
Domain	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Excellent
3a				
3b				
3c*				
3d				
3e				
<b>Final Domain Rating</b>				

DOMAIN 4 - PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES				
4a: Reflecting on Teaching				
<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	
The teacher does not know whether a lesson was effective or achieved its instructional outcomes, or the teacher profoundly misjudges the success of a lesson. The teacher has no suggestions for how a lesson could be improved.	The teacher has a generally accurate impression of a lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which instructional outcomes were met. The teacher makes general suggestions about how a lesson could be improved.	The teacher makes an accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which it achieved its instructional outcomes and can cite general references to support the judgment. The teacher makes a few specific suggestions of what could be tried another time the lesson is taught.	The teacher makes a thoughtful and accurate assessment of a lesson's effectiveness and the extent to which it achieved its instructional outcomes, citing many specific examples from the lesson and weighing the relative strengths of each. Drawing on an extensive repertoire of skills, the teacher offers specific alternative actions, complete with the probable success of different courses of action.	
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>				
4b: Maintaining Accurate Records				
<input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Proficient	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	
The teacher's system for maintaining information on student completion of assignments and student progress in learning is nonexistent or in disarray. The teacher's records for non-instructional activities	The teacher's system for maintaining information on student completion of assignments and student progress in learning is rudimentary and only partially effective. The teacher's records for non-	The teacher's system for maintaining information on student completion of assignments, student progress in learning, and noninstructional records is fully effective.	The teacher's system for maintaining information on student completion of assignments, student progress in learning, and non-instructional records is fully effective. Students contribute	

are in disarray, the result being errors and confusion.	instructional activities are adequate but inefficient and, unless given frequent oversight by the teacher, prone to errors.		information and participate in maintaining the records.
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>			
<b>4c: Communicating with Families</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The teacher provides little information about the instructional program to families; the teacher's communication about students' progress is minimal. The teacher does not respond, or responds insensitively, to parental concerns.	The teacher makes sporadic attempts to communicate with families about the instructional program and about the progress of individual students but does not attempt to engage families in the instructional program. Moreover, the communication that does take place may not be culturally sensitive to those families.	The teacher provides frequent and appropriate information to families about the instructional program and conveys information about individual student progress in a culturally sensitive manner. The teacher makes some attempts to engage families in the instructional program.	The teacher communicates frequently with families in a culturally sensitive manner, with students contributing to the communication. The teacher responds to family concerns with professional and cultural sensitivity. The teacher's efforts to engage families in the instructional program are frequent and successful.
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation</b>			
<b>*4d: Participating in the Professional Community</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
The teacher's relationships with colleagues are negative or self-serving. The teacher avoids participation in a professional culture of inquiry, resisting opportunities to become involved. The teacher avoids becoming involved in school events or school and district projects.	The teacher maintains cordial relationships with colleagues to fulfill duties that the school or district requires. The teacher participates in the school's culture of professional inquiry when invited to do so. The teacher participates in school events and school and district projects when specifically asked.	The teacher's relationships with colleagues are characterized by mutual support and cooperation; the teacher actively participates in a culture of professional inquiry. The teacher volunteers to participate in school events and in school and district projects, making a substantial contribution.	The teacher's relationships with colleagues are characterized by mutual support and cooperation, with the teacher taking initiative in assuming leadership among the faculty. The teacher takes a leadership role in promoting a culture of professional inquiry. The teacher volunteers to participate in school events and district projects, making a substantial contribution and assuming a leadership role in at least one aspect of school or district life.
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>			
<b>4e: Growing and Developing Professionally</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>

<p>The teacher engages in no professional development activities to enhance knowledge or skill. The teacher resists feedback on teaching performance from either supervisors or more experienced colleagues. The teacher makes no effort to share knowledge with others or to assume professional responsibilities.</p>	<p>The teacher participates to a limited extent in professional activities when they are convenient. The teacher engages in a limited way with colleagues and supervisors in professional conversation about practice, including some feedback on teaching performance. The teacher finds limited ways to assist other teachers and contribute to the profession.</p>	<p>The teacher seeks out opportunities for professional development to enhance content knowledge and pedagogical skill. The teacher actively engages with colleagues and supervisors in professional conversation about practice, including feedback about practice. The teacher participates actively in assisting other educators and looks for ways to contribute to the profession.</p>	<p>The teacher seeks out opportunities for professional development and makes a systematic effort to conduct action research. The teacher solicits feedback on practice from both supervisors and colleagues. The teacher initiates important activities to contribute to the profession.</p>
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>			
<b>4f: Showing Professionalism</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Needs Improvement</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Proficient</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Excellent</b>
<p>The teacher displays dishonesty in interactions with colleagues, students, and the public. The teacher is not alert to students' needs and contributes to school practices that result in some students being ill served by the school. The teacher makes decisions and recommendations that are based on self-serving interests. The teacher does not comply with school and district regulations.</p>	<p>The teacher is honest in interactions with colleagues, students, and the public. The teacher's attempts to serve students are inconsistent, and unknowingly contribute to some students being ill served by the school. The teacher's decisions and recommendations are based on limited though genuinely professional considerations. The teacher must be reminded by supervisors about complying with school and district regulations.</p>	<p>The teacher displays high standards of honesty, integrity, and confidentiality in interactions with colleagues, students, and the public. The teacher is active in serving students, working to ensure that all students receive a fair opportunity to succeed. The teacher maintains an open mind in team or departmental decision making. The teacher complies fully with school and district regulations.</p>	<p>The teacher can be counted on to hold the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and confidentiality and takes a leadership role with colleagues. The teacher is highly proactive in serving students, seeking out resources when needed. The teacher makes a concerted effort to challenge negative attitudes or practices to ensure that all students, particularly those traditionally underserved, are honored in the school. The teacher takes a leadership role in team or departmental decision making and helps ensure that such decisions are based on the highest professional standards. The teacher complies fully with school and district regulations, taking a leadership role with colleagues.</p>
<b>Comments/Supporting Documentation:</b>			
<b>Domain Ratings</b>			

- **Excellent** - *Excellent* ratings in at least three (3) of the components of the domain, with the remaining components rated no lower than *Proficient*.
- **Proficient** - No more than one (1) component rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining components rated at *Proficient* or higher. However, if the one *Needs Improvement* is an anchor\* the overall component rating cannot be *Proficient*.
- **Needs Improvement** - More than one (1) component rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining components rated as *Proficient* or higher; or one (1) *Needs Improvement* in an anchor.
- **Unsatisfactory** - Any component rated as *Unsatisfactory*.

Domain 4 for Teachers – <i>Professional Responsibilities</i>				
Domain	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Excellent
4a				
4b				
4c				
4d*				
4e				
4f				
<b>Final Domain Rating</b>				

#### *How to Arrive at Overall Summative Ratings*

##### **Overall Summative Ratings**

- **Excellent** - *Excellent* rating in at least two (2) or more of the domains, with the remaining domains rated as *Proficient*.
- **Proficient** - No more than one (1) domain rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining domains rated at *Proficient* or higher.
- **Needs Improvement** - More than one (1) domain rated *Needs Improvement*, with the remaining domains rated as *Proficient* or higher.
- **Unsatisfactory** - Any domain rated *Unsatisfactory*.

Final Summative Rating				
	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Excellent

<b>Student Growth</b>				
<b>Domain 1</b>				
<b>Domain 2</b>				
<b>Domain 3</b>				
<b>Domain 4</b>				
<b>Overall Rating</b>				

Administrator Comments/Supporting Documentation:

This evaluation is my judgment of the employee's performance during the rating period.

Evaluated by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE EMPLOYEE**

I have reviewed my performance evaluation and had an opportunity to discuss it with my administrator.

My signature below does not necessarily denote agreement with all aspects of my performance evaluation. I understand that I may comment on the evaluation in the space below or submit additional comments within the next five working days.

Employee Comments:

Employee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D: Danielson Framework Domains and Components**

### **Domain 1 - Planning and Preparation**

- 1a - Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
- 1b - Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
- 1c - Setting Instructional Outcomes
- 1d - Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
- 1e - Designing Coherent Instruction
- 1f - Designing Student Assessments

### **Domain 2 - The Classroom Environment**

- 2a - Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
- 2b - Establishing a Culture for Learning
- 2c - Managing Classroom Procedures
- 2d - Managing Student Behaviors
- 2e - Organizing Physical Space

### **Domain 3 - Instruction**

- 3a - Communicating with Students
- 3b - Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
- 3c - Engaging Students in Learning
- 3d - Using Assessment in Instruction
- 3e - Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

### **Domain 4 - Professional Responsibilities**

- 4a - Reflecting on Teaching
- 4b - Maintaining Accurate Records
- 4c - Communicating with Families
- 4d - Participating in the Professional Community
- 4e - Growing and Developing Professionally
- 4f - Showing Professionalism

EVERY CHILD A WHOLE CHILD: THE ILLINOIS K-8 SUPERINTENDENT'S  
APPROACH TO RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT  
DURING UNCERTAIN TIMES

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
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## **Abstract**

The Every Child a Whole Child policy outlines a school improvement process stemming from a whole child philosophy. One that believes the academic and social/emotional needs of students should drive improvement efforts rather than test scores. The policy maintains that this approach will produce greater overall success than efforts aimed solely at raising achievement. The Every Child a Whole Child policy addresses many of the identified problems of the No Child Left Behind act and provides Illinois K-8 superintendents an immediate roadmap to improve schools during uncertain times.



## **Preface**

The emphasis on increasing student achievement that permeates public education today has caused many educators to question their current practice and the purpose of public education. Is it appropriate to narrow the curriculum to the content of tested topics? Are standardized test results the most important aspect of schools?

This policy advocacy paper brings balance to the rhetoric and renews the spirit of teaching by stressing that student achievement is a byproduct of educating the whole child. When the social, emotional, physical, and academic needs of students are met, achievement will increase as a result.

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## **Section One: Vision Statement**

### **Whole Child Education**

As I began to enthusiastically craft the agenda for the opening teacher institute day as a new principal, I knew that presenting a clear vision of our destination was vitally important. As the obstacles we'd encounter on the journey sprang up and the weight of responsibility pressed down however, the euphoria of the new job quickly dissipated. Student achievement was abysmal. Hometown Elementary School had not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in over five years, the core curriculum was over a decade old, and I was replacing a well-loved principal. Not bowing to doubt or dismay, my strong commitment to children and learning rose up. Remembering the phrase commonly attributed to Aristotle, "educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all," I wrote "Whole Child Education" at the top of the agenda.

While other topics, like student achievement, generate more attention and headlines, whole child education offers a more sustainable vision as, "the demands of the 21st century require a new approach to education to fully prepare students for college, career, and citizenship" (ASCD, 2015b, para. 1). To realize each child's hopes and dreams for the future and to open the door to every opportunity, it is essential that school leaders, starting with the superintendent, bring members of every stakeholder group together to enhance the educational experience of the community's children. This shared responsibility approach "sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success" by ensuring that "each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged" (ASCD, 2015b, para. 2).

In a data driven world, where student achievement often dictates perceptions of success or failure, whole child education is an uncommon mantra from a school leader. It's not that I don't value student achievement however; I constantly analyze standardized test results to determine growth and achievement gains for various populations of students and make adjustments to our programming accordingly. To me, the difference is

that student achievement is just one measure of how well we are doing rather than the singular focus of our work. How can students learn if they come to school without breakfast each day? How successful will students be if they score in the top quartile on a standardized test but are unable to establish collaborative relationships with their colleagues later in life? As an assistant principal, who dealt with student discipline for many years, I learned that addressing students' social and emotional growth assisted their academic growth and paid many future dividends. Teaching students to respond to adults respectfully, for example, resulted in life-long behavioral change and kept them in class, a learning environment, rather than waiting in the office. For this reason, meeting the physical needs of students and giving them the social and emotional skills needed to properly interact with adults and peers is just as valuable as academic learning and present a more comprehensive vision for today's youth.

### **Policy Awareness**

Reforming education to improve student achievement has been a national priority for many decades. As far back as 1983, the *Nation at Risk* report asserted that America's public schools were failing and that students were not being adequately prepared for the work force, especially compared to other industrialized countries. From 2002-2014, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act challenged states to have every child test at a proficient level by 2014. During this time, the sanctions mandated for schools whose students failed to perform made student achievement the primary measure of a school's success (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002).

In 2012, I became the principal of Hometown Elementary School. The school had not made AYP for many years and was required to restructure under the mandates of NCLB. As the district investigated the various restructuring options, it became apparent that the law just mandated change, basically assuming that anything would result in improvement. For example, a district could change its structure from neighborhood schools to grade level centers or vice versa and be in compliance with the mandates,

regardless of whether student learning benefitted from the change (NCLB, 2002).

Thankfully, our superintendent, school board, and community committed to restructuring through a whole child framework. From the outset, the district's priority was to implement research-based initiatives to meet the identified needs of children, knowing that this approach would lead to increased learning (Susnjara, 2013). While the restructuring journey was difficult, the achievement at Hometown Elementary School showed dramatic and immediate improvement (Georgia, 2014).

This success however, has not been the norm as, across the state and nation, the number of schools not making AYP continually increased as 2014 approached. The Center on Education Policy (2012) found that the number of schools not making AYP increased nine percent from 2010 to 2011. The discrepancy between the professional literature pointing the way to increased student achievement and schools' continued failure to improve, left me wondering. If we know what works to improve student learning, why is achievement not increasing? What, and who, does it take to link these?

### **Critical Issues**

The problem with student achievement in public education in the United States is complicated and does not have a simple or easy fix. Decades of federal reforms have attempted to improve various aspects of the system, from assessment, to curriculum, to leadership, without finding a lasting solution (The Heritage Foundation, 2014). While student achievement is easy to measure, identifying the root causes requires a deeper and broader analysis of the issue from multiple perspectives: educational, economic, social, political, and ethical.

Educationally, the critical question has already been asked, why isn't student achievement improving when research clearly shows what works to increase success? Economically, the funding available to districts and how it is dispersed is a critical issue to analyze. Can districts realize improvement with existing resources or do additional funding sources need to be found? Socially, the impact that the emphasis on student

achievement has had on district programs and stakeholders must be explored. Is it possible that recent reform efforts have actually proven detrimental to the quality of programs, tarnished society's perception of public schools, and eviscerated local control of schools? Politically, one wonders whether politicians are looking out for America's children or themselves. Are educational decisions truly made in the best interests of students or could they be more influenced by lobbyists' agendas? Morally and ethically, student achievement raises important questions about the nation's philosophy toward public education. Are varying levels of achievement acceptable? Who is responsible for schools, the federal, state, or local government? Should the same opportunity be provided to all students? The next section of this paper will explore and analyze these questions in greater detail.

### **Policy Recommendation**

As previously stated, student learning is a by-product of the effectiveness of multiple components of a school system. The leadership, curriculum, instructional quality, climate, and community connections must all work together to meet the needs of the whole child, ensuring that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

This work requires strong leadership from a district's superintendent and requires that efforts to increase achievement analyze each of these components to determine which ones are most responsible for the school's success or failure. For example, a school could be underperforming because its curriculum is old and no longer aligned to state or national standards. Replacing the leadership at such a school will likely prove fruitless. Alternately, students may not feel part of the school community and see no value in learning "irrelevant" content. Reform efforts that do not address these climate issues will also fail.

For this reason, this paper advocates for Illinois K-8 superintendents to approach student achievement by embracing improvement efforts emanating from a whole child

philosophy, the Every Child a Whole Child (ECAWC) policy. By assessing students' growth and achievement toward college and career readiness, creating research-based continuous improvement plans for underperforming schools, and procuring and distributing resources fairly and equitably, superintendents will ensure that each child's full needs are met. This will result in increased student achievement and provide to a promising future.

### **Policy Effectiveness**

The ECAWC policy was developed in response to years of dealing with the mandates of NCLB. While NCLB had good intentions, the law's sanctions had an unnecessarily detrimental effect on the programs, finances, and reputations of many schools and districts (Schul, 2011). ECAWC will be effective because it gives superintendents the control needed to avoid these pitfalls.

First, ECAWC will provide the public valid and consistent information about student progress by requiring that assessment reports be aligned with college and career readiness standards rather than arbitrary state decisions. In contrast, NCLB confused the public regarding the true academic knowledge students possess by allowing states to design their own assessments and to determine their own cut scores, which resulted in a wide range of proficiency levels. Then, as time passed, and the bar for AYP increased, states even changed their cut scores to avoid the negative In Status label (ISBE, 2006). An analysis of fourteen states' cut scores by the Northwest Education Associates (NWEA), found significant variation between states' cut scores when compared to its own Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests. The study found that a sixth grader in Montana only needed to score at the 35th percentile on the MAP math test to achieve proficiency, while sixth graders in South Carolina had to score at the 78th percentile to be labeled proficient. The study also found differences between grade level cut scores within the same state. In Montana, fourth graders scoring at the 26th percentile achieved proficiency in reading, but as fifth graders, those same students would need to score at



the 36th percentile to maintain proficiency (Kingsbury, Olson, Cronin, Hauser, & Houser, 2003).

Second, ECAWC will be successful because it emphasizes what is best for the whole child. Test scores will be just one measure of a school's effectiveness and growth gains will be recognized in addition to achievement levels. NCLB, on the other hand, overemphasized test scores, which resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum as teachers felt great pressure to teach to the test and abandoned creative exploration to focus on basic skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Third, ECAWC provides a roadmap for the improvement process, identifies underlying causes for underperformance, and addresses the issues by channeling district resources to areas of need in a supportive manner and seeking out additional resources as needed. NCLB, however, mandated punitive measures without further guidance for implementing the changes in a manner that increased achievement, even though its goal was for every child to achieve at high levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). For example, after just two years of not making AYP, districts had to divert Title 1 monies to supplementary education services, which limited the superintendents' ability to effect change (NCLB, 2002).

Fourth, ECAWC is tailored to the specific issues faced by K-8 school districts in Illinois by recognizing individual differences and the need for the support and assistance of stakeholders. In contrast, NCLB tried to effect change from the top down by mandating the same sanctions for all schools in the nation with no regard for the differences between students or communities (NCLB, 2002). Of special significance is the fact that ECAWC can be implemented at any time and relies on district leadership and the support of a community rather than waiting for a federal policy that works or a state superhero. This is especially relevant since NCLB expired in 2007 and, after years of debate, is finally being reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Lastly, the ECAWC policy will be effective because it is an outgrowth of the successful initiatives implemented at Hometown Elementary School. While NCLB provided the impetus for change, the curricular, programmatic, and staffing initiatives were the result of a superintendent's commitment to doing what is best for children. By purposefully rallying the support of the school board and community, identifying the comprehensive needs of students, implementing programs to address those needs, and allocating resources equitably and fairly, she was able to effect substantial improvement in academic achievement. I am convinced that every school in the nation can achieve similar success following the same process.

## **Section Two: Analysis of Need**

### **Educational Analysis**

As previously stated, student achievement is a prime measure of success in today's public school. Thus, a failure to thrive academically is a critical issue that must be analyzed and addressed. After all, children are the future of our nation and deserve the very best educators can offer. Schools that have children at the heart of their mission must provide the greatest opportunity for each child and cannot sit back while students fail to reach their fullest potential.

The reality however, is that this has not been occurring as student achievement has been an issue for over three decades; from 1983's *Nation at Risk* report, to 2001's No Child Left Behind act, to 2009's Race to the Top grants. Despite incredible effort and billions of dollars, student learning remains a major concern and superintendents wonder if the new Every Student Succeeds Act will be the program that finally works or whether an alternate approach should be employed.

This failure to thrive academically is especially frustrating when professional literature is replete with studies detailing what works to increase achievement. Daggett's (2005) meta-analysis of seven different studies found distinct similarities between successful schools. In each one, leadership, school culture, curriculum, instruction, professional development, and parent/community relations marked high student success. Adding to the frustration is the fact that professional literature also provides clear guidance on the process to follow to successfully transform a school from an existing situation to the ideal (Wagner, et al., 2006). Given that the components of successful schools and the transformation process are so well known, it appears that providing educational practitioners the necessary *guidance* and *support* are the missing components of the various federal programs.

## **Economic Analysis**

Economic issues also play a critical role in a school's ability to improve. Inequities in school funding are a frank reality that will affect each district's capacity to change. According to the 2013 U.S. Census Bureau, Illinois annually spends \$12,288 per pupil and ranks 14<sup>th</sup> in the nation. This average does not tell the whole story however. In Illinois, general state aid is provided to districts on a sliding scale so that those with a higher percentage of low-income families receive more aid than districts with a lower percentage of low-income students. This equalization grant, however, amounts to only \$7,000 per pupil and does not account for the revenue a district receives from local property taxes. As a result, some districts with a strong tax base have significantly more than the equalization grant (Morton, 2015). The difference is quite startling, especially since the state has not been able to pay districts their full share in recent years. The operating expense per pupil ranges from \$6,036.51 in Germantown, District 60 to \$30,628.48 in Rondout, District 72 (ISBE, 2014).

In addition to the inequity in per pupil spending, school improvement efforts are affected by the allocation of federal funds. NCLB is often referred to as an "unfunded mandate" because no additional finances were provided to districts that had to implement the sanctions for not making AYP. While this is true, it is lesser known that federal funding for education increased 59.8% from 2000 to 2003 to support NCLB programs, including \$1 billion for Reading First (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). Title 1 monies are distributed directly to schools with high poverty populations. Since there is a high correlation between high poverty schools and low achievement (ASCD, 2015a), many schools not making AYP have received more monies to work with.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education revealed the Race to the Top (RTTT) program. These competitive grants aimed to lay "the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased

productivity and effectiveness” (U. S. Department of Education, 2009, p. 2). \$3.45 billion was awarded to states whose grant applications scored the highest on the selection criteria (Civic Impulse, 2015). To date, RTTT has resulted in some significant reforms to state laws on teacher evaluation (Dillon, 2010), and 18 of the nation’s 50 states, representing 45% of the nation’s K-12 students, have been awarded grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

At present, the financial ramifications of the forthcoming Every Student Succeeds Act are still percolating down to the district and school level, specifically with regard to Title 1 funds (Marcos, 2015). For this reason, superintendents contemplating school improvement measures during such uncertain times must juggle deliberate and aggressive actions. While taking some action to advocate for the equalization of per pupil spending in Illinois is understandable, the oversight and distribution of resources in a superintendent’s current district must remain his or her first priority. At the same time, opportunities to receive grants or other resources must be aggressively pursued.

### **Social Analysis**

The intense focus on student achievement in public education has had a significant effect on the fabric of American society as test scores have received more attention than whole child education. From the outset of public education, the purpose of schools has been the improvement of the nation’s citizens. “The founders of the nation were convinced that the republic could survive only if its citizens were properly educated. This was a collective purpose, not simply an individual benefit or payoff to an interest group” (Tyack, 2003, p. 1). For the past decade however, NCLB has not mentioned civic responsibility and the public’s collective responsibility to all students. Instead, schools have been labeled negatively and sanctioned. Frequent media reports about schools in “restructuring” or “not making AYP” have left the public skeptical and distrustful. According to Rose (2009), this indictment of public schools occurs because:

It preempts careful analysis of one of the nation’s most significant democratic

projects. And it engenders a mood of cynicism and retrenchment, preparing the public mind for extreme responses: increased layers of testing and control, denial of new resources, and the curative effect of free market forces via vouchers and privatization. (p. 2)

Aside from the damage to the nation's perception of public schools, NCLB has had other detrimental effects. To better support increased testing and to emphasize reading and math instruction, many schools have reduced their emphasis on the arts. A study on the impact of NCLB on art education by Purdue University reported that NCLB had negative effects on scheduling, workloads, and funding. In addition, critical thinking has been replaced with test preparation (Sabol, 2010).

As the annual progress of schools is judged by single standardized tests in reading and mathematics, the panic created by such a policy has had a snowball effect of emphasizing passing the test over the general quality of the school experience: the more emphasis placed on test scores, the less emphasis placed on the general school experience. Once tests have such high stakes attached to them, instructional time is supplanted by test preparation resulting in a shortened and weakened classroom experience. (Schul, 2011, para. 3)

Even worse, the high stakes nature of testing has resulted in unethical behavior. While the public can understand individual students cheating on a test, the thought of administrators changing answers is shocking. This however, is precisely what happened in the Atlanta Public School system between 2005 and 2009 when student answers were changed by teachers or administrators out of pride, to earn bonuses, to enhance their careers, or to keep their jobs (Frantz, 2015). When the systems in place have an adverse effect on students, something needs to be done. "What makes education in a democracy distinct is a commitment to a particularly precious and fragile ideal...that the fullest development of all is the necessary condition for the full development of each" (Ayers, 2009, para. 9).

## **Political Analysis**

Education has always played a major role in politics and candidates at each level generally have a school improvement plan as part of their platform. The U.S. Department of Education is then responsible for making our political leaders' vision a reality. The department's stated mission is "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (U. S. Department of Education, 2012, para. 10).

Numerous laws and policies have been implemented over the years with mixed results. While the major laws addressing equity issues, *Brown v. Board of Education* and Title IX, have improved opportunities for students, the verdict on the efficacy of the major achievement policies, NCLB and RTTT, has not been as positive. While the goals of the programs are clear, the implementation and accountability processes have raised many questions and had a number of detrimental repercussions. For example, under NCLB, districts with schools that did not make AYP for two consecutive years were required to submit a district improvement plan detailing the steps that would be taken to ensure that more students reached proficiency targets. No provision however, was given for how states would support the plan financially or hold districts accountable for implementing the plan with fidelity.

Regarding the implementation process, NCLB allowed parents the option of sending their children to a school that made AYP if their child attended a school that did not make AYP. While some students did switch schools as a result of this sanction, the reality is that many schools didn't have room to accommodate mass transfers or that transferring didn't make sense because the other district schools also failed to make AYP.

The concern about the effectiveness of implemented initiatives remained as schools continued to not make AYP and entered Corrective Action status and Restructuring status. While clear options were provided, NCLB merely required change, almost assuming that any change would improve student achievement. There was no

requirement that the changes be linked to the needs of the school or the needs of students. Specifically, the restructuring guidance for the governance model allowed, “any other major restructuring” that makes “fundamental reform” to the school’s “governance and management” (Illinois State Board of Education [ISBE], 2010, p. 49). As a result, a district with neighborhood schools could restructure to grade level centers or vice versa without justifying how this would improve student learning.

A major issue with the existing situation is the political election cycle. Improving achievement is a long-term process that requires consistent, dedicated effort. Even the U.S. Department of Education’s (2010) blueprint for the reauthorization of NCLB, states that grants must be awarded for more than three to five year cycles so that programs are given sufficient time to become established. Rather than honoring prior work and seeing it through to fruition however, most newly elected politicians eagerly implement their own educational agendas. NCLB for instance, was passed into law shortly after President Bush took office in 2001 and Race to the Top was announced in 2009, shortly after President Obama was elected.

As a result, efforts to improve academic achievement for students in America’s public schools must ensure that that federal, state, and local agencies work together, implement proven initiatives, set long-term objectives, and hold themselves accountable.

### **Moral and Ethical Analysis**

The emphasis on student achievement, generated by recent reform efforts, has created a climate that questions the moral and ethical foundation of public education. When Horace Mann standardized the statewide system of public schools in the mid-1800s, he established a mindset that education should be “universal, non-sectarian, free, and that its aims should be social efficiency, civic virtue, and character” (Cubberley, 1919, p. 167). As a result, one would expect whole child education to be the primary focus of schools and that those with the least resources would be provided the greatest support. Unfortunately, this is largely not the case, as NCLB and RTTT have not been



implemented with equity or justice.

Initially, NCLB's goal of having every student attain proficiency by 2014 was embraced as an acceptable challenge, but as more and more schools failed to meet AYP and more and more districts started dealing with the reality of the unfunded mandates required by the law, it became apparent that Mann's desire to provide the best for all students was being replaced with antagonism toward education and was eroding the public's perception of public schools.

By 2009, the number of schools failing to improve under NCLB's punitive measures was rapidly increasing when RTTT monopolized the educational spotlight. Rather than addressing the problems caused by NCLB however, RTTT laid out competitive grants that were awarded to states willing to comply with the award criteria. In response, several states changed their policies to make their applications more competitive. Illinois, for instance, increased the cap on the number of charter schools it allows from 60 to 120. Even with such changes however, only 55% of students and only 32 states have received assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In addition, some analyses of RTTT grant applications have reported that politics may have influenced the scoring of certain applications more than their merit (Bowen, 2010).

As the primary authority for education in the United States, it would seem both just and ethical that the Department of Education supported rather than vilified schools and provided resources to the neediest rather than the motivated. If the nation's vision is the development of the whole child, the policies we enact must ensure "that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged" (ASCD, 2015b, para. 2). While the platitudes of politicians support comprehensive school improvement for student success, it is essential that the reforms enacted benefit all students rather than some, provide assistance based on need rather than request, and tailor changes to individual schools rather than one size fits all policies.

### **Section Three: Advocated Policy Statement**

Sections One and Two have highlighted three key points.

- Students are graduating from high school unprepared for college and career opportunities.
- Numerous research-based programs that document what works to raise student achievement exist.
- Reform policies, like NCLB, have not resulted in lasting change or significantly increased achievement.

To ensure that improvement efforts are effective, this paper advocates for the Every Child a Whole Child (ECAWC) policy. The course of action outlined by ECAWC provides K-8 superintendents in Illinois a research-based roadmap for whole child improvement regardless of what is occurring at the state and federal level. The ECAWC policy requires: an accurate assessment of student growth and achievement toward college and career readiness, the implementation of a research-based continuous improvement plan, the procurement of additional resources, and the fair and equitable distribution of assets to ensure that every child obtains the academic, social, and emotional skills necessary to open every future possibility and will produce strong academic achievement.

#### **Performance Assessment and Proficiency Criteria**

First, ECAWC requires that superintendents obtain assessment data to determine the district's students' progress toward college and career readiness by administering the Northwest Education Association's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) tests in reading and math. The tests should be given bi-yearly to determine individual and collective growth and achievement.

The NWEA is a global not-for-profit educational services organization that was founded nearly 40 years ago and is best known for its MAP assessments. Currently, more than ten million students in more than 7,400 schools, districts, education agencies, and

international schools use the MAP assessments each year (Northwest Evaluation Association [NWEA], 2015a).

The MAP assessments are computer-based tests, aligned with the Common Core standards, that create a personalized experience by adapting to each student's learning level. As students progress through the test, each question's level of difficulty adjusts, based on prior answers, to identify their instructional level (NWEA, 2015b). Results from the MAP tests are given in Rasch Units (RIT) that represent the K-12 continuum of learning within a subject matter. Each child's RIT score is also accompanied by a percentile rank that represents his or her progress compared with similar peers across the nation. For example, a student who scores at the 20th percentile has scored higher than 20% of his or her peers across the nation and lower than 80% of peers. The average score for a grade level of students across the nation is set at the 50th percentile.

In addition, the NWEA projects the growth students typically make from the fall to winter, or fall to spring, testing windows. While it is expected that all students make some growth over the course of a year, the growth target is set at the 50th percentile so the average school will have just 50% of students achieving typical growth.

These growth and achievement measures are important to understanding student learning. Students with a high RIT score can actually be a concern if they do not consistently make typical growth, as they will eventually fall behind their peers. On the other hand, students with low RIT scores can be celebrated if they repeatedly exceed typical growth because they will close the achievement gap.

Therefore, ECAWC will require that both measures are monitored to provide a clear picture of student progress toward college and career readiness benchmarks. For achievement, schools should have 50% or more of students achieving at or above the 50th percentile and for growth, 50% or more of students attaining typical growth in the course of a year. Both of these criteria are required to meet the *minimum* level of proficiency as a correlation study between MAP scores and ACT scores indicates that the

college and career readiness benchmark is near 70th percentile on the reading and math MAP tests (NWEA, 2012).

### **Needs Assessment and Continuous Improvement Plan**

Having a common assessment and common proficiency measure will provide superintendents an “apples to apples” comparison of each school in the district compared with national results that should then be publicized to all district stakeholders. The discrepancy between those schools that attained the proficiency criteria and those that didn’t will raise questions about why this has occurred. In response, ECAWC will require an in-depth analysis of those schools not meeting the minimum proficiency criteria for growth or achievement to identify the root cause of why students are underperforming. Then, a school improvement plan (SIP) will be created to outline strategies and actions steps that will address the identified needs.

As more and more schools failed to attain AYP in the mid 2000s, the professional research and literature on school improvement, school reform, and school restructuring grew exponentially, as detailed below. One of the key findings was that different approaches are needed for each situation based on the specific needs of a school. For some, incremental changes are needed, but for others, dramatic changes are necessary (Learning Point Associates, 2010).

For this reason, ECAWC will not require a common school improvement process as with the performance assessment and criteria described above. Rather, ECAWC will stipulate that the school improvement process a district selects will include the following components; which characterize the core of the common themes intertwined throughout current research and literature.

1. An Improvement Team
2. Data Collection
3. Needs Analysis and Prioritization
4. Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Steps

5. Resource Procurement and Distribution
6. Implementation and Communication
7. Monitoring and Evaluation

**An improvement team.** Improving a school is an immense undertaking that requires a group effort. Multiple studies highlight the need for teams to successfully accomplish the work. As a result, the school improvement plan and process selected by a school must incorporate the following elements: inclusion of internal and external stakeholders, defined roles for each member, knowledge of the improvement process, and a commitment to meeting regularly to do the work (Parker Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2013; Walberg, 2007).

**Data collection.** Research also highlights that improvement planning continues with the collection of data that serves as the basis for all decisions. Effective plans must include the collection of student growth and achievement data, results from surveys of internal and external stakeholders, and the findings of inquiry-based reflection to obtain a comprehensive picture of a schools current reality (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; New Hampshire Department of Education [NHDE], 2011; Parker Boudett et al., 2013).

**Needs analysis and prioritization.** The next component required of the selected school improvement process is the analysis of the accumulated data to identify strengths and areas for growth. Researching root causes and comparing the current reality with the desired future to determine specific needs are important steps to generating productive goals and action steps (NHDE, 2011; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). In addition, the selected plan must require the leadership team to: assess the school's readiness and capacity to change, prioritize the identified needs in light of the district's strategic plan, and determine whether changes can be accomplished within the current budget and current policy or will require a change in those conditions (National Association of Secondary School Principals

[NASSP], 2011; Walberg, 2007).

**Goals, objectives, strategies, and action steps.** In addition to identifying and prioritizing needs, selected plans must include the creation of goals specifying the targeted topic, objectives describing the desired change, strategies detailing how the work will be done, and actions steps listing the tasks to be accomplished. The writing should include each aspect of the SMART acronym: specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused, and time-bound (NASSP, 2011; National Institute for Urban School Improvement [NIUSI], 2005; NHDE, 2011; Parker Boudett et al., 2013, Walberg, 2007).

**Resource procurement and distribution.** Selected improvement plans must account for the resources necessary for the implementation of the plan with fidelity. The time, space, finances, curriculum, and personnel necessary to bring each goal to fruition must be clearly detailed and should include sources, timelines, and the persons responsible for obtaining the new resources or distributing existing resources (NHDE, 2011; Walberg, 2007).

**Implementation and communication.** While immense time and effort are frequently put into analyzing data and creating improvement goals, it's important that the goals and objectives are put into action rather than in a binder, and that the strategies and actions are communicated beyond the planning team. For this reason, selected school improvement plans must have accountability measures in place to ensure that they are implemented with fidelity and that the action steps are communicated to all stakeholders at the school, district, and state level (NASSP, 2011; Walberg, 2007).

**Monitoring and evaluation.** Lastly, selected school improvement plans must be living, breathing documents that are part of a continuous improvement cycle. For this reason, they must contain processes and procedures for routinely monitoring implementation, evaluating effectiveness, and updating goals (NASSP, 2011;

NIUSI, 2005; Parker Boudett et al., 2013; Walberg, 2007).

**Sample improvement plans.** As previously stated, the improvement plan selected must be tailored to the specific needs identified at a school in addition to the research-based criteria described above. While some of the cited literature focuses on single components of school improvement, others are more comprehensive and would qualify for ECAWC. While a multitude of plans have been developed, these three illustrate the fit between a plan and the needs of a school. *Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning* focuses on the improvement of instruction within a building (Parker Boudett et al., 2013). Therefore, a school with few programmatic deficiencies or climate issues would greatly benefit from *Data Wise* and its efforts to increase the instructional capacity of teachers. *Breaking Ranks Framework: The Comprehensive Framework for School Improvement* focuses on collaborative leadership, personalizing the school environment and curriculum, instruction, and assessment (NASSP, 2011). This framework covers a wider range of issues and will be a good fit for schools that are dealing with low achievement, poor climate, and teacher ownership. Lastly, *Indistar* is a system that provides research-based indicators of success covering a wide range of topics, from the classroom, to the school, to the district, to the community (Academic Development Institute [ADI], 2014). Indistar is appropriate for improvement teams at all of these levels and provides an online tool for assessing the indicators, creating improvement plans for them and monitoring their implementation.

## **Section Four: Policy Argument**

### **Argument One: Why Reinvent the Wheel?**

The first requirement of the ECAWC policy is to adopt the NWEA's MAP tests to provide valid information about student growth and achievement toward college and career readiness. Illinois has never been more ready for this as the reports issued by the state for many years following the implementation of NCLB misled the public about the true level of student learning. From 2002 through 2012, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) set the cut mark for Meets Standards at approximately the 40th percentile on the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) (Gavin, 2014), when studies correlating ISAT scores with ACT scores found that students deemed to be college and career ready were scoring around the 70th percentile (NWEA, 2012). It wasn't until 2013 that ISBE reset its cut scores to more accurately reflect college and career readiness standards. By then, however, the focus had shifted from ISAT to the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment that would replace the ISAT in 2015 and the major drops were largely overlooked.

Like MAP, the PARCC assessment is given online and provides parents and educators information about how children are progressing in school and whether they are on track for postsecondary success (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers [PARCC], 2015). It would seem logical then, to argue that districts use the new PARCC test in place of the MAP tests. Leading up to the first assessment of PARCC in 2015 however, many questions about the validity, reliability, and practicality of the test arose. Errors were found on the sample tests and many districts' technological infrastructures were not adequately prepared. More significantly, college readiness cut scores were not determined in advance and results were not released for months afterwards (Strauss, 2014). In contrast, MAP provides immediate results that measure growth and achievement, both individual and collective, and can be used to accurately determine program placement for the next school year.



Aside from the issues with the PARCC assessment, the partnership itself is in trouble. Originally a consortium of 25 states, the membership list is now down nine and Mississippi is set to pull out at the end of 2015 (Vander Hart, 2015). Various reasons have been given by each of the states. Florida, for instance, withdrew citing unconstitutional involvement by the federal government in states' affairs (McGrory, 2013). Ohio withdrew due to technological glitches with the testing and the loss of instructional time (O'Donnell, 2015). As a result, sticking with an established organization like NWEA that provides a valid, reliable, and practical test remains the best course of action.

### **Argument Two: The Buck Stops Here**

A major aspect of the ECAWC policy is that decision making and implementation authority reside at the local level. Superintendents, school boards, and community members are all part of determining reform initiatives, accountability measures, and procedures. Quite simply, this local control is how schools were designed to operate. From the outset of public education, cities and towns had the authority to set their own educational tax rates and school boards determined their own curriculum, programs, and staffing. While the federal government can outline policies, programs, and laws, the responsibility for implementation and accountability rests on state and local agencies (Adams, 1854).

With the passage of NCLB however, a new era of government control over local educational agencies began. While states were not required to participate, the allocation of Title 1 funds was contingent on the ratification of NCLB, so most states approved NCLB rather than losing the funds or cutting programs. As a result, testing all third through eighth grade students in math and reading became a requirement and schools were publically labeled based on their AYP proficiency level. This emphasis on test scores resulted in a national move toward the standardization of academic standards and transferred much decision making to the states to meet strict federal guidelines for

assessments, record-keeping, and reporting systems (Bloomfield & Cooper, 2003).

In Illinois, the Center for School Improvement was created in 2012 to assist schools with the continuous improvement process and to coordinate state supports more efficiently (ISBE, 2012). The organization quickly reported that schools were more focused on compliance with state and federal regulations than they were with a system of continuous improvement that would increase opportunities for children (Illinois Center for School Improvement, 2013). This, along with the detrimental effects of NCLB that have been documented in previous sections, clearly shows that the increased role of the federal government has not produced the intended results and that more latitude for decision making and accountability should be returned to local educational agencies.

### **Argument Three: Nothing New Under the Sun**

On its face, ECAWC appears to be a novel approach to school improvement. On closer inspection however, it seems that the policy is nothing new. For example, Illinois already requires schools to participate in the annual 5Essentials survey that provides feedback from students, staff, and parents about a school's ambitious instruction, effective leaders, collaborative teachers, involved families, and supportive environment (Byrk et al., 2010). As a result, why would a school use anything else? Secondly, Illinois has already partnered with Indistar to create Rising Star, a school improvement process for the state. If Illinois already provides an improvement plan, why would a superintendent use something like Data Wise?

To fully address the concerns raised by these questions, it is important to differentiate between *what* is done and *why* it is done. If superintendents approach restructuring from the perspective that change must be made just to comply with the law, the result will be very different from the superintendent who restructures for the purpose of helping children and realizes that achievement is a byproduct of one's cumulative improvement efforts rather than a specific program. This philosophical approach, of viewing every child as a whole child, makes a significant impact on the decision making

process and the final product. In essence, ECAWC operates as a recipe giving superintendents clear direction for which ingredients to use and how to combine them.

While the 5Essentials survey may be the best instrument to gather data for improvement decisions at one school, there may be some schools that would receive much better data from an inquiry-based tool, like Indistar, or would benefit from analyzing student test score data instead of just perception data from survey participants. Likewise, the comprehensive nature of Rising Star would be an appropriate fit for a school needing a long-term overhaul of a school's systems, leadership, and curriculum. Other schools with a solid infrastructure however, may just need minor tweaks in the area of classroom instruction and having the school improvement team unnecessarily assess indicators on community relations would make the whole process irrelevant and unproductive.

Over the last decade, individual schools have positively reformed achievement (Georgia, 2014). However, the number of schools that have worked through Supplemental Educational Services, School Choice, Corrective Action, and Restructuring without impacting student achievement has continued to rise as superintendents have failed to pair actions to root causes. Unfortunately, many improvement attempts have even had detrimental effects as the overemphasis on increasing test scores has damaged staff morale and limited teacher creativity. It is time for something new under the sun, the Every Child a Whole Child policy.

#### **Argument Four: A Leopard Can't Change its Spots**

Superintendents have long and varied job descriptions. While student achievement is widely valued and most strategic plans aim to increase achievement, research shows a strong and long-term correlation between high poverty and low student achievement (ASCD, 2015a). As a result, it can be argued that a superintendent's time and efforts are best spent managing other district initiatives as low poverty schools will naturally achieve and high poverty schools will not. Since most high poverty schools in

Illinois have significantly lower per pupil spending than other districts, the argument concludes that the work of improving student achievement is really the responsibility of the state and federal government.

The argument is convincing, as the links between funding and poverty and poverty and achievement are undeniable. Additionally, no one will argue that superintendents have excess time on their hands, nor that the federal government has many more resources than any one school district. However convincing, the acceptance of this argument nullifies the basis of American public education and the overarching philosophy of educators. As previously discussed, Horace Mann's vision for public schools was to provide non-sectarian and universal schools that equalize the opportunity for America's children. Most educators agree with this and likely pursued education to "make a difference." How then, will students reach their fullest potential if everyone accepts the status quo?

While superintendents have numerous responsibilities, many tasks can be delegated to other administrators. What can't be delegated is the superintendent's vision for the district. Effective superintendents set a vision that paints a clear picture of the desired future for a district's children that the community can embrace and support (ECRA Group, 2010). As a result, the ECAWC policy advocated in this paper, provides the best opportunity to realize substantial change, because the federal government's latest attempt, NCLB, has not been successful.

## **Section Five: Policy Implementation Plan**

Implementing the Every Child a Whole Child (ECAWC) policy is not only feasible but also necessary, as the core work of educators is to ensure that students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. To achieve success, the superintendent must coordinate the district's leadership, curriculum, instructional quality, climate, and community connections to improve each school. A key component to this plan is the superintendent's ability to perceive stakeholders' readiness and willingness to adjust timelines accordingly.

### **Obtain Board Support**

From the time a superintendent becomes aware of the ECAWC policy and decides to pursue it further, the support of the board of education must be obtained. Based on McCarty and Ramsey's (1971) *Models of Community Power Types*, the superintendent must know whether to *inform* or to *educate* the board about the ECAWC policy before seeking their approval for its adoption. At this stage, it is important for the superintendent to explain that the policy will likely result in new programs and expenditures, stressing that while some costs will be known, others will be unanticipated. For example, a district that is not already using MAP tests to measure progress will have a known expense to approve, but the technological infrastructure needed to administer the MAP tests in each building may result in some unforeseen expenses. As a result, fully informing the board about the policy, implementation process and taking the time to fully answer their questions prior to approval will prove invaluable when other hurdles arise.

### **Create District Execution Team and School Improvement Team**

Once the support of the board has been obtained, the superintendent must build a team to champion the implementation. The District Execution Team (DET) should represent each stakeholder group, incorporate a wide range of skills and experiences, and include people who understand the issues that will potentially arise with either the policy or its implementation. The superintendent must purposefully build the team to include

candidates interested in participating, as well as handpicked members to fill specific roles.

In addition, the superintendent must have his or her principals build School Improvement Teams (SIT) that will consist of administrators, teachers, and parents from each building. The SIT will conduct the needs analysis and create the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions steps that comprise the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

### **Communicate Policy**

Once a strong DET has been formed, the team must focus on generating a groundswell of support for the policy in the community. This backing is critical to successful implementation and will be built by frequent communication about the policy's details, rationale, and future impact on students. A member of the DET should be selected as the communication coordinator to create and oversee a rollout campaign that will expose members of every community demographic to the ECAWC policy. Information should be publicized through print media (newspaper articles, billboard advertising, letters, post cards, flyers, etc.), social media (district website, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.), and face-to-face events (conference presentations, Community Forums, Parent Universities, etc.) that clearly present the information as well as opportunities to get involved. In addition, the communication coordinator will create a schedule detailing the dissemination of information for each medium that also lists the team member responsible for coordinating the work.

### **Conduct MAP Assessments**

Once basic information about ECAWC has been communicated to district stakeholders, the implementation focus will shift to the administration of the MAP assessments and the analysis of the results. To ensure effective oversight, an assessment coordinator will be selected from the DET if the district does not already have this position. If a district has never used the MAP tests, the assessment coordinator will first contact the NWEA regarding initial setup steps and technology requirements. Then, the

testing window will be communicated to the staff at each building and they will be trained to set up test sessions and how to assign students and tests to those sessions. Throughout the first year, the assessment coordinator will plan additional trainings that explain how to read the student reports so that RIT scores, percentiles, and typical growth can be clearly explained to students and parents.

### **Measure Proficiency**

When the spring MAP testing is complete, the assessment coordinator will analyze each building's results to determine whether students met the minimum proficiency levels set by ECAWC. For achievement, 50% or more of students should score at or above the 50th percentile and for growth, 50% or more of students should make their typical yearly growth in reading and math.

Once the data has been analyzed, the assessment coordinator and superintendent will present the information to the board and publicize it to the community. The fact that schools may not have the majority of students performing at grade level or that they are not learning as much as their typical peers across the nation could be difficult for parents and community members and will raise difficult questions for school officials. While many superintendents try to minimize or avoid bad news, it is important that superintendents assume ownership for the data while confidently reminding stakeholders that the district is aware of the need for improvement and has adopted a continuous school improvement policy to address the issues to prevent them from occurring year after year.

### **Design School Improvement Plan**

After the board presentation, the SIT should be convened to further analyze the MAP data and to identify successes and areas for growth for their specific building. In the process, existing information, like the 5Essentials survey data, should be incorporated and the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students prioritized. This needs analysis will provide the necessary information for the selection of the specific school

improvement plan. As discussed in Section Three, different plans target different areas so it is important that the one selected is the best fit to address the identified needs.

Once a specific improvement plan has been selected, the SIT should create the specific goals, objectives, strategies, and action plans that will begin to correct the identified deficiencies. The plan must include the following: a detailed description of the action steps, the people responsible for the work, timeframes for completion, a list of needed resources, and estimated costs for the proposed programs or personnel.

The SIT team will meet monthly to review progress and adjust individual components of the plan. The DET should receive frequent updates so the district's resources are allocated in a manner consistent with the identified needs of the schools.

### **Allocate and Procure Resources**

As the superintendent is appraised of the actions steps being formed in each school's improvement plan, he or she must pay particular attention to the resources required to implement the plan with fidelity. In an ideal world, there would be no limits to the available space, time, personnel, and finances, however, every superintendent keenly understands that resources are generally limited and must be allocated carefully. While year-to-year budget increases are often minimal, it will appear that there is little new opportunity for change. Approaching resources from the ECAWC framework however, gives superintendents a different perspective. Rather than seeing budgets as static amounts typically funded based on the prior year's expenditures, ECAWC takes a more flexible view that provides greater opportunity for existing resources by redistributing funds to prioritize the identified needs and programs. While some accounts, such as transportation, require consistent balances, other funds, like those set aside for professional development, can be used to support other initiatives. With this philosophical approach, the superintendent, in conjunction with the DET, needs to list the needs being generated by each school's improvement team and determine how existing resources can be allocated or redistributed to meet as many needs as possible.



Besides identifying funds that can be completely redistributed to support other initiatives, the superintendent needs to utilize opportunities provide by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Regional Office of Education (ROE). The Illinois School Improvement Center, for example, was created in 2012 to assist school districts implementing improvement plans, and provides districts coaching, networking opportunities with other districts, and research forums. Also, the Illinois Resource Council (IRC) provides many professional development workshops and trainings targeting linguistically and culturally diverse schools at no, or minimal, cost. Lastly, the Illinois Principal's Association (IPA) provides support, mentoring, and training to new principals who are often inexperienced with change leadership.

Once these existing resources have been analyzed, the superintendent and DET will consider whether new sources for resources should be pursued. At this time, federal grants, private foundations, and referendums will be explored. While referendums should never be entertained haphazardly, the detailed planning done by the DET constitutes the groundwork necessary for determining whether a district should pursue a referendum.

Once this detailed planning has been completed, a comprehensive resource allocation and procurement plan will be presented to the school board for approval. Given that the school board endorsed the ECAWC plan from the outset and received frequent progress reports during the planning phase, it is unlikely that the board will not continue to support clear, realistic, and feasible plans that provide the best for children.

### **Monitor and Evaluate**

Failed initiatives are all too common in the world of education. Usually, this is not due to the lack of a good idea, as new initiatives generally have solid research backing the fidelity of the program. Rather, the failure stems from a lack of appropriate planning or the failure to adapt what has worked in one context to the culture of a different context (Nudzor, 2013). If the necessary resources are not considered ahead of time and the necessary training and support are not put in place, there is little hope that a new initiative

will become embedded in a system. For this reason, the ECAWC policy has placed a significant emphasis on frontloading research, analysis, and planning of new initiatives.

This careful consideration does not stop once a plan has been put in place however. As the next section will discuss in detail, the ECAWC policy requires constant monitoring, assessment, and evaluation to ensure that a school meets the academic, social, and emotional need of students and manifests itself through increased student achievement.

## **Section Six: Policy Assessment Plan**

To determine the effectiveness of ECAWC, the School Improvement Team (SIT) and District Execution Team (DET) will actively monitor internal processes and evaluate external outcomes for the three components of the policy: assessing student growth and achievement, conducting a needs assessment, and creating an improvement plan. The likelihood for the policy's success is great because these accountability measures are built into the policy.

### **Assessment Implementation**

The assessment coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that each school in the district administers the MAP tests in reading and math. After each testing window, the NWEA provides a comprehensive data file that the assessment coordinator will use to check whether each student has taken the necessary tests.

The assessment coordinator, in conjunction with the SIT, will also be responsible for analyzing growth and achievement data. Two numbers will be calculated. For achievement, the percentage of students scoring at, or above, the 50th percentile on the spring tests, and for growth, the percentage of students attaining typical fall to spring growth. The assessment coordinator will collect these results from each SIT for the DET and will present them to the board of education each year. Longitudinal displays of each student cohort's growth and achievement will be a powerful indicator of the impact of the ECAWC policy.

### **Needs Assessment and Improvement Plan**

As detailed previously, ECAWC requires a *continuous* aspect to the SIP. For this reason, the SIT will conduct the needs assessment component of the plan every year to determine whether previously identified needs have been addressed or still persist. In addition, the assessment will reveal whether new needs have emerged that should be added to the plan. This annual undertaking gives the team an opportunity to evaluate whether a different assessment instrument should be used. For example, a school

collecting data from a survey-based tool may find it productive to try an inquiry-based tool that requires deeper reflection on issues rather than one that summarizes the staff's perspectives on the issue.

The fresh information from the needs assessment will need to be incorporated into the existing SIP. Since the SIT meets monthly to monitor the timeframes attached to various action steps, these updates will be a natural fit to the process of updating, modifying, or creating new goals, objectives, strategies, or action steps. For example, the needs assessment may reveal that parents don't feel welcome to volunteer in classrooms and the DET may disclose that funding for a specific writing program listed in the SIP is unavailable. Both of these will need to be incorporated into an updated SIP. Upon completion, the updated needs assessment report and modified goals, objectives, strategies, and actions steps will be submitted to the DET and shared with the board at the next ECAWC presentation.

## **Section Seven: Summary Impact Statement**

### **Child-Centered**

John Dewey, a 20th century educational reformer, believed that the purpose of public education should be the realization of each child's full potential and the ability to serve the common good rather than merely acquiring a pre-determined set of skills. He wrote, "to prepare him for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities" (Dewey, 1897, para. 6).

Now, more than a century later, the language and vocabulary have changed but the philosophical approach of whole child education maintains the same themes: developing and preparing students for college, career, and citizenship, building a shared responsibility between students, families, schools, and communities, and ensuring that the social, emotional, and academic needs of students are met. In short, the Every Child a Whole Child policy provides superintendents a course of action for rescuing schools from a singular focus on student achievement by returning to the founding principles of our nation's schools.

### **Stakeholder-Based**

John Adams, the second president of the United States and an educational reformer from the 19th century, firmly believed in the democratic ownership of public education. "The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it" (Adams, 1854, p. 540). ECAWC also embraces the philosophy that greater success is achieved when all stakeholders are given a voice and the whole community contributes to meeting the needs of all students. This approach stands in stark contrast to NCLB, which advocates top down decision making that has repelled stakeholders with its negativity and led to compliance with the law rather than changes in achievement.

## **Clear Direction**

The superintendents of America's public schools work in changing times. While the 2014 goal of having every student achieve proficiency has come and gone, the next iteration of the original 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act is imminent. Superintendents must decide whether they will entrust their district's future to the Every Student Succeeds Act or will employ a strategy that provides superintendents clear and timely guidance for school improvement that can be implemented immediately and is not contingent on current or forthcoming federal policies.

In conclusion, The Every Child a Whole Child policy provides Illinois K-8 superintendents a roadmap that will realize each child's hopes and dreams and open the doors of every future opportunity. Any educator will agree with President Obama that, "we did not come to fear the future. We came here to shape it" (Hoch, 2009). As a result, ECAWC will be successful because it stems from a child-centered philosophy, incorporates the full community, and provides direction during uncertain times.

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