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# Systemic Reform in a Third Cohort Abbott District

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SYSTEMIC REFORM IN A THIRD COHORT ABBOTT DISTRICT

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Seton Hall University

2004

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**This book is lovingly dedicated to  
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## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	x
List of Figures .....	xii
Chapter 1	
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Research Questions .....	4
Subsidiary Questions .....	5
Significance of the Study.....	5
Limitations of the Study.....	6
Definitions of Terms.....	7
Chapter 2	
School Finance and the History of Abbott.....	10
Impacts on Education.....	19
Standards-based Curriculum.....	20
Social Science Research .....	21
Urban Decay .....	22
Systemic Reform.....	23
School-based Management .....	24
Decentralization vs. Traditional Management Hierarchy.....	26
School Choice and the Impact on Public School Finance .....	30
Summary .....	34
Whole School Reform Models.....	37

Success for All .....	37
Comer School Development Program .....	38
School Leadership Council (SLC) .....	40
Student Staff Support Team (SSST) .....	41
Parent Team (PT) .....	41
Guiding Principles .....	41
Developmental Pathways .....	42
Implementation Studies .....	44
Implementation of the Comer School Development Program .....	53
Summary .....	56

### Chapter 3

Methodology .....	58
District History .....	60
Instrumentation .....	61
Data Collection .....	63
Sample Population .....	67
Elementary School A .....	68
Elementary School B .....	69
Elementary School C .....	70
Middle School .....	71
High School .....	73
Statistical Treatment .....	74
Research Bias .....	75



## Chapter 4

Presentation of Data .....	76
Research Questions .....	78
Areas of Concern .....	100
Subsidiary Questions .....	125
Length of Time in Current Position and Training .....	149

## Chapter 5

Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications for New Policy.....	152
Gauging Implementation Progress.....	157
Topics for Future Research.....	162
References.....	165
Appendix A – Letters of Informed Consent .....	175
Appendix B – Letter of Request to Use Survey Tool – George Washington University.....	180
Appendix C –George Washington University Consent Reply Letter.....	182
Appendix D – Letter of Request to Use Survey Tool – Seton Hall University.....	184
Appendix E – Seton Hall University Consent Reply Letter .....	186
Appendix F – Letter of Solicitation to the Interim Superintendent .....	188
Appendix G – Interim Superintendent’s Consent Reply Letter.....	190
Appendix H –Sample Letter of Solicitation to Principals .....	192
Appendix I –Sample Consent Reply from Principal.....	194
Appendix J – Survey Instrument.....	196
Appendix K – Verbal Script for Individual Interviews .....	204

Appendix L – Frequency Distribution Charts.....	208
Appendix M – Prior Membersip * School Level Crosstabulation.....	283
Appendix N – Professional Development* School Level Crosstabulations.....	293
Appendix O – Criteria for Designating Abbott Districts .....	294
Appendix P – List of Approved Whole School Reform Models .....	297
Appendix Q – Nine Elements of Whole School Reform .....	299
Appendix R – Memo dated May 9, 2000 from the State Department of Education .....	301

## List of Tables

Methodology Matrix .....	64
Mean score comparison of self-assessment of WSR implementation – 2001 and 2003 .....	79
Comprehensive needs assessment * School Level Crosstabulation .....	87
SLC role and responsibilities * School Level Crosstabulation.....	89
Training in teamwork and consensus * School Level Crosstabulation .....	92
Training to develop sound and realistic goals and strategies * School Level Crosstabulation .....	95
Aligning instructional strategies to the CCCS * School Level Crosstabulation .....	98
Student achievement a priority .....	102
SLC decisions are made by consensus.....	105
Our SLC communicates well with the larger community .....	109
Our school encourages parent involvement.....	111
Parents and caregivers are partners in decision related to the school.....	113
Parents and caregivers are welcomed in the school.....	115
Significant barriers * School Level Crosstabulation .....	119
What is different about your school as a result of WSR * School Level Crosstabulation .....	123
Central office support to align curriculum and district assessments to state standards * School Level Crosstabulation.....	127

Central office support by providing professional development * School Level Crosstabulation .....	129
Central office support of the school budget * School Level Crosstabulation .....	131
Central office support by hiring appropriate personnel * School Level Crosstabulation .....	133
Central office support by providing meaningful and timely performance data for planning and decision-making * School Level Crosstabulation .....	135
One-way ANOVA of professional development to align curriculum to state standards * School Level .....	140
One-way ANOVA of prior experience in developing a school-based budget * School Level .....	142
One-way ANOVA of perceptions of the impact of Abbott funding * School Level .....	144
One-way ANOVA perceptions of central office support * School Level .....	147
Correlation between length of time in current position, role on SLC and perceptions of training .....	150

## List of Figures

Comprehensive needs assessment * School Level Crosstabulation .....	88
SLC role and responsibilities * School Level Crosstabulation.....	90
Training in teamwork and consensus * School Level Crosstabulation .....	93
Training to develop sound and realistic goals and strategies * School Level Crosstabulation .....	96
Aligning instructional strategies to the CCCS * School Level Crosstabulation .....	99
Student achievement a priority .....	103
SLC decisions are made by consensus.....	106
School, Parent, and Community Interaction Framework.....	108
Our SLC communicates well with the larger community .....	110
Our school encourages parent involvement.....	112
Parents and caregivers are partners in decision related to the school .....	114
Parents and caregivers are welcomed in the school.....	116
Significant barriers * School Level Crosstabulation .....	120
What is different about your school as a result of WSR * School Level Crosstabulation .....	124
Central office support to align curriculum and district assessments to state standards * School Level Crosstabulation.....	128
Central office support by providing professional development * School Level Crosstabulation .....	130

Central office support of the school budget * School Level	
Crosstabulation .....	132
Central office support by hiring appropriate personnel * School Level	
Crosstabulation .....	134
Central office support by providing meaningful and timely performance	
data for planning and decision-making * School Level Crosstabulation .....	136

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

By the turn of the 20th century, public schools were charged with providing all students with a common and equal education that cuts across ethnic, religious, and class differences (Lannie, 1971). However, “throughout much of American history, the separate and unequal schooling of poor children and children of color has been reinforced by social mores, justified by pseudo-science, and in many cases mandated by law” (Rossi & Montgomery, 1994, p. 1). Anyon (1997) noted a 25-year disparity between 1972 and 1997 in educational services between districts in the State of New Jersey. Her research revealed that the heart of the disparity lay in the unequal distribution of property wealth within the State, dwindling local education agency financial contributions, and limited Federal aid. In an effort to address the huge disparities between the “haves” and the “have nots” a variety of diverse strategies and approaches have been sought. In response to *A Nation At Risk* (1983), education reform initiatives involved developing core standards, expanding assessment repertoires, and raising the standard for hiring new teachers (Goertz, Floden, & O’Day, 1996). The more recent approaches have included increased collaboration between schools, the business community, community-based organizations, and social service agencies. However, fragmentation, lack of training and resources, duplication of services within the school, and conflicting policies have limited the institutionalization of state mandated reform initiatives.

## Statement of the Problem

Since 1972, 32 years of litigation in the State of New Jersey have challenged the constitutionality of public school funding in special needs districts. The State Supreme Court's 1997 Abbott IV (Abbott v. Burke, 1997) ruling, and subsequent 1998 Abbott V (Abbott v. Burke, 1998) ruling, acknowledged the widening gap in student achievement and mandated immediate remediation. The Court further recognized that raising standards for student achievement via the Core Curriculum Content Standards and standardized tests, without providing adequate support, could potentially do more harm in increasing student failure. In addition, the Court suggested that parity in funding does not necessarily equate to an equitable, or thorough and efficient, education. Consequently, the Court mandated sweeping changes in public school funding.

The thrust of systemic reform in the Abbott districts was to provide policy mechanisms that foster greater accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency to help students achieve and exceed the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The educational system must change in order to respond to current and future needs. Current literature suggested that effective change must include developing policies that remove bureaucratic barriers to change, a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of school level staff, central office personnel, and building administrators. Change must be embodied in a coherent system of instructional practices, policy, and curriculum alignment that promotes student achievement. Reform cannot be reduced to a one size fits all panacea. Rather, a successful reform initiative must take into account the individual needs of the targeted student population at each school site. Changes in structure should be directly linked to learning outcomes for student. These changes



must occur at both the district and school levels, and focus on student performance, intellectual development, application of technology, accountability, shared decision-making that includes all stakeholders, and a school culture that encourages life-long learning. There must be continual support from the district. The characteristics that described this support are (a) developing cohesive interrelationships among the main components of the system; (b) a professional development program that supports the change initiative; (c) a mechanism to institutionalize the innovation; (d) an active regulation system that coordinates change efforts, tracks problems, and monitors the results of the system; (e) a unifying vision that describes what the school should be like; and (f) a coherent system of instructional leadership. In addition to concerns about implementation, this study also identified the degree to which both district and school level personnel developed the capacity to initiate and sustain the whole school reform process.

### *Purpose of the Study*

Individual schools have been charged with adopting a scientifically research-based whole school reform model that stakeholders have bought into by an 80% vote. Subsequent to the Court's mandate for whole school reform, the Orange Public School district decided on district-wide implementation of the Comer School Development Program as its reform model.

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of whole school reform implementation in a small Abbott school district, along with the planning and

preparation underlying these efforts. This study incorporated historical data on school finance in the United States, individual interviews with central office staff members and of the Orange Board of Education and Comer Facilitators. Survey data from school level personnel was used to develop a comparative profile of the progress made in overcoming barriers to implementation that were identified by Muirhead, Tyler & Hamilton (2001). The information gleaned also provided insight into the elements of systemic reform initiatives, in juxtaposition to this district's progress towards developing a solid foundation for successful whole school reform implementation. In addition, the data revealed stakeholders' perceptions of the level of implementation, and indicators for quality and effectiveness of the district's systemic reform initiative via the Comer School Development Program. In the final analysis, this study illuminated the degree of implementation, resource capacity to implement the Court's mandates, barriers to implementation of the whole school reform, and the role of central office leadership in facilitating the reform efforts at the school level.

### *Research Questions*

1. What implementation barriers existed in 2001 with first, second, and second year mid-year cohorts that are currently impacting third cohort schools implementing whole school reform?
2. What were the district's priorities in establishing a foundation for systemic change?
3. What were the financial, capacity-building activities (i.e. professional development workshops, and model showcases, collaboration with model developer), and human

resource barriers to achieving full implementation of the Comer School Development Program?

4. What mechanisms have been established, prior to implementation, to assess the level of successful implementation of the Comer School Development Program?
5. What mechanisms have been instituted, since implementation began, to determine the effectiveness of implemented components of the Comer School Development Program?
6. What, if any, progress indicators provided evidence of improved student achievement and growth as a result of implementing the Comer School Development Program in the district?

#### *Subsidiary Questions*

1. What role did central office play in the change process?
2. What impact did district-wide implementation of the Comer School Development Program have on stakeholder support of whole school reform?
3. Did variance in perception of implementation of whole school reform exist between the school levels represented in the sample population?

#### *Significance of the Study*

Without a clear understanding of the nature of systemic change, the potential for gaps in implementing reform and conflicting agendas can potentially impede the reform

process. After 2 successive years of trial and error with whole school reform, what progress have districts made in aligning the critical elements of systemic change with the district's goals and priorities? Studying the evolution of whole school reform in a third cohort district adds to the current body of research that has focused on first and second cohort schools. Research focused on a third cohort district's ability to meet court ordered whole school reform model adoption will provide insight into the efficacy of the mandate, illuminating the human, capital and expertise resources that either limited or enhanced the district's implementation process. The study also identified reasons why some mandates may have been implemented while others were not, and what factors were considered when making those determinations. Further, the findings in this study may provide insight to the reader on the merits of district-wide implementation of a single whole school reform model, the driving and restraining forces that can lend themselves to successful implementation of whole school reform. As the concept of systemic reform continues to gain momentum, school leaders may find the conclusions from this case study helpful in providing a deeper understanding of how schools change.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

The limitations of this study were that (a) this study focused on one district. Therefore, any comparisons or generalizations would have to be made in the context of a district with similar demographics, (b) the Comer School Development Program has a 3-year implementation schedule. This study investigated the progress of the a third cohort Abbott district in year two of implementation, (c) student achievement was not the focus

of this study. Any correlation between student achievement and whole school reform will require a separate study, (d) some respondents did not answer every question asked in the survey. The omitted questions were coded as missing values. In addition, some participants opted not to complete the questionnaire. The average response rate was 60%. The reasons for lack of response could range from lack of interest in topic, or little knowledge of topic, (e) not every School Facilitator was available for the individual interview. Of the five schools in the sample population, only three School Facilitators were interviewed, (f) because of the small sample size (five schools) within one district, some respondents expressed concern for complete anonymity. The concern over anonymity may have had an impact on the detail of information given in the open-ended responses.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Abbott v. Burke* 153 N.J. 480 – a school finance lawsuit which charged that disparities between wealthy and poor districts resulted in unequal distribution of State resources and violated students' rights to receive a thorough and efficient public education and posed an unfair tax burden on property poor districts in the State.

*Abbott District* – New Jersey classifies its school districts based on census data consisting of population density, median household income, unemployment, poverty, occupation, percent with college education, percent with some college, and percent with no high school diploma. A district categorized as an Abbott district represents one of 30 special

needs districts, in district factor group A and B specifically identified in the appendix to Raymond Abbott, et al. v. Fred G. Burke, et al. decided by the NJ Supreme Court on June 5, 1990 (Abbott v. Burke, 1990).

Comprehensive Education Improvement and Finance Act (CEIFA) – an improvement and financing mechanism which defines a system of thorough and efficient public education that is uniformly applied to all districts in the State and specifies what must be learned with reference to academic standards that must be achieved by all students. CEIFA also establishes the types of programs and services that will accomplish these goals of thorough and efficient education, and identifies the level of financial support sufficient to support those programs and services (Abbott v. Burke, 1990).

Capacity – the ability of the education system to help all students meet more challenging standards.

Cohort – reflects the timetables for planning and implementation that were consistent with those ordered by the State Supreme Court at the recommendation of the NJ DOE. “Cohort 1” schools initiated the whole school reform process in 1998-1999, “cohort 2” in the 1999-2000 school year, and “mid-year cohort” in the second term of the 1999-2000 school year (R3CC, p. iii)

School Leadership Council – school based planning and decision-making team established pursuant to Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts (2003).

School Resource and Improvement Member (SRI) of the DOE consisting of Budget Managers and Program Specialists who reviewed school budgets, implementation plans, provided technical assistance on implementation issues (Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts, 2003).

Whole School Reform – Court ordered reform process by which all designated Abbott districts must undertake school-wide restructure of existing programs and practices in order for students to achieve the Core Curriculum Content Standards. Schools must choose a New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDOE) approved research-based school reform model as part of the process (Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts 2003).

Zero-based Budgeting – a budget in which there has been a concentration of all available resources to support a district's or school's current objectives and strategies for achieving the Core Curriculum Content Standards. It also means a budget in which resources have been allocated and reallocated to support those objectives and strategies. Individual budget items are justified based on need, directly related to the achievement of those objectives and strategies (New Jersey Administrative Code 6:19A, 1998)

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

#### *School Finance and the History of Abbott*

The controversy of school finance reform was not unique to New Jersey. For example, in 1971, Los Angeles County parents brought legal action against state and county officials responsible for administering the California Public School finance system (Serrano v. Priest, 1971). Plaintiffs alleged that they were required to pay a disproportionate share of taxes to receive the same education as their suburban counterparts. The allegation further charged that the current system of funding failed to meet the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and California's constitutional guarantee for free common schools (Serrano v. Priest, 1971).

In its ruling, the Court declared that the school financing system did discriminate against students in poorer districts on two grounds. First, over half of all educational revenue was raised locally by levying taxes on real property. Therefore, districts with a smaller tax base could not produce revenue equal to that of their wealthier counterparts. Second, basic state aid actually widened the funding gap between wealthy and poor districts, because such aid was distributed on a per pupil basis to all districts regardless of the district's wealth. However, the Court did not find the finance system to be in violation of the California Constitution's provision to provide a system of free common schools, and the case was returned to the trial court for further proceedings



In 1973, Mexican American parents filed a class action suit on behalf of Texas school children who were members of poor and minority groups living within the San Antonio public school district. The appellees contended that the Texas Minimum Foundation School Program violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The suit alleged that due to the disparities in taxable property between urban and suburban districts, urban schools received less per pupil funding than their suburban counterparts. Therefore, students in poor urban districts did not receive the same educational opportunities as students in the wealthier districts (*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 1973).

Although the District Court agreed with the appellees in its December 1971 ruling, that decision was overturned by the United States Supreme Court in 1973. The Court ruled that the Texas system did not operate to the particular disadvantage of any suspect class. The Texas finance system had not been shown to discriminate against any definable class of "poor" people or to occasionally discriminate depending on the relative wealth of the families in any district. And, insofar as the financing system disadvantages those who, disregarding their individual income characteristics, resided in comparatively poor school districts, the resulting class cannot be considered a suspect or protected class (*San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 1973).

The Court further asserted that education is not among the rights afforded explicit protection under the United States Constitution, nor does the equal protection clause require absolute equality or parity. Nor does the Texas school-financing system impermissibly interfere with the exercise of a "fundamental" right or liberty. Though education is one of the most important services performed by the State, it is not within

the limited category of rights recognized by this Court as guaranteed by the Constitution (San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, 1973).

Several states around the country began to see its school finance formulas challenged as inefficiently providing for the equitable education of its children. Vermont's Equal Educational Opportunity Act (Act 60) in 1997, and judicial proceedings in Maine, New Mexico, Ohio, and Kentucky represented a trend of legal action aimed at providing judicial solutions to legislative concerns. Declared the most radical judicial response to school finance reform to date (LaMorte, 2002), Kentucky's *Rose v. Council for Better Education*, (1989), found an entire school district discriminatory and inefficient. Classifying 80% of its local school districts as poor, based on property tax rates, the Court established a correlation between test scores and a district's wealth (achievement scores in poor districts were lower than their counterparts in wealthy districts), and a 35% drop out rate among its adult population in poor districts. In its opinion, the Court noted that the General Assembly failed to provide an efficient system of common schools throughout the state. The Court's response mandated that the General Assembly create a new system of common schools and establish a uniform tax rate for real and personal property.

In 1970, a complaint was filed against the State of New Jersey on behalf of students, parents, taxpayers and public officials in poor urban districts (*Robinson v. Cahill*, 1971). The complaint held that the State of New Jersey discriminated against poor urban students in favor of children in wealthy districts, by distributing the State's educational resources in proportion to the wealth of the respective school district. The complaint further purported that because of the unequal distribution of financial

resources, the State had failed to provide a “thorough and efficient” education to poor urban students, therefore, violating the State constitution’s education clause.

In its deliberation, the State Superior Court had to determine whether the current system of public school funding violated the state constitution’s “thorough and efficient” mandate. In its decision, the Court found that the current system of public school finance discriminated against the poor urban districts by imposing an unequal tax burden on those citizens, for a common state purpose (Robinson v. Cahill, 1971). Under Article 4 section 7 paragraph 6 of the New Jersey State Constitution, the state is charged with providing for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools for the instruction of all children in the state between the ages of 5 and 18. The Court construed that this 1875 amendment directly addressed the state’s responsibility to insure equal education for all children, or impose that responsibility onto local governments.

The implication for urban districts was the availability of judicial recourse to pursue relief from the unequal distribution of state resources. As a result of enacted legislation, students in low-income districts would have the same opportunity for a thorough and efficient education as their counterparts in New Jersey’s affluent districts.

The Public School Education Act of 1975 marked the legislature’s first attempt to distribute state aid to compensate for the differences in wealth among school districts. The Public School Education Act created a new funding formula for New Jersey’s poorest urban districts. Unfortunately, failure to raise taxes to fund the Act resulted in the New Jersey State Supreme Court closing schools for 8 days during that school year (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

In 1981, public school students in East Orange, Irvington, Camden, and Jersey City filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the Public School Education Act of 1975 (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). The subsequent evidentiary record, developed by the Administrative Law Judge, confirmed that students in those districts were not receiving their State guaranteed thorough and efficient education. The Administrative Law Judge's ruling declared the Public School Education Act unconstitutional as applied to the state's poorest urban schools (Abbott v. Burke II, 1990).

The Court ordered the Legislature to amend the Public School Education Act or pass new legislation to insure parity funding between the state's poorest districts and its wealthier districts. Abbott II went further by requiring the implementation of supplemental programs and services in the Abbott districts to "wipe out disadvantages as much as a school district can" (Abbott v. Burke, 1990).

In response to the Court's mandate, the Legislature enacted the Quality Education Act (QEA I) of 1990. However, in 1994, the State Supreme Court ruled the Quality Education Act unconstitutional because it did not equalize funding between the Abbott districts and its wealthier counterparts. The Court further found that the Commissioner failed to address the issue of providing supplemental programs in Abbott districts (Abbott v. Burke, 1994).

The Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Finance Act (CEIFA) was passed in 1996, which through its delineation of core curriculum standards, gave a tangible definition of "thorough and efficient" (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). However, as with its predecessors, CEIFA had failed to guarantee adequate funding to enable students in the Abbott districts to achieve the Core Curriculum Content Standards. In addition, the

Court found two major flaws with CEIFA. First, the recommended supplemental programs and their funding sources (demonstrably effective program aid and early childhood program aid) were not based on an actual study of students' needs or the costs associated with meeting those needs. Second, CEIFA failed to address the facilities issues that plagued the Abbott districts, and prevented poor students from achieving the Core Curriculum Content Standards. (Abbott v. Burke, 1998)

Considering the 32 year span of litigation, and pending appeals, the Supreme Court mandated that the State provide an interim parity funding remedy to the Abbott schools, approximately \$246 million for the Abbott districts, to be dispersed in the 1997-1998 school year (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). The State was directed to develop strict administrative oversight to insure that the increased funding was allocated effectively.

In response, the commissioner committed DOE resources "to review budgets, coordinate necessary support, and assisting with the transition from centralized to site-based management" (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). Located in the northern, central, and southern regions of the state, Program Review and Improvement teams were responsible for programmatic and fiscal oversight of the Abbott districts. Their responsibilities also included providing technical assistance to districts in the development of strategic plans called school implementation plans, monitoring the implementation of the whole school reform, and how districts were allocating additional state aid.

The Court sought to ascertain the extent of judicial relief necessary to level the playing field for students in the Abbott districts. The State Supreme Court remanded the case to the State Superior Court, Chancery Division (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). Under Judge Michael P. King, the Superior Court focused its attention on school facilities and

supplemental programs. As a result, Judge King ordered then Commissioner Klagholz to develop a report of the academic needs of students in the Abbott districts, supplemental programs to meet those needs, the costs associated with program implementation, and a plan for supplemental program implementation. In addition, the Commissioner was directed to develop a study of the current condition of school facilities in the Abbott districts, the costs of repair, renovation of existing structures, or new construction (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

The State Supreme Court also authorized Judge King to appoint an expert in the field of whole school reform. Allen Odden, a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was appointed as Special Master. Dr. Odden's role was to serve as the Court-appointed expert, providing assistance to Judge King in his review of the recommendations for school improvement (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

After receiving recommendations from the plaintiffs and the State of New Jersey, and hosting a series of public forums to solicit community input and expand awareness, Judge King issued his report on January 22, 1998 (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). Judge King recognized that increased funding would not necessarily equate to improved student achievement or true parity. Therefore, Abbott schools were also required to (a) implement full day pre-school for 4 and 5-year-old eligible students and half day pre-school for 3-year-olds; (b) develop health and social service support programs; (c) address dilapidated and outmoded facilities; (d) review and improve school security; (e) provide alternative school opportunities for disaffected students; (f) implement school level technology programs; (g) implement school-to-work and college transition

programs; (h) develop a system of accountability; and (i) implement whole school reform (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

Concurrently, Urban Education Reform Regulations in the Abbott Districts (N.J.A.C. 6:19A, 1998) was created as governing policy for Abbott districts. Embodied within this new policy were guidelines for adoption of whole school reform. N.J.A.C. 6:19A-3.1e stated that schools must focus on nine specific criteria or elements when deciding to adopt a whole school reform model. The nine elements of whole school reform provided the criteria for model selection. Whether schools chose to select a model from the State-approved list or apply to develop its own research-based model, “model selection is important because it is likely to impact whether or to what degree student achievement gains are made” (Muirhead et al., 2001, p. 15).

Due to limited research of effective whole school reform models at the secondary level, high schools were not required to adopt a whole school reform model (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). High schools were required to implement a series of required secondary supplemental programs aimed at addressing student achievement, graduation, and drop out rates. With its primary focus on systemic reform at the elementary school level, elementary schools were required to develop a 3 to 5 year implementation plan to incrementally phase in all elements of the adopted whole school reform model.

Based on the Commissioner’s testimony against imposing specific budget limits on schools, illustrative budgets were developed by each model developer for the NJDOE (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). The illustrative budgets served as guides for school districts in developing their zero-based budgets. They outlined the salary, instructional supply, and professional development costs associated with model implementation. The budgets

recommended full time equivalents in all instructional and administrative areas based on the student population count of 500. Budget amounts were prorated according to the number of students above or below the 500 student-count threshold. Costs that exceeded the illustrative budget had to be justified to the Office of Program Review and Improvement via support documentation or Particularized Need application (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

Abbott schools volunteered to enter one of two cohorts. The first cohort began in the 1998-1999 school year, and cohort two began in the 1999-2000 school year. Schools that had not chosen to enter the first or second cohorts were assigned to cohort three beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. At the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, the NJDOE created a second year mid-year cohort to reduce the large number of schools that had not entered the first two cohorts. Of the 420 Abbott schools dispersed throughout northern, central, and southern New Jersey, the NJDOE anticipated approximately 50 schools would enter the first cohort. They received and accepted 75 applications. Each first cohort school received a \$50,000 incentive grant to cover the initial cost of implementation.

The whole school reform mandate required schools to create a governance structure to manage the change process, create a full-time whole school reform facilitator position, develop an implementation plan and zero-based budget, and develop a school improvement plan in an effort to build capacity to improve student achievement. Whole school reform represented the Court's attempt to provide a multi-layered resolution to accomplish three goals: (a) to address the disparities in student achievement between Abbott districts and the wealthier I and J school districts within the state, (b) to align



layers of public policy to promote the desired academic achievement, and (c) to restructure governance at the school level to support improved achievement (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

In making its ruling, the Court looked at multiple factors that have plagued urban education, and the role state policies played in students not receiving a thorough and efficient education as guaranteed by the State Constitution. The Court considered several factors that impact on education including the development of standards-based curriculum; (b) social science research; and (c) urban decay (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

### *Impacts on Education*

As schools become more diverse, local districts must begin the process of assessing their current levels of effectiveness in preparing students to pursue productive and responsible lives. In spite of some progress in the American education system, evidence suggested that we still have ground to cover in improving student achievement as measured by standardized assessments. For example, Schmidt, Houang & Cogan (2002) stated that by the end of secondary school, our student's performance on standardized tests was near the bottom, when compared to forty-two countries participating in the *Third International Math and Science Study* (TIMSS 1999).

### *Standards-based Curriculum*

Rapid changes in technology, global economies, and the demand for students who are able to problem-solve point to the need for more rigorous state standards. States have adopted high-stakes testing (i.e., New Jersey's High School Proficiency Assessment) as a method for determining proficiency in the Core Curriculum Content Standards and to receive a high school diploma. Content standards have become the blueprint for determining what students should know at specific grade levels. Progress indicators help insure a level of accountability in the process. To address the reported drop in Scholastic Aptitude Test scores during the 1970s,

the remedy – at least to the American public and to government policy makers – seemed clear. Establish minimum standards for local school districts, design achievement tests to measure what students had learned, and monitor the system carefully. In a word, the operative term became accountability. Accountability was largely defined in terms of testing. Achievement testing became the means through which schools would become accountable to a concerned public.” (Eisner, as cited in Henderson and Hawthorne, pg. 62)

As recently as 1989, 49 states have instituted standards-based curriculum. This could be considered a direct result of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission of the Excellence in Education, 1983), which highlighted the poor performance of schools and the low skill level of students in Math and Science. In addition, the *Third International Math and Science Study* (1999) indicated similar findings - the gradual decline of student achievement scores in math and science between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

Under President Bush's 2002 legislation, No Child Left Behind, all 50 states will have to establish standards-based curriculum to improve student achievement as measured by adequate yearly progress. However, while standards such as New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards provided a framework for understanding "what students should know," they do not translate into effective pedagogy. The standards did not specify the "how." This deficiency can result in inconsistent implementation and poor execution of instructed learning aligned to the standards.

### *Social Science Research*

As technology continues to improve research capabilities, medical and social sciences have focused our attention on extraordinary phenomena. For example, brain-based research and multiple intelligences theory have attempted to establish a positive correlation between effective pedagogy and student achievement.

The finite pool of whole school reform developers typified the marriage between scientific research and social science. The Comer School Development Program, Success for All, Communities for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environments Model claim that their programs can positively affect student achievement (Abbott v. Burke, 1998). The professionals believe that if they received more resources and control to influence curriculum decisions, schools would perform better. However, the wholesale adoption of these models in New Jersey begs the question – Have state and local officials resigned themselves to the fact that public education, as it currently exists, no longer works, and that market-based competition among private vendors is the answer?

### *Urban Decay*

The role of the school has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. The proliferation of gang violence, drugs, and limited safe recreational areas has made playing outside a dangerous proposition in some neighborhoods (Kotlowitz, 1991; Zinsmeister 1990). Students' needs have become more complex, which has required school systems to transform into systems of duality – playing the role of educator and advocate for students and parents. Chronic stress, unsafe and overcrowded living conditions have reduced students' lives to a day-to-day existence. The level of community dysfunction and social decay in some urban centers is such that “children in some neighborhoods face the possibility of walking into danger every trip to and from school, and on every trip up and down the stairs of their apartment building.” (Halpern, 1991, p. 47). The Court recognized that schools must keep pace with the dynamic shifts of the community in order to prepare a civic-minded literate citizenry. The traditional teaching/learning paradigm of the public school is now overshadowed by the overwhelming rise in school violence, teen pregnancy, teen drinking, sexually transmitted diseases, homelessness, delinquency, dropout, and incarceration. These non-academic issues would seem to be so far removed from the corridors of the school building. However, the community's problems become the school's problems, and in light of dwindling community resources, school personnel and community partners have become the most consistent source of support for many students. Through health and social service partnerships, schools develop the capacity to address character education, multiculturalism, conflict resolution and peer mediation, violence prevention support

groups, career education, sex education, and teen parenting classes, just to name a few of the non-traditional curriculum initiatives.

### *Systemic Reform*

With the roles and responsibilities of schools constantly changing to meet the demands of parents and community, teachers' roles have become more complex. On a daily basis teachers act as surrogate parents, counselors, social workers, role models, disciplinarians, and targets to endure the students' frustrations and pain. As schools become more diverse, local districts must begin the process of assessing their current levels of effectiveness in preparing students to pursue productive and responsible lives. With standardized test scores remaining relatively stable over the past 20 years, and the myriad of outside variables that impact student achievement, school leaders are looking for creative ways to improve school governance structures, pedagogy, school climate and accountability. As Fowler (2000) stated, systemic reform is deemed appropriate when new behaviors are needed, but the current personnel have become complacent and unresponsive to the demand for change.

According to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS, 2002) "a view of a system requires understanding the whole in terms of interacting component subsystems, boundaries, inputs and outputs, feedback and relationships" (p. 1). In their current state, public schools represent a system of loosely coupled subsystems that are misaligned with achieving their fundamental mission - producing a literate citizenry. Borrowed from business models espoused by theorists like Peter Senge (1990), "systems thinking"

focuses attention on realigning functions and operating systems within the school “to produce more sustainable changes and better use of limited resources” (NAS, p. 1).

Wasser (1998) concurred when she wrote:

systemic reform focuses attention on the ways in which we introduce innovations to educational systems, how we nurture those innovations to take in that system, and how we redefine and shift the context in which those innovations are located in order that they may be sustained over time.

(p. 1)

As a comprehensive approach to system-wide change, systemic reform requires a complete overhaul of the current school culture and inefficient instructional practices. At the core of systemic reform are the issues of school-based management and shifts of power away from the more hierarchical line and staff concept, to a more inclusive, broad-based approach to school management. Leading researchers have challenged the effectiveness of school-based management through a decentralized shift of power from central office. Critical issues under scrutiny are employee preparedness to make critical personnel and financial decisions, principal accountability versus management team accountability, which require educators and come up with creative strategies to ensure successful implementation of the reform initiative.

### *School-based Management*

A large body of literature suggested that school-level personnel are in the best position to make decisions that can positively impact daily school operations. Their input can potentially have long term positive implications for student achievement. “Studies

have shown that school reform efforts are more effective and long-lasting when carried out by people who have a sense of ownership and who are closely affected by management decisions” (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 1997, pp. 11-12). Stakeholder buy-in and acceptance of the new innovation is paramount to its success. The level of stakeholder buy-in can be directly related to the success or failure of the new innovation. As evidenced by the Bronx Leadership Academy High School, collaboration among all stakeholders was paramount to the success of the new school. During the initial planning, the South Bronx Churches and the Board of Education did not establish a collaborative partnership with incoming staff members. The lack of shared decision-making in the formation of the Academy demonstrated a clear disconnect between developing community capacity through collective wisdom and transforming a vision into practice:

The professional educators felt that the South Bronx Church’s involvement in [curriculum development] violated their professionalism; SBC leaders felt their exclusion to indicate a lack of respect for the years of work already spent on the school.  
(Stuart, as cited in Ravitch & Viteritti, 2000, p. 122)

Research also suggested that when innovations were unilaterally mandated in a top-down fashion, school personnel are less likely to work towards their successful implementation. However, schools do not operate in isolation of their surrounding environments. Therefore, as the body of research revealed, successful schools have developed a network of internal and external collaborators: “Baker, Curtis & Benenson’s

(1991) study of 48 school districts in Illinois confirmed that internal development and external involvement must go together” (as cited in Fullan, 1994, p. 7).

In a study conducted by Corbett and Wilson (1990), top-down mandates for reform often resulted in reduced motivation and commitment to change, low morale, and collaboration among staff members (as cited in Fullan, 1994, p. 2). However, if an innovation is adopted as a viable solution to identified problems, and is adopted based on collaborative input from all stakeholders, they will enthusiastically work for its successful implementation. Schools must have the autonomy offered by school-based management to appropriately allocate human and financial resources to facilitate the achievement of the school’s mission and vision.

#### *Decentralization vs. Traditional Management Hierarchy*

The role central office plays in the reform process was also essential to successful implementation. The dilemma for central office personnel is to make school districts more responsive to students and community needs, without creating an adversarial relationship, where schools resent any interference from central office. Fullan (1994) suggested that central office and districts work collaboratively in a simultaneous top-down/bottom up approach to reform. He cited a 1990 study conducted by Louis and Miles of five urban high schools implementing systemic reform. Of the five high schools, two schools implemented and sustained school-wide reform. Louis attributed the success of the two high schools to their collaborative relationship with central office and categorized the interactions into two dimensions “that affected the quality of the



relationship.”: (a) the degree of engagement (the quality and quantity of interactions, coordination and communication); and (b) the level of bureaucratization, or rules and regulations that govern the interactions (as cited in Fullan, 1994, p. 8). Louis identified the characteristic of high engagement and low bureaucracy that is most conducive to successful implementation of reform. Louis further stated that an environment of high engagement and low bureaucracy represented a system of “co-management, with coordination and joint planning enhanced through the development of consensus between staff at all levels about desired goals for education” (as cited in Fullan, 1994, p. 8). In similar findings, LaRocque and Coleman (1989) suggested in their study of 10 districts in British Columbia, that effective schools engaged central office staff in purposeful dialogue to address school improvement. Interactions between central office and the school were collaborative, not prescriptive, and solutions were tailored to the unique identity of the particular school.

Unfortunately, districts implementing systemic reform initiatives encountered other barriers that stalled successful implementation of the reform initiative. For example, professional development is especially important when schools are in the process of systemic reform. Maintaining an experienced, well-trained staff is critical to implementing a process over time. The influx of inexperienced teachers and limited professional development opportunities with the new innovation can potentially create an environment of disequilibrium and restraining forces that limit the progress of reform implementation. However, Beers, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) suggested that “as people gain clarity and skills through experience . . . greater consistency is achieved.” (as cited in Fullan, 1994, p. 10)

In the 1978 Rand Change Agent Study conducted by Berman and McLaughlin and Associates (as cited in Fullan, 1994), districts often undertake reform for opportunistic reasons. The availability of additional funding, political pressure to do something, or attempts to appear progressive, represented short-term gains and ultimate failure for many of the 293 sites implementing reform. Site-based managers found themselves mired in a frivolous change process, without substance to any meaningful degree.

Policy fragmentation with the lack of articulation and alignment of policy initiatives between federal, state, and local policymakers who may have little expertise in effective educational practices is another restraining force. Political pressure to do something, and fast, often results in the quick fix solution. Fowler (2000) stated that the major drawback of systemic reform is unpredictability, especially in the area of decision-making. Heifetz (2000) concurred when he stated “authorities under pressure to be decisive sometimes fake the remedy or take action that avoids the issue by skirting it” (pp. 72-73).

Developing adequate timelines for implementation is paramount if comprehensive and self-sustaining reform is to have any chance of achieving long-term success. As noted by Walker (2000) “successful reform efforts make a provision for school level and central office actors to engage in activities that will enhance their abilities to meet the demands and challenges of the reform” (p. 6).

Walker (2000) further suggested that the absence of adequate time for all stakeholders to engage in quality planning will inevitably produce less than optimal implementation and integration of services required by systemic reform. As noted by

Rowley (1992) in his 12-year case study of systemic reform in the Sequoia Valley School District in California, the district-wide initiative was poorly implemented, suffering from uneven implementation among schools and the lack of reallocation all available resources to support reform. This study also revealed that the Sequoia Valley School District reform efforts were not highly successful because of two common mistakes in implementation of systemic reform. The first was confusion over the role of central office and its relationship with individual schools. Developing a clear understanding of the role central office would play in the reform process, and its relationship with individual schools was not addressed during the initial planning phase of implementation. Second, by adding several new programs throughout the district, they did not have a clear understanding of systemic reform. Lacking cohesion and lateral articulation, the add-on programs overwhelmed the staff, and helped maintain the status quo.

*School Choice and the Impact on Public School Finance*

“Seminal reports such as a *Nation At Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983) and the *Third International Math and Science Study* (1999) reveal that the current K-12 system of education has produced dismal results” (Finn & Gau, 1998, p.5). New Jersey, like other states and countries around the globe, has embraced systemic reform as a panacea to improve poor performing schools and stakeholder involvement in schools. With the recent *Abbott vs. Burke* decision of June 2003 (*Abbottv. Burke*, 2003), the New Jersey State Supreme Court has acknowledged that the current strategies to improve New Jersey’s poorest schools have met with limited success. Allegations of wasteful spending, and a State budget deficit have contributed to a hiatus on implementing many of the *Abbott V* mandates ordered in 1998 (*Abbott v. Burke*, 2002). Inconsistent implementation of the adopted whole school reform models at the elementary level, limited success with supplemental programs at the high school level, and overall dissatisfaction with the model developers’ contract performance has led the Court ordering a series of corrective action including identifying barriers to high student achievement and reevaluating the State Department of Education’s role in providing timely data and budget decisions to Abbott districts.. (*Abbott vs. Burke*, 2002).

Over the past two decades school districts have come under increased pressure to improve student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. The one-size- fits-all model of education has been adopted for far too long, is neither fair nor ineffective. Gradual reforms of New Jersey’s Abbott districts have not worked effectively, and according to Finn and Gau (1998)

the glacial change of education is rooted in both complacency with comfort with the more familiar, traditional form of education. Many interests are deeply rooted in the status quo: teachers unions, textbook publishers school board associations . . . which represent the public school establishment. (p. 5)

Hentschke, Oschman and Wiersman (2002) suggested that radical change may be required. New policy initiatives have given school districts, parents, and community stakeholders the flexibility to experiment with creative options to improve educational outcomes for students. The viability of the radical change must present an effective alternative for parents and school-age children, that is accessible and flexible enough to address students' individual learning needs (Finn & Gau, 1998). The radical change comes in the form of education management organizations and school choice options for parents who are dissatisfied with the public education system.

Parental choice programs have become the latest effort to improve student achievement in American public schools. Charter schools represent one example of choice for a public disenchanted with their neighborhood school. Finn and Gau (1998) identify charter schools as the institutions that offer new educational opportunities for students, thus changing the landscape of public education as it is configured today.

Since the opening of the first charter school in 1992, 37 states and the District of Columbia have passed charter school legislation (Ericson & Silverman, 2001). Charter school legislation in these jurisdictions outlined the conditions under which a charter is granted, the length of the charter, and the expectations for charter renewal. Data from the State of Charter Schools, National Study of Charter Schools, Fourth Year Report,

highlighted the existence of 421 Charter schools operating in 1999 (Nelson, Berman, Ericson, Kamprath, Perry, Silverman & Solomon, 2000). The United States Department of Education estimated that there were 2,372 charter schools operating across the country in 2001. California's 73,905 students represented the largest student population enrolled in charter schools in the nation. In 1999-2000 only 4% of all charter schools in existence (59) lost their Charter. "In a 17 month study of Pennsylvania Charter schools by Western Michigan University Evaluation Center, 66 charter schools were operating during the 2000-2001 school year, enrolling more than 20,000 students" (Miron & Nelson, 2000, p. 13).

Charter schools can be created by parents, teachers who want to implement their educational vision, or for-profit companies. In addition, research conducted by the University of Minnesota indicated that in 1995-1996 approximately one-third of all charter schools in existence were once public schools (Manno, Finn, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1998). As an option for parents and students, charter schools offer greater freedom from bureaucratic regulations, flexibility to create and initiate new programs tailored to unique populations and students' interests, and smaller class sizes. The median number of students in charter schools was one hundred thirty seven in 1998-1999 versus 475 in all of the public schools studied (Nelson et al., 2000).

The Report of the National Study of Charter Schools (Ericson & Silverman, 2001) investigated the impact of Charter schools on public education. The results revealed that Charter schools offer educational options to parents and students with very few choices. Of the 49 districts studied, 25 (51%) of the districts reported an increase in choice for at-risk students, minority students and students with special needs. Charter schools created

a marketplace of competition and improved stakeholder satisfaction. This competition effect, according to experts, will require public schools to develop innovative educational services and deliver a higher quality product to attract and retain its student population or close its doors.

The creation of a competitive marketplace was evidenced in school districts in Albany, NY, Buffalo, NY, Lansing, Michigan, and Massachusetts. Districts in these states have embraced the nature of competition by “mimicking the Charter school curricula in an effort to out-charter the charters.” (Finn & Gau, 1998, p. 12). Twenty-four of the 49 districts studied reported the existence of competition between them and the charter schools. Also, nearly 50% of the sample school districts initiated at least one new educational program in response to competition from Charter schools.

Keeping pace with the growth of Charter schools, Educational Management Organizations operated 368 schools in 24% states and the District of Columbia (Hentscke et al., 2002). Although several arguments exist opposing Education Management Organizations, the most common being the profit maximizing philosophy at the expense of quality education programming, Education Management Organizations promised to operate public schools more efficiently and provide a higher quality educational product than its public school counterparts (The Edison Schools, 2004). When charter schools find their operation in dire financial straits, Education Management Organizations bring the advantage of venture capital to support extensive research and professional development on rigorous curricula, and effective pedagogy for students.

The charter school phenomenon, while 11 years young, has produced very little longitudinal data to support claims of improved student achievement. The literature is

filled with anecdotal data on the impact of Charter schools on student achievement or as a viable whole school reform initiative. For example, the Hudson Institute's Educational Excellence Network's 2 year national study of 43 Charter schools in Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin revealed that six out of eight Massachusetts Charter schools out-performed their regular education peers, and data from Arizona suggested that many of their Charter schools are performing well (Manno et al., 1998). However, quantitative data does not exist to verify these claims. Do students enrolled in Charter schools or privatized schools run by Educational Management Organizations outperform their public school peers on standardized tests? Further research is required in the area of privatization of public education and the impact on student achievement. The results of a longitudinal study of a sample test scores from public school students compared to students in privatized educational programs, over a period of time, would support or refute the anecdotal claims of quality educational service provided by private sector vendors.

### *Summary*

It is clear that systemic reform is not an easy task. Long-term success is highly possible when the barriers to successful implementation are addressed in the preliminary phase of implementation. School personnel must commit themselves to developing efficient organizational systems that identify and address the prevalent barriers to student learning. For example, policies that are narrow in scope, focusing on individual teachers' knowledge rather than working to enhance organizational capacity, hinder the reform



process. Implicit here is that policy makers must use their authority in support of reform by eliminating the obstacles that impede the progress of successful systemic reform, obstacles that are beyond the control of the local school district.

Collaboration between stakeholders through brainstorming of viable solutions is essential to reform. Giving teachers and schools discretion over decisions relevant to instruction can enable them to organize in ways that increase their ability to improve student achievement opportunities and provide personnel with opportunities for collaboration. In the absence of collaboration and consensus on possible solutions, those individuals who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the change process can become the restraining force that determines the fate of the initiative. Within the framework of collaboration is developing a mission and vision statement that is also reflective of community concerns.

Although school-level personnel may not be adequately prepared to take on the task of systemic reform, appropriate support systems introduced into the system can improve the quality of reform implementation. Training and experience with the reform initiative help build levels of comfort and familiarity with the process. Through personal capacity building and critical reflection, school personnel can develop consensus to fully support the new initiative. Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) outlined a model for introducing innovation. The Concerns-based Adaptive Model (CBAM) proposed introducing innovations incrementally. The seven levels of use, Orientation, Preparation, Mechanical Use, Routinization, Refinement, Integration, and Renewal, helps stakeholders track teacher behaviors during the process of implementation of differentiated curriculum (Marsh & Willis, 1999).

In addition to school level-experience and motivation, shared accountability between the schools and central office play a role in successful reform. Michael Fullan (1994) recommended a managerial shift between central office and the individual schools. His research concluded that both a top-down and bottom-up approach to reform initiatives were highly effective in several districts.

The concern for districts was how to manage and maintain the inordinate task of planning reform, analyze data to determine effective strategies for improvement, monitoring program implementation, providing professional development and ongoing assessment. As mandated by the State Supreme Court, each Abbott school was required to select a pre-packaged whole school reform model (Abbott v. Burke, 153 N.J. 480, 1998). Each of the State-approved whole school reform models incorporated design options and were selected by schools based on the individual needs of the school. Some models offered reading-based programs. Others offered curriculum development through technology. In the next section, two whole school reform models will be highlighted and discussed in detail. They are Success for All and the Comer School Development Program.

## *Whole School Reform Models*

### *Success for All*

Created by Dr. Robert Slavin in 1987 at Johns Hopkins University, Success for All incorporated instructional pedagogy and many of the educational best practices that have been proven effective at improving student achievement. This highly prescriptive pre K-6<sup>th</sup> grade whole school reform model focused on improving literacy with a school-wide literacy curriculum, a 90-minute reading period, think-pair-share cooperative learning activities, and reading tutors.

The components to successful implementation included an 80% buy-in from school staff, the involvement of key stakeholders (Family Support Team, SFA Facilitator, teachers, principal, and parents) in the school-level decision making process, and extensive teacher training. Overall, implementation of Success for All required developing a comprehensive program that is integrated into the school culture and instructional climate. It is not an add-on program that duplicates current instructional practices, but it replaces ineffective instructional pedagogy. As the most extensively researched whole school reform model, Success for All demonstrated the most potential in improving students' literacy by Grade 3. Based on its internal audits of improved student achievement, Success for All received unilateral support from the State DOE and was recommended to the State Superior Court as the presumptive model (Abbott v. Burke, 1998).

Research showed that children participating in the Success for All program “read about three months better than children in the control or non-SFA schools. By the end of fifth grade, they read an average of slightly more than one year ahead of their peers in the non-SFA schools.” (Abbott v. Burke, 1998, p. 37).

As the presumptive model, all districts were required to implement the Success for All, Roots and Wings Program, or develop a compelling case to implement another State-approved model. However, two caveats should be noted regarding the Success for All whole school reform model. What are there long-term benefits of Success for All, if the researched conducted indicated that the positive student gains do not last beyond the sixth grade? In addition, the question remains whether student literacy is actually increasing as a result of Success for All, or are students using alternative coping techniques to memorize the prescriptive instructional process in the short term?

#### *Comer School Development Program*

In tackling the social issues preventing students from maximizing their full potential, schools cannot do it alone. Dr. James Comer established the Comer School Development Program (Comer SDP) in 1968 at Yale University (Comer School Development Program, 2004). Originally implemented in two of New Haven’s lowest achieving schools, the Comer School Development Program provided a holistic approach to bridging the gap between student achievement and the affective domain, which is critical to long-term growth and development. Helping students develop self-respect, in a non-threatening environment, can potentially open the door for deeper connections to the

learning process. The Comer School Development Program attempts to identify the root causes of poor student achievement.

Organizations cannot function properly until people have been recruited and trained to fulfill specific roles. Maybe the most important resource to an organization is its staff. Therefore, it is apparent that the initial and most important human resource issue for any organization is how to select, train, and socialize employees for maximum performance. Community stakeholders and school personnel are reorganized into three structured teams to maximize the organization's infrastructure for change. The School Planning and Management Team, Student Staff Support Team, and Parent Team represent the three decision-making structures of the school. Each team is extensively trained to operate more efficiently and collaboratively to address those issues preventing students' growth, impeding improved school climate and community involvement. Other staffing requirements for each school included: District Liaison (1), Comer SDP Facilitator (1), Parent Facilitator (1), Master Teacher (1), Social Worker (1), School Psychologist (1), School Nurse (1). The Comer SDP implementation guidelines state that these positions are necessary to insure the faithful replication of the Comer process (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004)

Described more as a non-prescriptive whole-school-reform process, Comer's Nine Elements of Implementation included three teams: (School Planning and Management Team, Student and Staff Support Team, Parent Team); three operations (Comprehensive School Plan, staff development, monitoring and assessment); and three guiding principles (consensus, collaboration, and no-fault). The nine elements of the Comer process developed a framework for engaging all stakeholders in the process of

improving school climate, student achievement, students' self-efficacy, and building community capacity for school-wide reform. "Through the nine elements . . . the SDP improves essential dimensions of school climate. As these dimensions improve, students experience significant positive growth along the six developmental pathways..." (Comer, Haynes, Joyner & Ben-Avie, 1996, p. 124 ).

The Comer School Development staff strive to create the conditions that promote the successful adaptation of the nine elements. Those fundamental conditions that must be present to begin the implementation process included: (a) collaboration between Comer SDP and district personnel-which is represented by a contractual agreement between the district and Comer SDP. Individual schools complete separate contracts that secure the number of on-site, in-district visits by the Comer SDP staff and the cost for each visit; (b) developing positive interpersonal relationships, that include understanding the unique characteristics of each Comer school or district; (c) the Comer facilitator having an in-depth understanding of the elements for successful systemic reform; (d) wholesale participation of all stakeholders, especially parents and students (Comer et al., 1996).

*School Leadership Council (SLC).* The School Leadership Council represents the central policy and decision-making body for the school. Each individual school is responsible for developing its own School Leadership Council comprised of both instructional and non-instructional staff, parents, community members, and students. The responsibilities of the School Leadership Council are to plan, coordinate, monitor, and evaluate all school activities. The School Leadership Council develops the Comprehensive School Plan that

outlines the process for achieving the school's social, academic and professional development goals.

*Student Staff Support Team (SSST).* The Student Staff Support Team proactively addresses the staff and student's mental health needs and provides crisis intervention. Specific responsibilities included recommending school policy and procedure changes to the School Leadership Council, and working with community members on understanding the social development areas of child development and mental health. The SSST also maintains case files on students to monitor their progress and the success of the prescribed intervention.

*Parent Team (PT).* This team was responsible for involving parents in all school activities beyond fundraising and attending athletic events. The Parent Team members developed strategies to expand the base of parental involvement in overall school management, curriculum development, and facilities.

*Guiding Principles.* Group decision-making was guided by three theoretical principles: collaboration, consensus, and no fault. Collaboration is an empowerment mechanism by which building administrators involve all team members in the decision-making process. In a collaborative problem-solving environment, school administrators utilize the expertise of team members as a value-added resource. Through collaboration, team members build true partnership and trust.

Consensus-based decision making ensures that everyone has contributed to the brainstorming process. Each member was involved in the discussion of ideas and identification of possible solutions. The goal of consensus decision making helps eliminate the win-lose paradigm established by voting. Consensus creates an open environment that is accepting of divergent points of view, in addition to giving each member of the team a personal stake in the success of an innovation, idea or policy to be implemented.

No-fault decision making equally distributes the responsibility of failure or success to all stakeholders. As Heifetz (2000) noted, blaming others helps us rationalize the dismal circumstances we may find ourselves in. As our failures persist, scapegoating is a natural occurrence. Finger pointing, and playing the blame game are counterproductive to the guiding principle of no-fault decision-making. No-fault helps the team focus on the work, versus focusing on the shortcomings of others. The team discusses relevant information and provides appropriate feedback rather than blaming others. No-fault does not mean absence of accountability. Rather, by sharing the responsibility, the team also shares accountability for the successes or setbacks experienced by the team.

*Developmental Pathways.* Based on child development and relationship theory research, the Comer School Development Program has incorporated six developmental pathways into the model. “Dr. Comer believes that current reform initiatives are largely unsuccessful because they are not grounded in how students develop, process information and acquire new knowledge” (Comer, 2001, as cited in the Principals Academy



Handbook, p. 279). Dr. Comer added that schools must actively infuse the developmental pathways into the instructional process in order to develop a well-rounded, balanced child. Establishing a cognitive, social, and emotional balance can enhance student's academic success, enabling students to maximize their full potential.

The developmental pathways provide a tangible framework for understanding the child's behaviors, and establish a focal point for developing instructional strategies that promote the social, emotional, and cognitive growth of students. The pathways are one set of tools necessary in creating an environment that is conducive to learning.

“Educators from John Dewey to Deborah Meier have emphasized the importance of schools as communities where children learn to be citizens in a democracy.” (Hemphill, (as cited in Ravitch & Viteritti, 2000, p. 52). Classroom activities, then, must be tailored to instill a sense of social responsibility and connection to the larger social community. The integration of the pathways into the school culture helps to create conditions in which students can develop positive and meaningful relationships with peers and adults, thus enhancing the teaching-learning interactions. A description of each pathway is outlined below (Comer School Development Program 1999).

1. The Physical Pathway promotes healthy functioning of the body through movement and physical activity.
2. The Cognitive Pathway addresses the ability to problem solve, analyze and think critically.
3. The Social Pathway focuses on one's ability to healthy relationships with others
4. The Psychological Pathway promotes positive self-esteem and confidence.

5. The Language Pathway builds capacity for expressive language in a variety of social or professional situations.
6. The Ethical Pathway helps one achieve a sense of justice and fairness.

School-based management, as mandated by Urban Education Reform Regulations in the Abbott Districts 6A:24A (2002), gives school management teams more control over policy, procedures, and internal school operations. A cross-sectional representation of school, parent, and community stakeholders at each school site is responsible for developing and managing the budget and yearly strategic plan, monitoring facilities and grounds, as well as instructional practices and school climate. Principals serve as equal members on the School Leadership Council (SLC), which is charged with developing goals and objectives to help students meet and exceed the Core Curriculum Content Standards, through effective teaching strategies and the application of the Comer School Development Program's Guiding Principles. With individual schools having greater control over responsibilities that once rested with central office, top-down micromanaging from central office is replaced with decentralized school-level decision making.

### *Implementation Studies*

Prominent institutions and various corporations across the country have conducted relevant research on whole school reform. According to a 1994 poll of urban districts, 96% of large city districts reported that they were engaged in district-wide reform. The poll also indicated that in the past 15 years, cities such as Boston, Chicago,

New York, and Philadelphia have attempted to improve the performance of schools by implementing various restructuring activities (Council of the Great City Schools, 1994, as cited in Anyon, 1997)

Case studies of schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district, Sacramento City Unified School District and a portion of the Fourth District in New York City share several common characteristics in their systemic reform initiatives. Their efforts at improving student achievement in these poor urban districts is noteworthy in that evidence showed trends of overall improvement in student achievement and at a rate that outpaced their peers within their respective states (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 2002).

Based on research conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (2002), some preconditions to reform must be established as a foundation to engage in and sustain successful school reform over the long-term. Adaptive challenges require that individuals invent, discover, and take responsibility to act (Heifetz, 2000). For example, top-level administrators must identify the adaptive challenge of reform, and implement a shift in priorities from developing policy to manage day-to-day school level crises, versus developing policy that focuses on improving student achievement. In addition, schools and central office must develop a shared mission and vision statement that rallies the community around the change initiative. The community, as a major stakeholder, must remain in the dialog continuum, and have a forum to provide feedback.

Among the shared characteristics, the success of the reform initiatives in the sample districts also focused on developing new policy is creating a plan of implementation based on realistic expectations. The sample districts focused their reform

initiatives at the elementary level, not trying to fix everything at once. Heifetz (2000) stated that effective “leadership often requires pacing the work in an effort to prepare people to undertake a hard task at a rate they can stand” (pp. 39-40). The adaptive challenge of change in this case represents the gap between the current landscape of public education in poor districts, versus the desired outcomes of high student achievement and self-efficacy via systemic reform. When individuals are overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand, they become disillusioned and resistant to change. Pacing the work and having adequate time for planning is critical, when those responsible for implementing the desired change either have little knowledge of, or limited exposure to, the innovation (Marsh & Willis 1999).

Goal-setting that promotes student achievement is paramount. Achievement must be supported by an effective, research-based curriculum that is aligned to State standards. The curriculum should be challenging, make connections to the real world through authentic performance assessments, and incorporate a variety of assessment modalities for students to demonstrate content mastery. Vertical articulation between grade levels provides greater curricular cohesion and opportunity for cognitive growth.

The use of data to drive decision making plays a role in school improvement and student achievement. Data from multiple assessment tools were used to identify students’ strengths and areas of concern. Pedagogical changes, additional resources, co-curricular activities that were more aligned to students’ needs had a more significant impact on overall student achievement. Finally, each school included in the study developed an accountability system. By implementing a system of rewards and

sanctions, staff members were held responsible for student achievement on standardized assessments.

Erlichson, Goertz, and Turnbull (1999, 2001), Walker and Gutmore (1999), Walker (2000), and Muirhead, Tyler and Hamilton (2001) have advanced research reports on the level of implementation of whole school reform in New Jersey's Abbott districts. Their research analyzed cross-sectional data from a randomly selected sample of between 32 and 140 Abbott schools throughout the state. The findings indicated several common areas of concern that have limited the districts' abilities to fully implement whole school reform. For example, financial barriers were cited by 70% of the districts as "a vexing problem" to implementation (Walker & Gutmore, 1999). Other critical areas of concern included fragmented policy, state oversight, and lack of technical assistance. (Walker & Gutmore, 1999) This study also pointed to several factors that may have contributed to the district's limited ability to implement whole school reform. For example, adequate planning time to conduct a thorough needs assessment was eliminated due to the short time constraints imposed by the State DOE. Lack of communication and clarity in requests from the DOE, which was cited by 95% of the respondents, hindered progress. Walker and Gutmore (1999) did point out the importance of experience and expertise (capacity) as keys to initiating and sustaining systemic reform. However, they did not suggest possible reasons for the presumed lack of expertise and experience in the reform process. In addition, there is no indication in the Methodology that the responses came from multiple levels within the school level. It was stated that the Superintendent was asked to have the questionnaire completed by the person(s) most knowledgeable about the whole school reform process in the district. The

level(s) of responsibility, job title, position, or function was not explicit in the reported responses. Furthermore, although the number of Abbott districts who responded was 22 (79%), the number of individual school respondents was unknown.

Commissioned by the US DOE and conducted in the Fall of 2000, the Muirhead et al. (2001) investigated the progress of whole school reform implementation in New Jersey and the technical assistance needs of Abbott districts. Key elements of the study included the perception of implementation held by the State Department of Education staff, district-level administrators, and school-level personnel. Their results indicated a marked difference in perceptions among the three groups. Self-assessment within each group was generally higher than those assessments from their peers in the other two groups. Muirhead et al. (2001) did not look at the years of experience in the respondent's current position and length of experience in the whole school reform process to draw some correlation between that and the level of whole school reform implementation.

Of the 30 Abbott districts, eighteen first-, second-, and second-year mid-year schools responded to this study (Muirhead et al., 2001, p.iii). Data collected from the respondents represented multi-level responses to gauge the stakeholders' perceptions of successful implementation of whole school reform in their district. In addition, the study was designed to provide information to the State DOE on the progress of implementation of the whole school reform models within the sample population, and assess the adequacy of professional development and technical assistance provided to schools by the State Department of Education. Overall, this study attempted to identify the factors that have contributed to the school's organizational capacity to affect system change.

Noteworthy points from the study's self assessment survey indicated that the School Management Team respondents acknowledged making little progress in aligning key components of the systemic reform process. Specifically, School Planning and Management Teams experienced difficulty defining the role and responsibilities of the team, creating an environment for teamwork and consensus building, and developing realistic goals and objectives. Failure in these areas resulted in the self-assessed rating of making little progress in the overall implementation of the selected model (Muirhead et al., 2001, p. 18).

Central office and the State DOE played a critical role in the school's ability to effectively implement the whole school reform model. Model showcases and professional development opportunities were important to building internal capacity to initiate and sustain systemic reform. Study results showed that when School Management Teams were asked to assess the helpfulness of the Department of Education in the areas of providing written guidelines and materials, support and training, for example, the ratings were moderate (Muirhead et al., 2001). When asked the same question, the district rated the State's helpfulness well below the moderate level on four areas of whole school reform: implementation, particularized needs, zero-based budget and required programs for secondary schools. Coupled with the low self-assessment in overall implementation, one can conclude that a focus should include more timely technical assistance from the State. The School Management Teams and the districts rated their implementation efforts higher than what was perceived by the State Department of Education (Muirhead et al., 2001).

The State of New Jersey Department of Education viewed the school and district's implementation efforts as relatively low (Muirhead et al., 2001). Districts received low marks in the areas of developing a comprehensive needs assessment to guide decision-making and developing a school budget. Schools, too, received low ratings from the Department in their efforts to implement the whole school reform model. However, the State DOE rated its performance in supporting the district's implementation efforts significantly higher than the both the districts and School Management Teams. (Muirhead et al., 2001).

The evidence suggested a misalignment in stakeholders' perceptions of implemented initiatives. The State DOE must assess the particular training needs of central office, and school-level personnel and provide appropriate professional development and assistance.

The studies cited above provide aggregated data of all schools in cohorts one, two, and second-year-mid-year. Cohort three schools, having just begun the implementation process in September, 2001, have not been included in these studies. While the level of implementation is important, in order for students to meet and exceed the Core Curriculum Contents Standards, quality programming is imperative. Further, the previous studies have not gauged the stakeholders' perceptions of quality services compared with documented assessment reports to determine the effectiveness of what has been implemented. Furthermore, the sample district demonstrated characteristics that make it a unique Abbott district. First, the district petitioned for 2 years for State approval to implement its own whole school reform model. Second, previous reports have taken a cross-sectional view of Abbott school districts that house several whole



school reform models. As stated by Muirhead et al., (2001), and echoed by Walker & Gutmore (1999), a range of models have been adopted by schools in the same Abbott district.

The top four whole school reform models adopted by School Management Teams were Success for All, Accelerated Schools, Communities for Learning/ALEM, and Comer School Development Program (Muirhead et al., 2001). However, as the sample school district neared the beginning of the third cohort, a hybrid whole school reform model was implemented district-wide – a brain-based model linked to the Comer School Development Program. The small size of the district, and obvious difficulties experienced by earlier cohorts in implementing multiple models proved significant in the district's decision to implement one model district-wide.

Systemic reform and quality educational services have also been a priority in other countries as well. In the South American country of Argentina systemic reform was adopted to address concerns of pedagogy, school governance, curriculum and teacher training at the secondary level (Gorostiaga, Acedo, & Xifra, 2003). The need for a complete change in the delivery of educational services came as a result of the high drop out rates, the increasing number of students retained at the secondary level, the duplication of educational services between the national and provincial authorities, and the lack of expertise among teachers to provide comprehensive and rigorous instruction (Gorostiaga et al., 2003).

The desired outcomes of whole school reform in Argentina included effecting changes in management, organizational restructuring of its schools that would optimize the effective delivery of quality educational services, and participation from a wide array

of community stakeholders (Gorostiaga et al., 2003). This required a movement to decentralize the national secondary schools system down to provincial control; develop a national curriculum; extend compulsory education from 7 to 10 years, and develop extensive professional development opportunities for teachers.

The Ministry of Education in Argentina encountered several barriers to the change process. The Ministry faced economic constraints for its national reform initiative and political pressures to maintain the status quo system of education, which impeded successful implementation of the reform process. The passing of the decentralization law No. 24049 and the Federal Law of Education No. 24195 in 1993 outlined the nature of systemic reform, including (a) increased funding to local provincial governments, (b) gradual implementation over the next 7 years, with full implementation by 2000, (c) decentralized site-based management, (d) the creation of Teacher Training Institutes for teachers and principals, and (e) data driven decision-making via the 1993 National System of Educational Quality Assessment which evaluated students' levels of proficiency, and gathered stakeholders' perceptions of pedagogy, climate and school culture (Gorostiaga et al., 2003).

The limited experience in education reform resulted in a series of systems failures that reverberated throughout the school system. Every provincial school did not immediately embrace the newly developed curriculum. The lack of uniformity was evident in the inconsistent implementation of the new curriculum at the provincial level. The teacher training program resulted in some teachers being relocated from one province to another. The poorly planned relocation of teachers throughout the system resulted in some classes having no teachers (Gorostiaga et al., 2003). In addition, the

Ministry failed to generate broad-based support for change by failing to achieve buy-in from the teacher's unions, which resulted in opposition to the reform process. For example, 69% of teachers reported that they did not participate in the development of the new curriculum and 65% did not think the current reforms had a positive impact on teaching (Gorostiaga et al., 2003).

Gorostiaga et al. (2003) further reported that whole school reform in Argentina was instrumental in developing a more comprehensive educational service delivery system, which included the implementation of an evaluation and information system and a national curriculum. However, the researchers continued their analysis by stating that whole school reform in Argentina "illustrates the need for collaboration among all stakeholders in a meaningful partnership to implement systemic reform" (p. 19)

### *Implementation of the Comer School Development Program*

Implementation of the Comer School Development Program (SDP) was guided by a sequence of phases. "The life cycle of the SDP referred to the particular sequence in which the implementation of the program seems to occur" (Comer et al., 1996, p. 139). Faithful replication of the Comer process requires that schools are engaged in this five-stage process of implementation.

During the planning and pre-orientation phase, districts are planning to begin implementation. At this initial phase, the district develops a steering committee; schools begin to identify potential resources, collaborators, and stakeholders to be included in the implementation process. The Comer facilitator is also selected. Building internal

capacity through information sessions and professional development on the Comer process occurs during the orientation phase. Baseline data is collected that provide insight to district needs. Formal establishment of the structural teams takes place during the transition phase. The Comer SDP staff and Comer facilitator work closely with school personnel to reorganize existing resources and provide additional training to team members. Once the teams are in place, the operation phase begins; the nine elements of the Comer School Development Program are functioning efficiently. Finally, when the Comer SDP process of consensus, collaboration and no-fault has become the established protocol for school-based decision making, the developmental pathways have been assimilated as pedagogy, and the school climate is student-centered, the Comer SDP has reached the final phase of institutionalization (Comer et al., 1996).

To encourage active engagement of the implementation process, each phase of the life cycle has a length of time by which the activities and training in each phase should have commenced. From start to completion of implementation, the process is designed for a 3-5 year phase-in process. The life cycle process serves as a useful tool to gauge the level of implementation among Comer schools. Case studies have indicated varying levels of implementation among schools in the same district. The Yale Center for Child Development will conduct additional longitudinal studies on this phenomenon (Comer et al., 1996)

Hemphill stated (as cited in Ravitch & Viteritti, 2000) that successful schools share the following characteristic—an effective principal. The principal must be an effective communicator, expressing the importance of implementing the nine elements of the Comer School Development Program. “Good leaders are dependable and committed

...and know that the dream must be student-centered” (Muirhead, et al. 2001, p. 2). Principals must support the implementation process by their actions, serving as both cheerleader and motivator. Peterson, Kubilay and Martin (1995) concurred by stating that (a) principals must be able to help their schools develop clear, shared educational vision. (b) develop effective structures and processes to support shared decision-making, and (c) build strong and cohesive teams.

The Comer School Development Program has an intensive Principals’ Academy incorporated into the implementation process for years one and two. “Studies of the (Comer) implementation process reveal that the principal’s attitude and leadership . . . greatly affect implementation.” (Comer School Development Program, 2001, Principal’s Academy Handbook, p. 5).

A positive school environment is critical to the success of implementing the Comer School Development Program. The school should be a warm inviting place for parents and community stakeholders. Staff members must bring an enthusiasm and energy to their work that is visible to visitors. Furthermore, staff members must remain committed to the school, student success and the Comer process. Finally, the Comer Facilitator actively works to bring all groups together to form a cohesive, highly organized and efficient school environment.

The Yale Child Study Center for Child Development (1996 & 2001) has documented several examples of successful implementation of the Comer School Development Program. For example:

In 1986, an analysis of achievement data in the Benton Harbor Michigan Area Schools showed significant average 4 year gains,

between 7.5 and 11.0 percentile points, in reading and mathematics, at the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades for Comer SDP schools, exceeding gains reported for the school district as a whole.” (Comer et al., 1996, p. 128)

Similar gains have been documented in Prince George’s County Schools between 1985-1987, “where third grade students gained 18 percentile points in math, 9 percentile points in reading and 17 percentile points in language” on the California Aptitude Test (Comer et al., 1996, p. 128). MAT-6 results for Lincoln Bassett Elementary School in New Haven, Connecticut also showed significant achievement gains in third grade reading and math scores between 1987-1990 (Comer et al., 1996).

### *Summary*

Evidence to suggest Comer’s effectiveness in developing the whole child was seen in controlled studies conducted in 1994 and 1998 by Haynes, Comer and Hamilton-Lee (Comer et al., 1996). For example, the studies showed positive improvement in student attendance, and a decrease in student discipline referrals when compared to non-Comer SDP students (pg. 132). As indicated by the research, these gains can be linked to the level and quality of faithful replication of the Comer SDP process.

Across the spectrum, Comer schools were situated in typically low-performing, impoverished communities with little local support. In several highlighted cases, systemic reform was already in progress. However, the Comer School Development Program provided the expertise in organizational management and team building that allowed staff and the community to move beyond the stall of bureaucracy. In a number

of schools across the country, the Comer School Development Program has taken diverse student populations, loosely coupled operations and fragmented staff, and transformed these schools into high performing, collegial environments (Noblit, Malloy & Malloy, 2001). Teachers in several Comer schools felt revived with renewed energy and enthusiasm for teaching. Students reported that they felt safer and more relaxed. Through the incorporation of international nights and community celebrations, Comer has created a supportive environment for students, where differences were not only tolerated, but also celebrated.

Staff members also reported that Comer SDP has facilitated the shift of focus back to academics. Parents, students, and faculty all agree that the Comer School Development Program helped organize an academic environment and provide a structure for uniformity of purpose. Teachers and parents at Oceanview Elementary School saw Comer as a way for the school to develop goals and identify what changes were necessary to improve the community's capacity for sustaining change. The Guiding Principles have helped to create an environment of collegiality and sharing, with teachers focusing more on supporting one another.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of implementation of the Comer School Development Program in this small Abbott school district. In this chapter the investigator will delineate and describe the methodology used to gauge the level of implementation of systemic reform process.

The Orange Public School district, a pre-K through 12 Abbott district, is situated between West Orange and East Orange, approximately five miles west of Newark, New Jersey. The district operates 10 schools: seven elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one 7-12 alternative school. The October 15, 2002 Application for State School Aid indicated that 2,214 students are in the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) Title I program, and 3,683 are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The district employs approximately 391 teachers with an average of 13 years of teaching experience, and 244 full time non-instructional professional staff members to educate a student population of 4,668 (Data collected from Oct 15, 2002 Application for State School Aid Report). One hundred sixty-nine instructional staff members employed in Orange are male, and 466 are female. In 2002, the district hired 28 new staff members, 15 males and 13 females.

An eight-member appointed Board of Education sets the instructional, human resources, facilities, and fiscal agenda for the district. The most pressing concern for the Orange Board of Education was improving the quality of education for all students who



attend its public schools. They have charged the Chief School Administrator with developing instructional policies and procedures designed to positively impact the teaching/learning paradigm.

The Superintendent implemented the Board's agenda through the development of short- and long-range strategic planning. It was the Superintendent's vision that students learn in a non-threatening environment and demonstrate content mastery and problem-solving abilities on State standardized assessments. Equally important was the development of students' ethical and social skills. The Superintendent's Executive Cabinet consisted of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent for Operations & Human Resource Services, Director of Special Programs, Director of Curriculum & Testing, Director of Special Services, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary; and Assistant Business Administrator/Assistant Board Secretary. Ten Principals and five Assistant Principals represented the middle line managers, and teachers, classroom aids, paraprofessionals, secretaries, librarians, food service workers, counselors, and media specialists represented the operating core. One requirement of whole school reform calls for the addition of several non-instructional personnel to level the playing field of student achievement between wealthy districts (I & J) and poor districts (A & B). The Health and Social Services Coordinator, Technology Coordinators, one whole school reform facilitator per building and Parent Liaisons have expanded the non-instructional human resource base.

### *District History*

Although Success for All was the State DOE's presumptive model, the Department provided a list of 12 additional models from which schools could choose and implement (See Appendix Q – List of Whole School Reform Models). Of particular interest to this district was its opportunity to develop an alternative program design that incorporated the latest research in brain development. The district petitioned the State DOE to approve the implementation of its alternative program design. The district's contention remained that the alternative program design met the Department's Nine Elements for whole school reform model approval (See Appendix R – Nine Elements for Whole School Reform Model Approval). Confident that the State DOE would approve the alternative Program design, the district began professional development programs focused on district-wide implementation of the alternative program design. However, State DOE officials raised concerns about the alternative program design, specifically requesting to see the scientifically based evidence of the alternative program's effectiveness in improving student achievement.

The district entered the third cohort of whole school implementation in the Spring of 2000, focused on its alternative program design. However, the alternative program design did not pass State DOE's scrutiny according to the Nine Elements. Education officials cited two areas of concern that negated the implementation of the alternative program design (See Appendix S). First, the model lacked the research base evidence of success in improving student achievement. Second, the alternative design program did not have a tangible curriculum framework or evidence of pedagogical alignment of instruction to brain-based research and theory. In addition, consecutive years of

academic decline in the district called into question the Chief School Administrators' ability to effectively lead and make the district competitive with its surrounding counterparts.

Factors that impacted the district's whole school reform implementation process included a perception of uncertain leadership and the unanticipated shift in implementation priorities, from an alternative program design to an approved whole school reform model. In addition, the ultimate hiatus of whole school reform implementation and maintenance level spending requested by Governor McGreevey in 2001 created a void in the district's financial and human resource capacity and preparation to begin and sustain a district-wide systemic reform initiative.

#### *Instrumentation*

Surveys were administered to the School Leadership Council members of the selected school at one of their regularly scheduled team meetings. The researcher obtained a schedule of SLC meeting dates, and requested permission from each school principal and SLC Chairperson to attend the meeting for data collection. Survey dates were scheduled with each School Leadership Council beginning in August 2003 and concluding in November 2003. The researcher was allowed approximately 1 hour for an introduction, completion, and collection of the Letter of Informed Consent, to administer the survey and answer any follow-up questions. Respondents were asked to complete the survey during the meeting, and the researcher collected each survey as the respondents completed the instrument.

The survey instrument used a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = No Progress and 5 = Goals Achieved, and solicited responses to open-ended questions. The survey instrument asked questions that were divided by area of focus. The categories of interest to the researcher were (a) School Planning, (b) School Leadership Council Functions, (c) Budgeting Process, (d) Personnel, (e) Training and Professional Development, (f) Integration and Alignment of Resources and Functions, (g) School Environment, (h) Student and Family Services, (i) Family Involvement, (j) Role of Central Office (k) Perceptions of the Impact of State Funding, (l) Experience with and Knowledge of Whole School Reform Activities, and (m) Demographic Data

The sample survey questions included (a) Demographic data including current position/title, number of years in that position, role on SLC, and length of time on SLC, (b) How did you select your whole school reform model? and (c) How does the SPMT assess its progress towards implementing whole school reform?

Beginning in early August, individual interviews were conducted with the Interim Superintendent of Schools, The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent for Operations and Human Resource Services, and School Business Administrator. The sample interview questions included (a) Current role in the district? (b) Length of time in that position? (c) District Student enrollment? (d) Perception of progress in the areas of training and professional development in the reform model. (e) Progress in decentralization to ensure full implementation of school based management. (f) Providing timely and useful school data to schools for use in assessing student and school needs. (g) the district's greatest accomplishment(s) in implementing whole school reform (Open-

ended). (h) the district's greatest barrier(s) in implementing whole school reform (Open ended).

### *Data Collection*

An initial letter requesting permission to conduct research had been reviewed by the Interim Superintendent of Schools. The letter identified the nature of the research and the methodology for collecting data from school personnel and central office staff. Three School Leadership Councils, out of nine teams district-wide, were selected using a random drawing process that consisted of putting the names of each school in a plastic container. To insure that each school had an equal chance of being selected, the researcher used the same length and width paper for each elementary school. Three objective individuals were asked to pull one school name from the container. Elementary School A, Elementary School B, and Elementary School C were the three elementary schools selected from the random drawing process. The district's middle and high schools' School Leadership Councils were included in the study, but were not included in the random drawing process.

The principals of each school received a letter of solicitation introducing the nature of the research project. The letter also explained the methodology for data collection, the sole purpose for its use, anonymity of respondents and security of the data collected. Upon approval from the building principal, the primary researcher I contacted the School Leadership Council Chairpersons and received a copy of each team's meeting schedule. At the School Management Team meeting, the primary researcher provided the

letter of solicitation that explained the purpose for conducting the research, method of data collection, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Preliminary questions were answered and the survey instrument was distributed. At the conclusion of each session, the primary researcher collected the surveys, thanked each group for their participation, and suggested that anyone interested in the data results should contact my office in August 2003.

Individual interviews were conducted with the Interim Superintendent and central office staff members intimately familiar with the district's whole school reform process. Each respondent was given a letter of solicitation, briefed on the purpose for conducting the research, and the voluntary nature of this research project. The question and answers were tape-recorded with signed consent given prior to the interview.

The following matrix outlines each research question, the data source and the methodology for data collection, and the analytical tool used to quantify the findings.

Table 1 - *Methodology Matrix*

Research Question	Data Source	Methodology	Analytical Tool
1. What implementation barriers existed in 2001 that impacted the sample school's implementation process in 2003-04?	Cabinet members Business Adm. SLC Comer Facilitator	Interview data Interview data Survey data Interview data	Mean score Comparison of Survey responses

Table 1, continued

Research Question	Data Source	Methodology	Analytical Tool
2. What were the district's priorities in establishing a foundation for systemic change?	Cabinet members	Interview data	Frequency table of Responses
	Business Adm.	Interview data	
	SLC	Survey data	
	Comer Facilitator	Interview data	
3. What were the financial, capacity-building, and human resource barriers to implementing systemic reform?	SLC	Survey data	Frequency table of responses
	Comer Facilitator	Interview data	
	Business Adm.	Interview data	
	Adm. Asst. for	Interview data	
	Operations & Human Resources		
4. What mechanisms are in place to assess the level of successful implementation of systemic reform at the school site?	Comer Facilitator	Interview data	Frequency table of responses
	SLC	Survey data	

Table 1, continued

Research Question	Data Source	Methodology	Analytical Tool
5. What mechanisms are in place to determine the level of effectiveness of implemented elements of the Comer School Development Program at the school site?	Comer Facilitator SLC	Interview data Survey data	Frequency table of responses
6. What progress indicators show evidence of improved student achievement, school climate, and personal growth?	Comer Facilitator SLC	Interview data Survey data	Frequency table of responses
7. What role does/did central office play in the change process?	Comer Facilitator SLC	Interview data Survey data	Frequency table of responses
8. What impact did district-wide implementation of the systemic reform have on stakeholder support?	SLC Comer Facilitator	Survey data Interview data	Frequency table of responses



Table 1, continued

Research Question	Data Source	Methodology	Analytical Tool
5. Does variance in perception of implementation of whole school reform exist between the school levels represented in the sample population?	SLC	Survey data	ANOVA

#### *Sample Population*

This research project was based on preliminary work done by Muirhead et al. (2001). The method of data collection was multi-faceted in scope. Demographic data was gathered from the State DOE School Report Card data. A brief but detailed questionnaire was distributed to gauge the level of implementation, perception and perspectives of progress. The questionnaire was distributed to (a) three randomly selected elementary School Leadership Councils, (b) the middle and high school's School Leadership Councils, (c) Central Office staff members including the Interim Superintendent, Business Administrator, and the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent for Operations and Human Resources, and (d) the Comer Facilitator of each school selected in the random sampling. The district operates an Alternative High

School at the high school. For the purpose of this study, the Alternative High School was not included in the analysis of the systemic reform process in the district.

### *Elementary School A*

As the largest K-6 elementary school in the district, Elementary School A houses approximately 750 students, one principal, one assistant principal and 55 teachers. Sixty seven percent of the students were African American, 27% were of Spanish decent and 5% were of Haitian background. Elementary School A's student attendance showed a slight increase between 1997 (93.8%) and 2002 (95.6%). Staff attendance is also showed a positive increase. Between 1997 and 2002, staff attendance has been reported at 96.6% (1997), and peaked at 97.5% in 2002. However, the school demographics were contradictory and indicated an overcrowded school. For example, student suspensions have remained three times the state average for 3 consecutive school years. Student suspensions reached a peak in 1999-2000 at 18.2%, while the state average was 5% in the same year. Elementary School A has experienced a high level of student mobility over a 5-year period. The mobility rates between 1997 and 2002 ranged from 40% in 1997 to 35% in 2002. During the 1999-2000 school year, the school saw a student mobility rate of 51.7%.

What are the implications for teaching and learning, and standardized tests? Excluding special education and English Language Learners (ELL), Elementary School A students showed strength on the Science section of the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment. Over a 3-year period between 1998 and 2000, the standardized test scores in

Science ranged from 50.8% in 1998 to 55.3% in 2000. Standardized test data in the areas of Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics both fell below the 50% proficient mark on a normal distribution curve.<sup>1</sup>

### *Elementary School B*

Elementary School B's enrollment was 388 students, and has 1 principal and 32 teachers. Seventy-eight percent of the student population was African-American, 15% was Haitian, with a small Spanish, Turkish, and Arabic population. Instructional space was an issue for the principal at Elementary School B. Class size in all grades K-6 far exceeded the state averages. For example, in 2001-2002 the average number of students assigned to a class in Grades 4-6 was 26.3 students compared to a statewide average of 20.6 students. The reported mobility rate for the 2001-2002 school year was 25.8%, the lowest over a 5-year period between 1997-2002. During the same period, the mobility rate has reached twice the state average for mobility. In addition to high mobility, student suspensions ranged from twice to three times the state average. During the 1999-2000 school year, the suspension rate was 10.6% compared to a state average of 5.0%. For the next 2 consecutive years, Elementary School B's suspension rates reached three times that state average.

Student attendance at Elementary School B remained relatively stable between 1997 and 2002, close to 95% attendance, compared to a state average of 95% over the same period.

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<sup>1</sup>With the exception of the 2001-2002 ESPA Language Arts Literacy results, where 52.4% of the student population tested (44) scored in the proficient range.

Staff attendance has fluctuated between 90.5% to 97.5% over a 5-year period from 1997-2002. In relationship to instruction and standardized test scores, Elementary School B students have excelled in Science as indicated by standardized test scores. While Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics scores showed a large percentage of the student population testing at partially proficient, students have shown considerable improvement in Science. In the 2000-2001, school year 55 students were tested and 61.8%, 34 students, tested proficient.

#### *Elementary School C*

Elementary School C had 1 principal and 28 teachers. With a population of 308 students, 98% of the students were native English speaking students. Spanish, French/Creole and Yoruba made up the remaining 10% of the population. The average class size was 20.1, which met the state average. Their Elementary School Proficiency Assessments between 1998 and 2002 showed that for the areas tested (Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, and Science) Elementary School C students showed improvement in all three areas. For example, the data table showed that in Science, 28 students were tested, and 46.4% were proficient, just slightly below the state average of 49.4% and well below the previous year's level of 63.3% proficient. In Language Arts Literacy, students showed significant improvement, moving from 18.8% proficient in the 1998-1999 school year to 88.2% proficient in the 2001-2002 school year.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Data is for Regular Education students only. Special Education and ESL students are not included in the data profile.

As a result, Elementary School C has been categorized as a Category IV school based on the No Child Left Behind federal legislation.

Elementary School C's demographic data may provide one indication for its academic success. The student attendance rate was 96.2%, slightly above the state average of 95%. While student mobility was a chronic problem in the sample district, Elementary School C's mobility rate dropped 6% from 28.4% in 2000-2001 to 22.7% in the 2001-2002 school year. Since the 1994-1995 school year, Elementary School C has seen its mobility dramatically decline from 38.4% to its current level of 22.7%. Suspensions have declined over the past 4 years. Suspensions at 4.9% for the 2001-2002 school year indicated that discipline referrals and disruptions to the instructional program were kept to a minimum. In addition, of the 6-hour instructional day, Elementary School C students spend 5 hours and 30 minutes engaged in meaningful instructional activities. The statewide average was 5 hours and 36 minutes. In addition to maximizing classroom instructional time, teachers are present ninety seven percent of the school year.

### *The Middle School*

The middle school had a population of approximately 622 students in Grades 7 and 8 (including students with special needs and English Language Learners), 1 principal, 2 assistant principals and 56 teachers. Four distinct languages were spoken at the middle school.

Eighty-two percent of the student population spoke English, 90% spoke Spanish, 80% spoke Creole, and 1% spoke French. Six percent of the population received English Language Learner/Bilingual services. The average class size reported in the school's report card was 17.9 students per class, which was 2.5 students, on average, below the state average number of students assigned to a class or homeroom. Attendance over the past 5 years ranged from 91.1% in 1997-98 to 93.8% in 2001-02. These figures were relatively close to the state average of 95.1% in 1997-98 to 95.0% in 2001-02.

Two significant figures that stood out on the school report card were student mobility and student suspensions. At this middle school, student mobility has fluctuated between 20.9% during the 1997-98 to 19.6% in 2001-02. The state average mobility rate, with the exception of the 1998-99 school year, has declined steadily from 14.9% in 1997-98 to 13.8% in 2001-02. Second, average student suspensions across the state has remained in the single digits. Remaining relatively low at 4.4% in 1997-98, the state average suspension rate slowly climbed to a height of 5.0% in 1999-00 and declined to 4.6% in 2001-02. The middle school reported double-digit suspension rates in 3 successive years, 1999-00 at 56.2%, 2000-01 at 42.7%, and 59.6% in 2001-02. These figures reflected a constantly shifting student population, and more than 50% of its remaining population receiving at least one suspension during the school year. Comer School Development Program must account for the high mobility and suspension rates in its attempt to institutionalize systemic change.

### *The High School*

The high school had a population of approximately 1,130 students in Grades 9 through 12 (including students with special needs and English Language Learners), 1 principal, 3 assistant principals, and 89 teachers. At the high school, 634 students, or 56.1%, were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. The student population was predominantly Black. Forty-six percent of the Black student population was male, and 45.6% were female. There was a small Hispanic population, representing 7.3% of the total school population, 4.5% were male and 2.8% were female. Four distinct languages were spoken at the middle school. Eighty-five percent of the student population spoke English, 5% spoke Spanish, 9% spoke Creole, and 1% spoke French. Nine percent of the population received English Language Learner/Bilingual services. Attendance over the past 5 years ranges from 86.0% in 1997-98 to 86.8% in 2001-02. These figures were well below the state average of 92.6% in 1997-98 to 92.9% in 2001-02. The average class size reported in the school's report card for the 2001-02 school year was 21.0 students per class, which was .5 students on average above the state average number of students assigned to a class or homeroom in the same year.

Two significant figures that stood out on the school report card were student mobility and the drop out rates. At this high school, student mobility had fluctuated between 14.1% in 1997-98 to an astounding 35.4% in 2001-02, almost three times the state average of 12.0% in the same year. With the exception of 1998-99 school year, where the drop out rate was 12.3% compared to a 2.9% State average, the high school's drop out rate has almost doubled the state average between 1997 and 2002. These figures reflected a constantly shifting student population, with a large portion of the population

not completing their high school program and approximately one-third transferring to other school districts.

### *Statistical Treatment*

The data analysis will begin with a presentation of the demographic variables describing the subjects who participated in this study. A frequency table of responses will be developed. Frequency distributions will be included that show the participants mean years of experience in education, gender, current grade level, the number of years involved as a School Leadership Council member, the number of years of experience with a whole school reform model, and whether they have had any previous experience with implementing a whole school reform model. The researcher will use the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) to show correlation between different variables in the study that influence the implementation of whole school reform. For example, the study will identify correlation, if any, between professional development, number of years experience with whole school reform, and number of years experience as a teacher and the successful implementation of the Comer School Development Program. In addition, the researcher will perform an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine the existence of significant differences in opinion between the groups studied.



### *Research Bias*

Several research biases were evident during this research project. Not every teacher had an equal chance of being selected for participation on the School Leadership Council and in the survey process. Several newly hired teachers, and non-instructional staff members were not represented on the School Leadership Council. Finally, having personal experience with whole school reform implementation as a Program Improvement Specialist in the New Jersey State Department of Education's Office of Program Review and Improvement between 1997-1999, my own biases may become evident during the process. However, it is the intention of the researcher to remain objective during the data collection and analysis processes to minimize any subjective reporting of data or conclusions drawn from the research.

## Chapter 4

### Presentation of Data

Without a clear understanding of the nature of systemic change, the potential for conflicting agendas creates gaps in implementation that can potentially impede the reform process. After observing a 3-year trial and error period of whole school reform implementation, what progress has one third cohort Abbott district made in identifying and addressing the barriers encountered by first and second cohort schools? This study focused on those issues that both promoted and restrained the successful implementation of the whole school reform process in one small third cohort Abbott district.

The research results addressed seven areas of concern, which were formulated into research questions that guided the data collection process. These areas were: (a) What implementation barriers existed in 2001 with first, second, and second year mid-year cohorts that are currently impacting third cohort schools in 2003? (b) What were the district's priorities in establishing a foundation for systemic change? (c) What were the financial, capacity-building, and human resource barriers to implementing systemic reform? (d) What mechanisms were in place to assess the level of successful implementation of systemic reform at the school site? (e) What mechanisms were in place to determine the level of effectiveness of implemented elements of the Comer School Development Program at the school site? (f) What progress indicators showed evidence of improved student achievement, school climate, and personal growth? (g) What role did central office play in the change process? (h) What impact did district-

wide implementation of the Comer School Development Program have on stakeholder support of whole school reform? (i) Did variance in implementation of whole school reform exist between the school levels represented by the sample population?

This chapter presents the data collected from the sample schools about their perceptions of the level of implementation of systemic reform in their school district. Collected from respondents, including central office personnel, school-level and community stakeholders, the multilevel perspective will provide a basis for determining the breadth of initial preparation undertaken by the district to engage and sustain a successful reform initiative. The first section presents comparison data in areas where first cohort, second cohort, and second cohort mid-year schools perceived significant progress has been made in that area, along with the corresponding crosstabulation information that provides evidence of respondents ratings to support their perception of level of whole school reform implementation. Mean score data is identified and compared to determine whether progress has been maintained within the four-year interim between 1999 and 2003. In addition, areas of concern, where respondents indicated “some” to “little progress” was made in 1999, are also compared to the data collected in 2003. The comparison will allow the reader to visualize areas of strength regarding the implementation of whole school reform, and whether the implementation concerns in 1999 were present in 2003.

In the statement of the problem, the researcher identified the school site as the focal point for change. The second section presents school-level responses that answer the research questions driving this study. Crosstabulations and frequency distributions of interview and survey data were developed to illustrate the respondents’ answers to the

research questions. The primary researcher identified the most frequently stated responses to the open-ended questions and developed frequency distributions. The participants' responses to the open-ended questions provided evidence of the respondents' perceptions of progress, or lack of progress, in the implementation of whole school reform. The third section presents crosstabulation, correlation and ANOVA analysis between the participants' responses to selected survey questions and the respondent's school level.

The data format included interview responses from central office staff that was crosstabulated with the respondents' school level. The comparison of responses gives the reader insight into the degree of alignment and articulation between central office and school level variables that contribute to successful implementation of whole school reform.

### *Research Questions*

This section presents the interview data collected from multiple sources at various levels of school management: central office staff, Comer Facilitators, and School Leadership Council members. Their responses, compiled in narrative form, provide insight into how the district collectively envisioned and operationalized the change process at each school site. In order to determine the congruence between the district's perception of its reform initiative and school-level perceptions, the survey data was collected. The survey instrument used a 5 point Likert scale with 1 = No Progress, 2=Little Progress, 3=Some Progress, 4=Significant Progress, and 5 = Goals Achieved, and solicited responses to open-ended questions, which is presented along with

corresponding data collected from structured interviews with central office staff and Comer Facilitators.

1) What implementation barriers existed in 2001 that currently impact the sample district's implementation process in 2003-04??

Muirhead et al. (2001) investigated the progress achieved by 196 first cohort, second cohort, and second cohort mid-year New Jersey Abbott schools during their initial implementation phase of whole school reform. The focus of this section is to provide a comparative review of respondents' perceptions of progress attained by these schools in 2001 and the perception of progress attained by the sample population in this 2003 study. The data will allow the reader to begin dialog on: (a) the level, or lack of progress made in implementing elements of whole school reform; and (b) identify specific areas of concern from the school level perspective; and (c) whether the implementation concerns of 2001 still exist for third cohort schools in 2003.

Table 2

*Mean Score Comparison of Self-Assessment of WSR Implementation – 2001 and 2003*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	2001	2001	2003	2003
Planning				
Comprehensive needs assessment	4.57	.77	4.05	.93
Three year operational plan	4.47	.73	4.12	.85

Table 2 (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	2001	2001	2003	2003
Stakeholders engaged in the planning process	4.33	.80	3.82	.90
Informed search for model that meets students needs conducted	4.61	.78	3.71	.94
On-going data used to evaluate WSR implementation	4.31	.87	3.71	.94
School Planning and Management				
SLC is involved in the development of the budget	4.33	.90	4.27	.89
SLC provides input towards the development of the budget	4.40	.84	4.21	.91
SLC reviews assessment results to determine program and curriculum needs	4.25	.91	3.78	1.02
Creates workgroups of SLC and non SLC members	4.23	.96	3.89	1.03
Works effectively with other SLC members to accomplish WSR goals	4.46	.77	4.21	.86

Table 2 (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
	2001	2001	2003	2003
The SLC is constituted in accordance with state regulations	4.64	.60	4.38	.78
School-Based Budgeting				
Budget concentrates all resources to WSR	4.44	.75	4.06	.82
Budget reflects assessment of needs and goals	4.40	.77	3.94	.98
Personnel				
Decisions support goals of WSR	4.42	.76	3.80	.96
Sufficient number of faculty/staff to support and implement WSR	3.97	.98	3.48	.93
Training and Professional Development				
SLC trained in roles and responsibilities	4.35	.85	3.78	.91
SLC trained in teamwork and consensus building	4.33	.88	3.91	.88
SLC trained to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment	4.04	1.02	3.66	.95
SLC trained to identify needs for additional programs and services	3.95	1.03	3.74	.90

Table 2 (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	2001	2001	2003	2003
SLC trained to develop realistic goals/strategies	4.01	.99	3.61	.84
SLC trained to align curriculum and instruction to State Standards	3.99	1.04	3.29	.95
SLC trained to select personnel for their school	3.71	1.21	2.98	1.18
SLC trained to use zero-based budgeting process	3.75	1.24	3.57	1.03
Teachers received professional development to implement WSR model	4.10	.90	3.42	.82
<b>Integration and Alignment of Resources and Functions</b>				
Staff roles and responsibilities are coordinated to support WSR	4.30	.79	3.57	.98
School structures support WSR	4.29	.82	3.61	.92
<b>Student and Family Services</b>				
Team in place that encourages parent involvement	4.27	.85	3.48	.98



Table 2 (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	2001	2001	2003	2003
Team in place that trains parents for volunteer roles	3.75	1.18	2.69	1.02
<b>Family Involvement</b>				
Parents and caregivers are partners in decisions related to the school	3.82	1.01	2.97	.97
Parents and caregivers are welcomed in the school	4.60	.64	3.97	.89
School provides ongoing support to strengthen school-parent-student relationships	4.30	.88	3.48	.87
<b>Central Office Support</b>				
Aligning district and state standards to implement WSR	3.51	.71	3.28	1.10
Providing professional development to implement WSR	3.51	.76	3.26	1.00

Table 2 (continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	2001	2001	2003	2003
Developing and implementing school's budget	3.48	.74	3.52	.91
Hiring personnel to support WSR	3.31	.87	3.20	1.06
Providing timely performance data for decision-making	3.25	.82	2.98	1.08
<b>Impact of State Funding</b>				
Sufficient textbooks, materials, and supplies for all students	4.19	.87	3.88	1.03
Additional teachers to reduce class size to state mandated rates	3.76	1.20	3.16	1.03
Sufficient computers to meet the state ratio of 1:5	3.33	1.39	3.68	.90
Sufficient security guards and equipment	4.10	1.00	3.40	1.03
Sufficient training on the CCCS and other pertinent WSR topics	3.89	.94	3.17	.97
Support for remedial services	3.79	1.20	3.54	1.06
Health and social service referral and other support services	3.92	.98	3.45	1.13

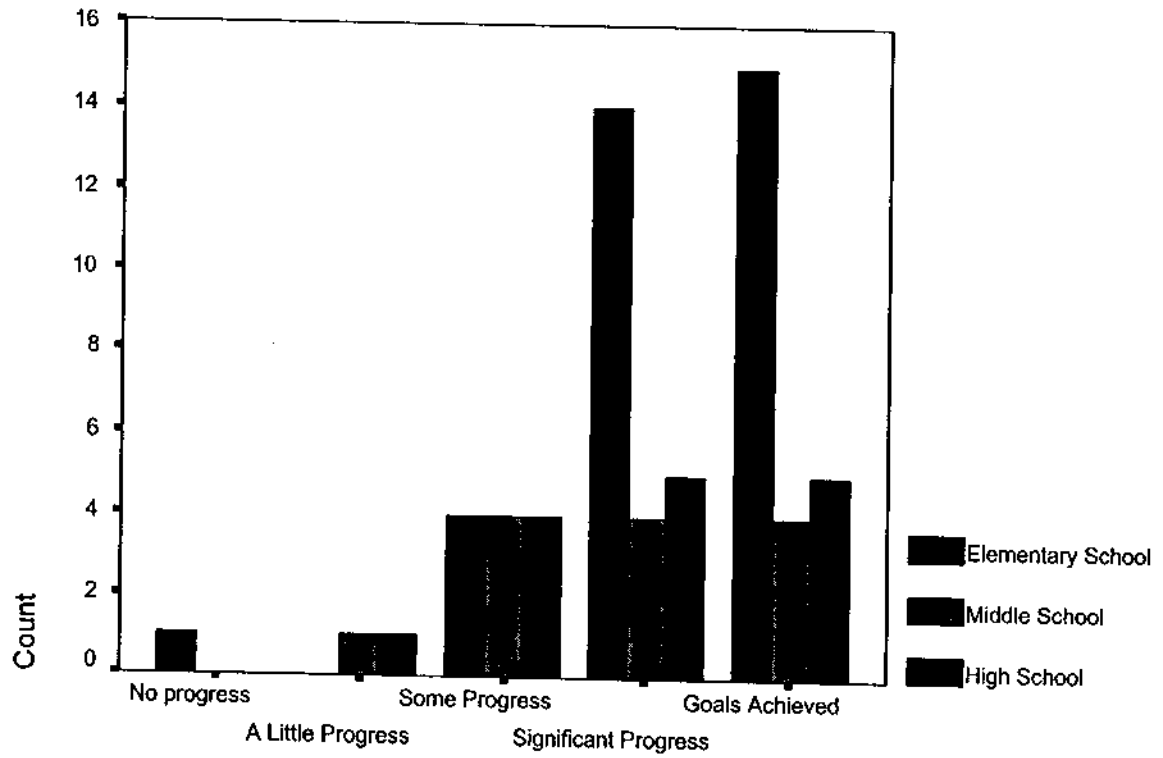
progress in the area of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, the data indicates that 31% percent of the middle school respondents ( $n = 4$ ) perceived they have achieved their goal of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to select a whole school reform model, and 31% percent ( $n = 4$ ) perceived making “significant progress.” High school respondents displayed similar patterns in their responses. Twenty-seven percent of the high school respondents ( $n = 4$ ) indicated making “some progress” in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, 33% ( $n = 5$ ) indicated making “significant progress”, and 33% ( $n = 5$ ) indicated “goal achieved.” One respondent indicated making “little progress.” Council members may not possess the technical skills to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, a critical first step in systemic reform. The data suggested a misalignment between perception of training received to complete the task (capacity) and completing the task at the middle and high school levels.

Table 3 *Comprehensive Needs Assessment \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
No Progress	1			1
A Little Progress		1	1	2
Some Progress	4	4	4	12
Significant Progress	14	4	5	23
Goal Achieved	15	4	5	24
Total	34	13	15	62

*Note. n = 62*

Figure 1 Comprehensive needs assessment \* school level crosstabulation



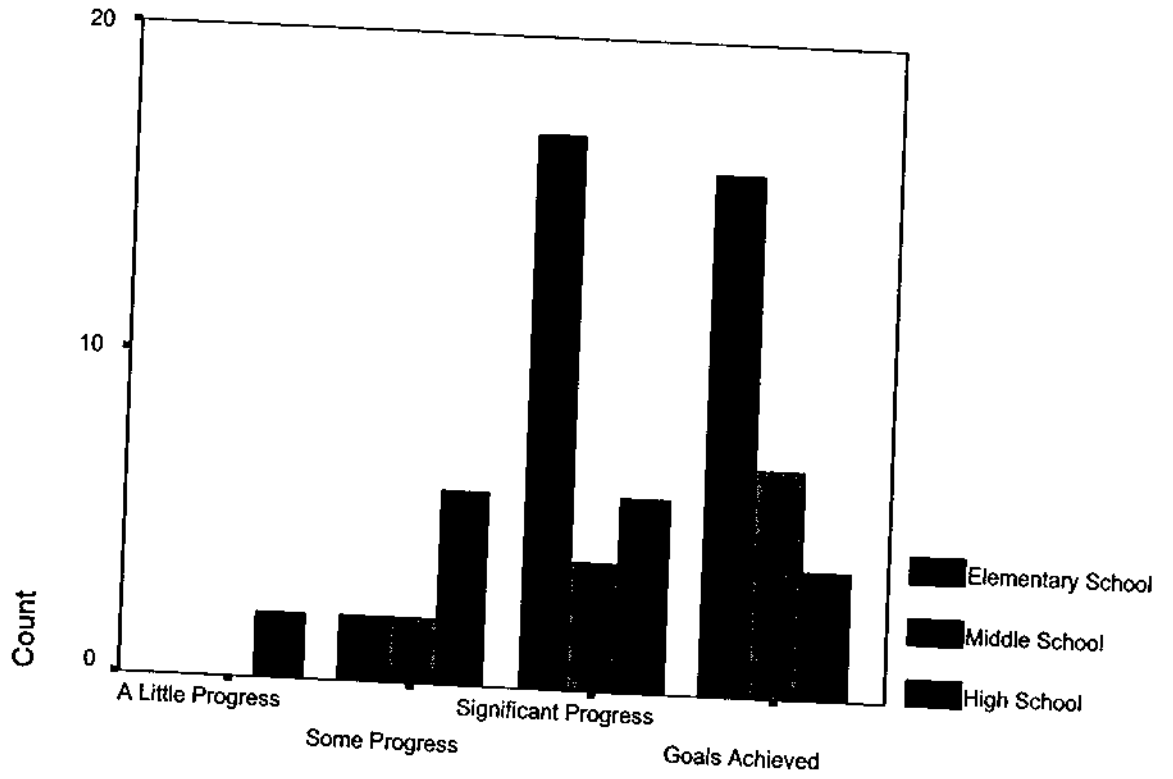
In 2001, survey respondents indicated making “significant progress” in defining roles and responsibilities as team members ( $M = 4.35$ ). Table 6 shows respondents’ overall perceptions in 2003.

Table 4 *SLC Role and Responsibilities \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
A Little Progress			2	2
Some Progress	2	2	6	10
Significant Progress	17	4	6	27
Goal Achieved	16	7	4	27
Total	35	13	18	66

*Note.*  $n = 66$

Figure 2 SLC roles and responsibilities \* school level crossstabulation.



In 2003, survey respondents indicated making “some progress” in receiving training in understanding their roles and responsibilities as School Leadership Council members ( $M = 3.78$ ). Crosstabulation data showed 6% of elementary school respondents ( $n = 2$ ) indicated making “some progress,” 48% ( $n = 17$ ) reported making “significant progress,” and 46% ( $n = 16$ ) indicated “goal achieved.” Fifteen percent of the middle school respondents ( $n = 2$ ) indicated making “some progress,” 31% ( $n = 4$ ) reported making “significant progress,” and 54% ( $n = 7$ ) reported “goal achieved” in having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as School Leadership Council members. At the high school level, 11% of respondents ( $n = 2$ ) reported making “little progress,” 33% ( $n = 6$ ) reported making “some progress,” 28% ( $n = 5$ ) reported making “significant progress,” while twenty two percent ( $n = 4$ ) reported “goal achieved.”

In 2003, respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of progress made in training in teamwork and consensus building. Table 7 shows respondents’ overall mean scores indicating their perceptions of making “significant progress” in this area ( $M = 3.91$ ). The crosstabulation data shows that 14% ( $n = 5$ ) reported making “some progress,” 54% of the elementary school respondents ( $n = 19$ ) reported making “significant progress,” and 31% ( $n = 11$ ) indicated “goal achieved.” The middle and high school data showed a wider range of dispersion in their responses. For example, 50% of the high school respondents indicated making “little” and “some progress” in this area.

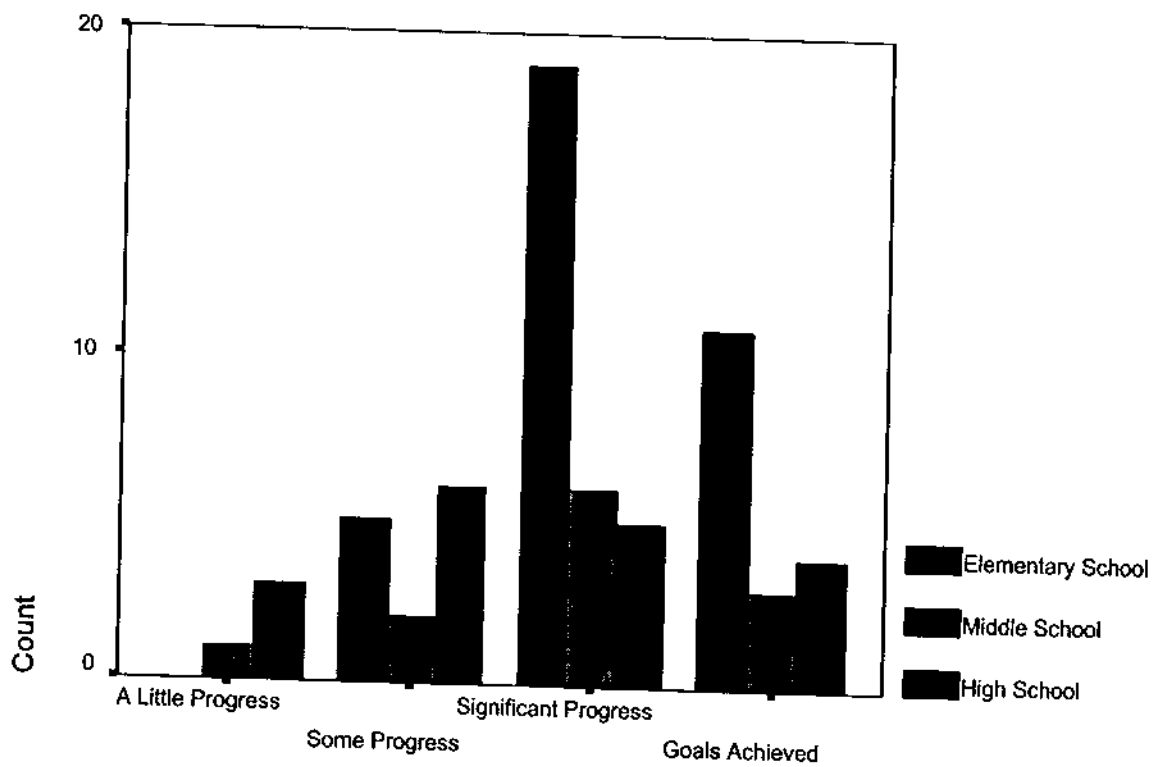


Table 5 *Training in Teamwork and Consensus Building \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
A Little Progress		1	3	4
Some Progress	5	2	6	13
Significant Progress	19	6	5	30
Goal Achieved	11	3	4	18
Total	35	12	18	65

*Note.*  $n = 65$

Figure 3 Training in teamwork and consensus building \* school level crosstabulation.



In 2001, survey respondents indicated making “significant progress” in developing sound and realistic improvement goals and strategies ( $M = 4.01$ ). In 2003, survey respondents were asked the same question and reported overall making “some progress” in developing sound and realistic improvement goals and strategies ( $M = 3.61$ ). The crosstabulation data presented in Table 8 revealed that over 50% of the respondents ( $n = 19$ ) at the elementary school level reported having made “significant progress,” at the middle school level, 50% reported making “some progress” ( $n = 6$ ). The high school respondents’ ratings showed a wider range of dispersion with respect to their perceptions of progress. It is worth noting that 24% of the high school’s School Leadership Council ( $n = 4$ ) reported making “little progress” in developing sound and realistic improvement goals and strategies.

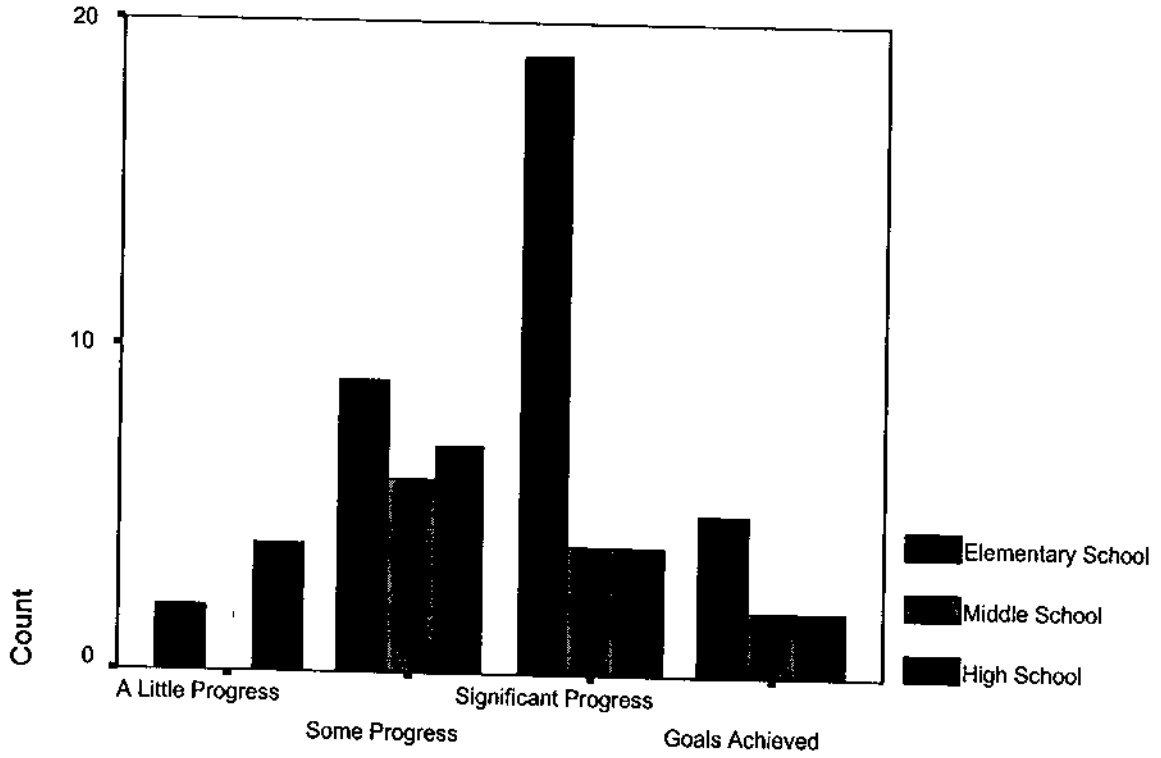
Table 6 *Training to Develop Sound and Realistic Goals and Strategies \* School Level*

*Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
A Little Progress	2		4	6
Some Progress	9	6	7	22
Significant Progress	19	4	4	27
Goal Achieved	5	5	5	9
Total	35	12	17	64

*Note. n = 64*

Figure 4 Training to develop sound and realistic goals and strategies \* school level crosstabulation.



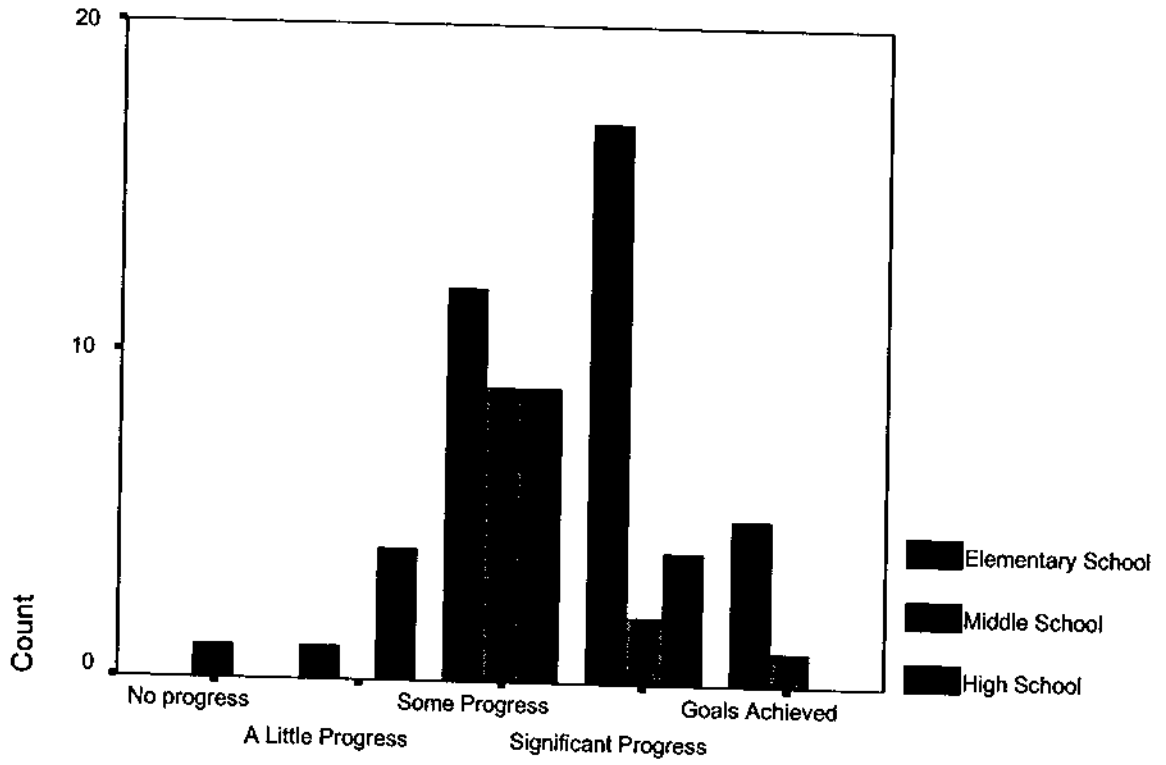
In 2001, respondents indicated making “significant progress” in teachers receiving sufficient professional development to implement instructional strategies aligned to state standards with an overall mean score of 3.99. In 2003, respondents indicated making “some progress” in this area with a mean score of 3.29. Crosstabulation data, Table 9, shows respondents’ perceptions of progress made in training received in curriculum alignment. Thirty-four percent ( $n = 12$ ) of elementary school respondents indicated making “some progress,” while 49% ( $n = 17$ ) reported making “significant progress.” Similar responses were seen at the middle and high school levels where 69% of middle school respondents ( $n = 9$ ) and 53% of high school respondents ( $n = 9$ ) reported that only “some progress” has been made.

Table 7 *Aligning instructional strategies to CCCS \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
No Progress		1		1
A Little Progress	1		4	5
Some Progress	12	9	9	30
Significant Progress	17	2	4	23
Goal Achieved	5	1		6
Total	35	13	17	65

*Note. n = 65*

Figure 5 Aligning instructional strategies to the CCCS \* school level crosstabulation.





### *Areas of Concern*

In 2001, respondents identified three areas of concern where “little” to “no progress” was achieved in the training and professional development category of whole school reform implementation. Training to identify needs for additional programs and services ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), aligning curriculum and instruction to state standards ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and selecting personnel for their school ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ). The standard deviations indicated the wide dispersion among respondents’ perceptions of their training experiences. In 2003, respondents indicated making “some progress” in two of the three areas: (a) identifying needs for additional programs and services ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = .900$ ) and (b) aligning curriculum and instruction to state standards ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .947$ ). However, respondents made “little progress” in hiring personnel for their school ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ). In addition, respondents in the 2003 study reported making “little progress” with central office providing timely performance data for decision making ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). However, data collected in 2001 indicated that schools made “some progress” with central office providing timely data for decision making ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .82$ ). Fuhrman (1999) highlighted the importance of meaningful data as a critical foundation to the developing improvement strategies via data-driven decision-making with specific benchmarks and yearly progress indicators.

2. What were the district’s goals and priorities when establishing a foundation for systemic change?

Interview data collected revealed that the district’s goals and priorities included adopting a model that would align with the district’s Ecology of Excellence philosophy.

In addition, the model would help improve three areas of concern that, if adequately addressed, would improve the quality of education for all students by closing the achievement gap.

The district sought to make its K-12 system a high achieving district as measured by standardized test scores. As one Cabinet Member stated “the desired state for the district is to become a high achieving district, i.e. improved curriculum, test scores and facilities to make the district a more competitive district.”

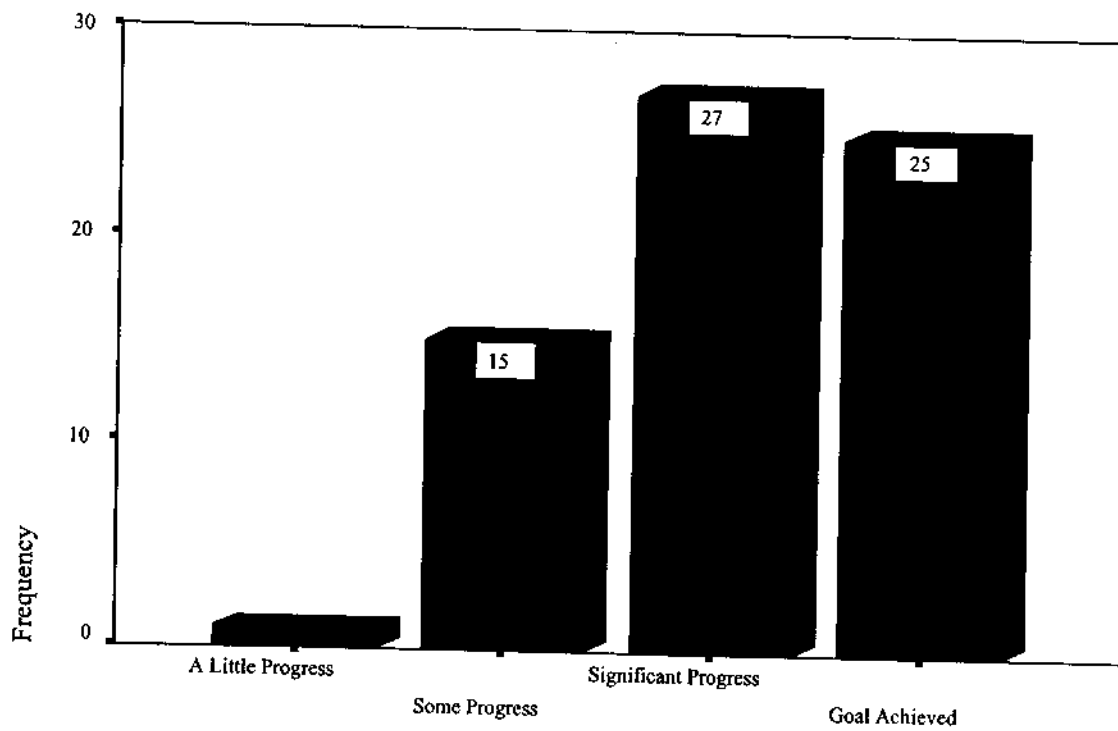
Although student achievement was not the focus of this study, data was collected on the levels of progress School Leadership Council members have made in making student achievement a priority. Table 10, shows that at the school level, stakeholders have embraced the concept of transforming their district into a high achieving district. Forty percent of the total respondents ( $n = 27$ ) indicated making “significant progress” and 37% percent ( $n = 25$ ) indicated “goal achieved” in making student achievement a priority.

Table 8 *Student Achievement is a Priority*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Some Progress	15	22.1	22.1	23.5
Significant Progress	27	39.7	39.7	63.2
Goal Achieved	25	36.8	36.8	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	

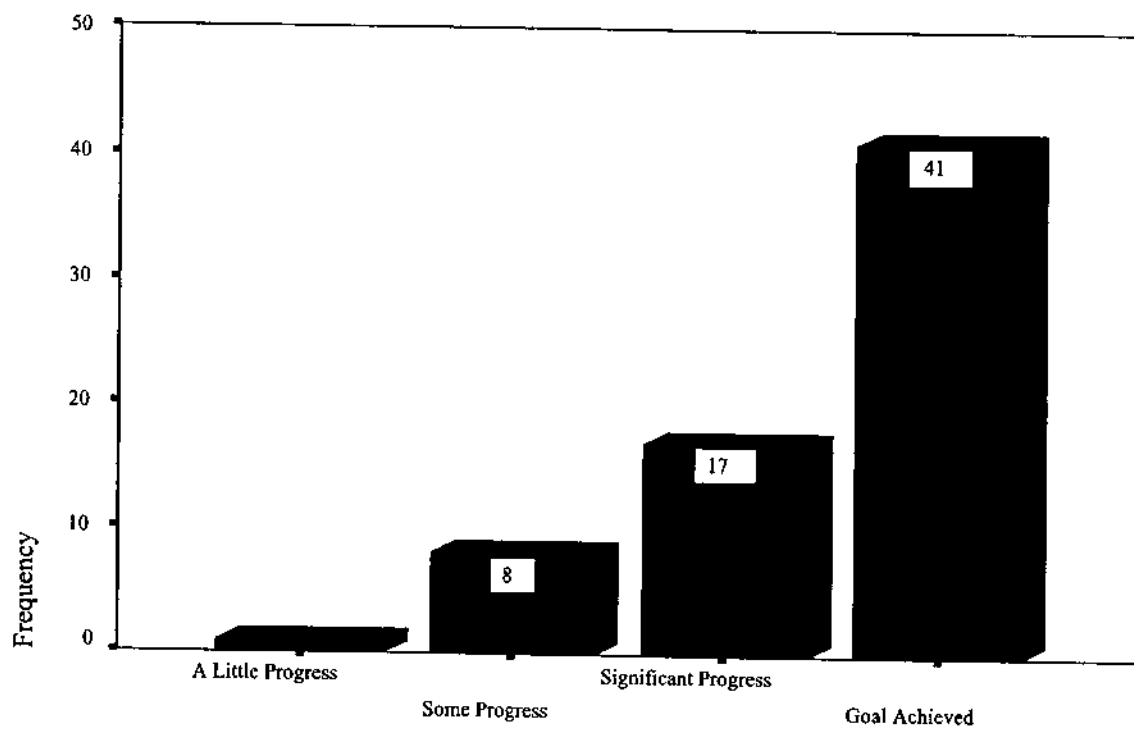
*Note.*  $n = 68$

Figure 6 Student achievement is a priority.

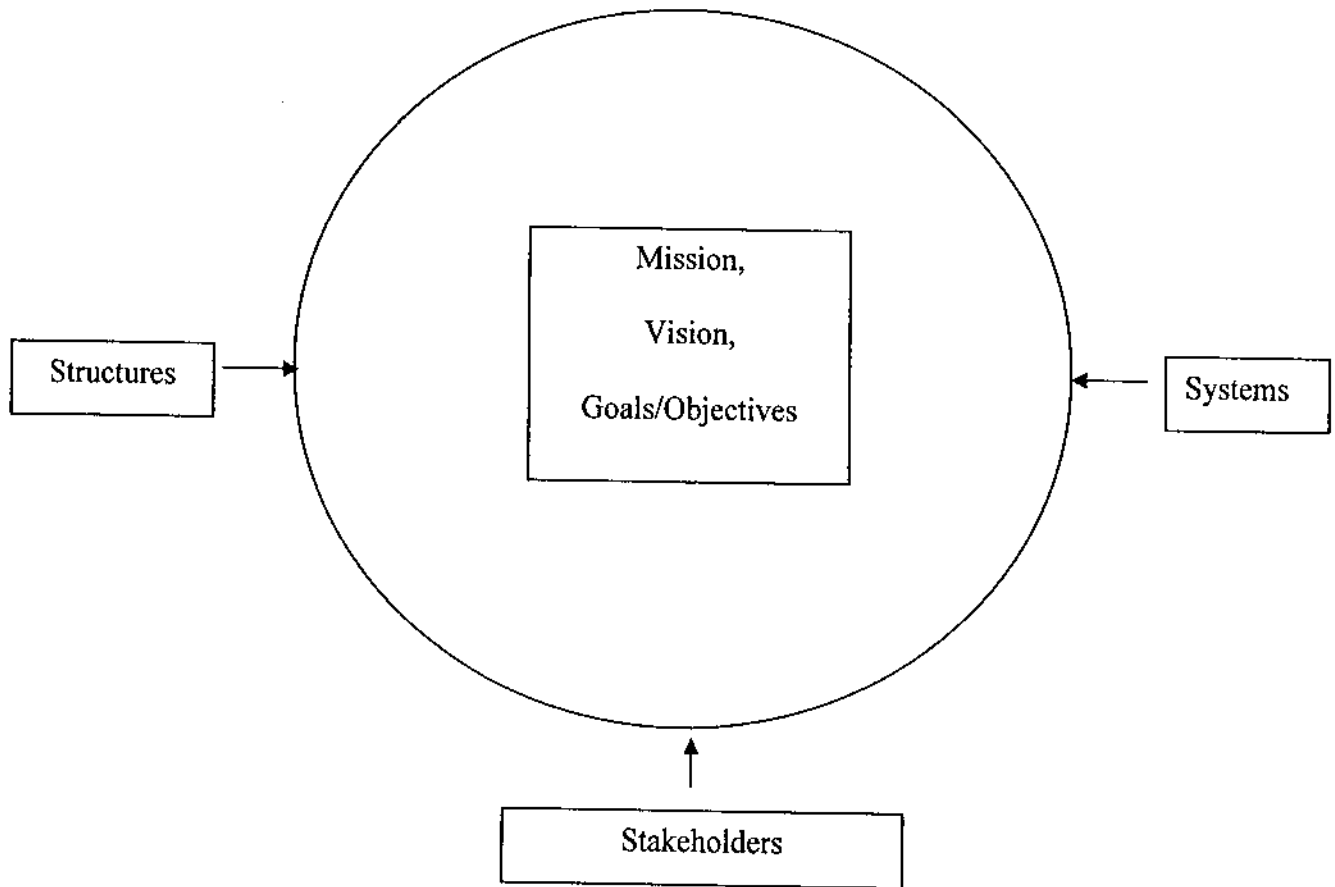


The second district goal and priority included faithfully implementing the Guiding Principles of Consensus, Collaboration, and No Fault while reducing the level of top-down bureaucracy between central office and the schools. The frequency of participants' responses, Table 11, indicated that 60% of all school level team members perceived the goal has been achieved, 25% indicated having made significant progress in making critical decisions by consensus. Interview data also showed that central office has increased its open door policy to help School Leadership Council members at each school site. In addition, central office personnel were more visible at the school site. Additional information regarding the role central office plays in the change process will be discussed in a later section.

Figure 7 SLC decisions are made by consensus.



The third priority involved including more parents in the change process. The school should represent a permeable environment that is open to and inclusive of, external factors (See Figure 8). Specifically, one Cabinet Member stated “by embracing whole school reform the district sought to involve more parents, build and extend community capacity through collective wisdom.”



*Figure 8 School, parent, and community interaction framework*

Four frequency distributions were developed to determine the articulation between the central office and school-level perceptions of how well parent participation was an internalized expectation (Tables 13-16). With the exception of “parents as partners in decisions related to the school,” the data revealed that School Leadership Council members perceived making “some” to “significant progress” involving parents and the community at large in the reform process.



Table 11 *Our SLC Communicates Well With the Larger Community*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.6	9.1
Some Progress	24	35.3	36.4	45.5
Significant Progress	22	32.4	33.3	78.8
Goal Achieved	14	20.6	21.2	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

*Note. n = 66*

Figure 9 Our SLC communicates well with the larger community.

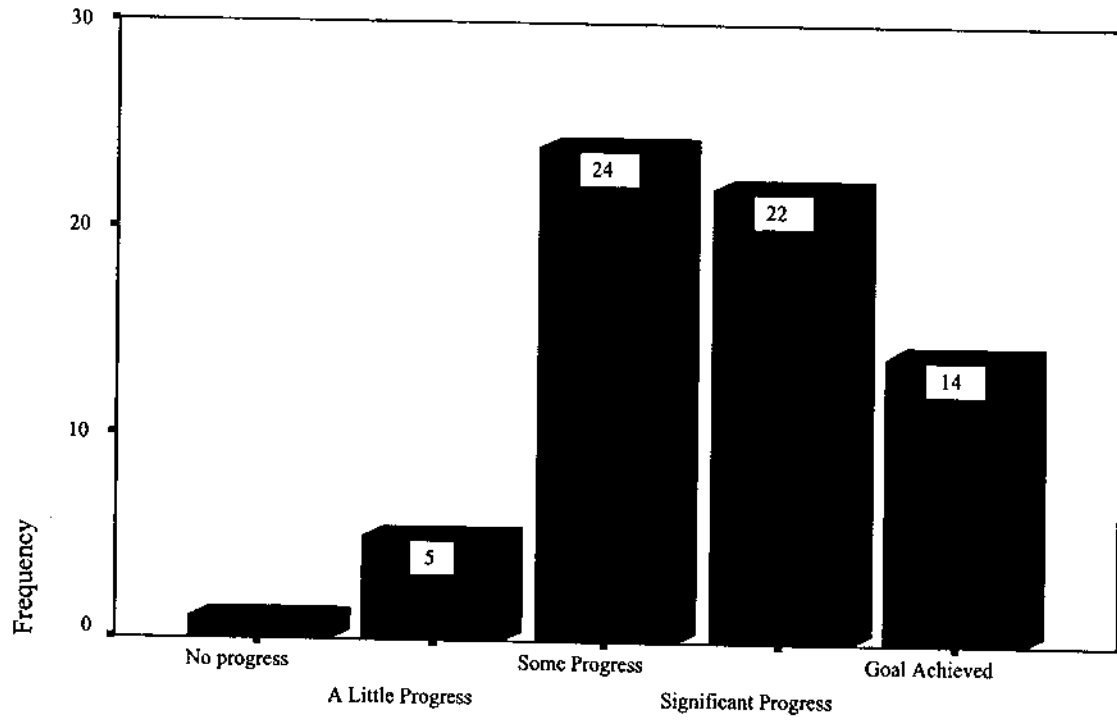


Table 12 *Our School Encourages Parent Involvement*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.0	3.0
A Little Progress	7	10.3	10.4	13.4
Some Progress	25	36.8	37.3	50.7
Significant Progress	23	33.8	34.3	85.1
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	14.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

*Note n = 67*

Figure 10 Our school encourages parent involvement.

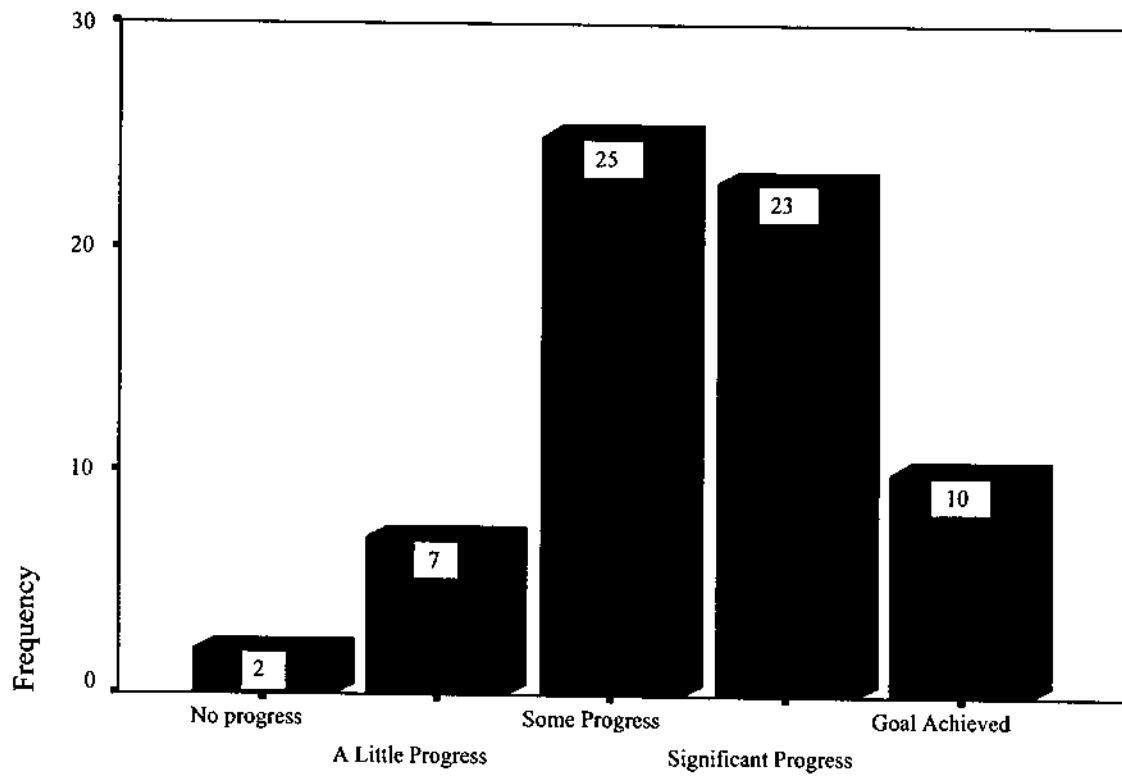


Table 13 *Parents and Caregivers Are Partners in Decisions Related to the School*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	3	4.4	4.6	4.6
A Little Progress	19	27.9	29.2	33.8
Some Progress	23	33.8	35.4	69.2
Significant Progress	17	25.0	26.2	95.4
Goal Achieved	3	4.4	4.6	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		

*Note.*  $n = 65$

Figure 11 Parents and caregivers are partners in decisions related to the school.

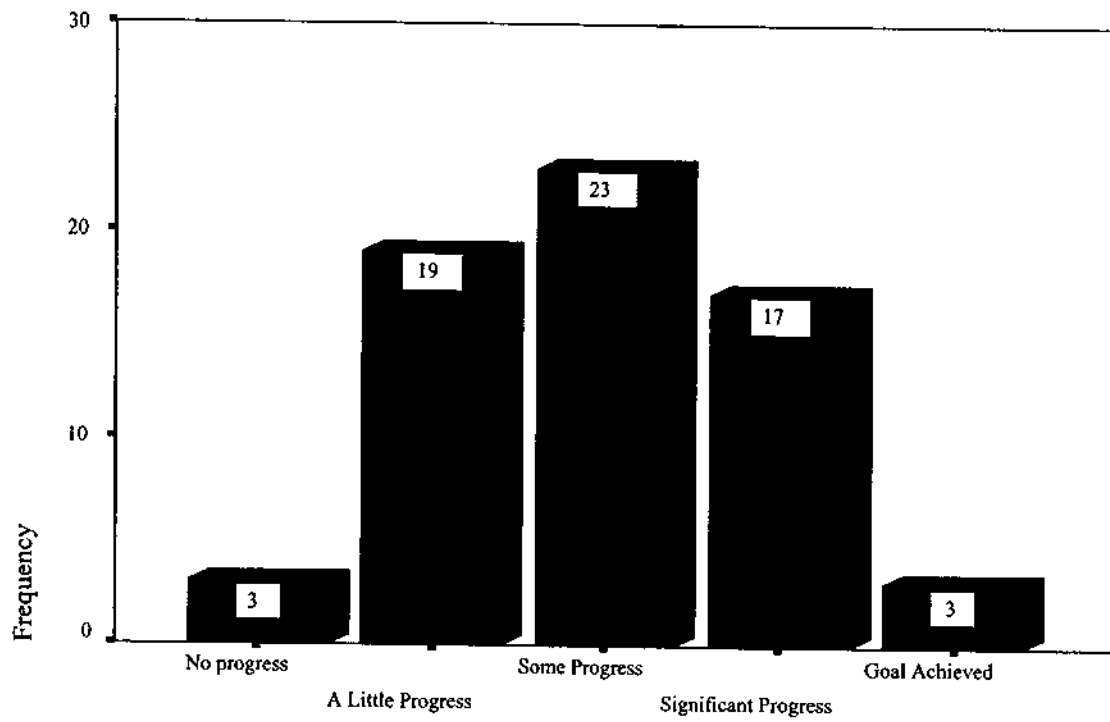
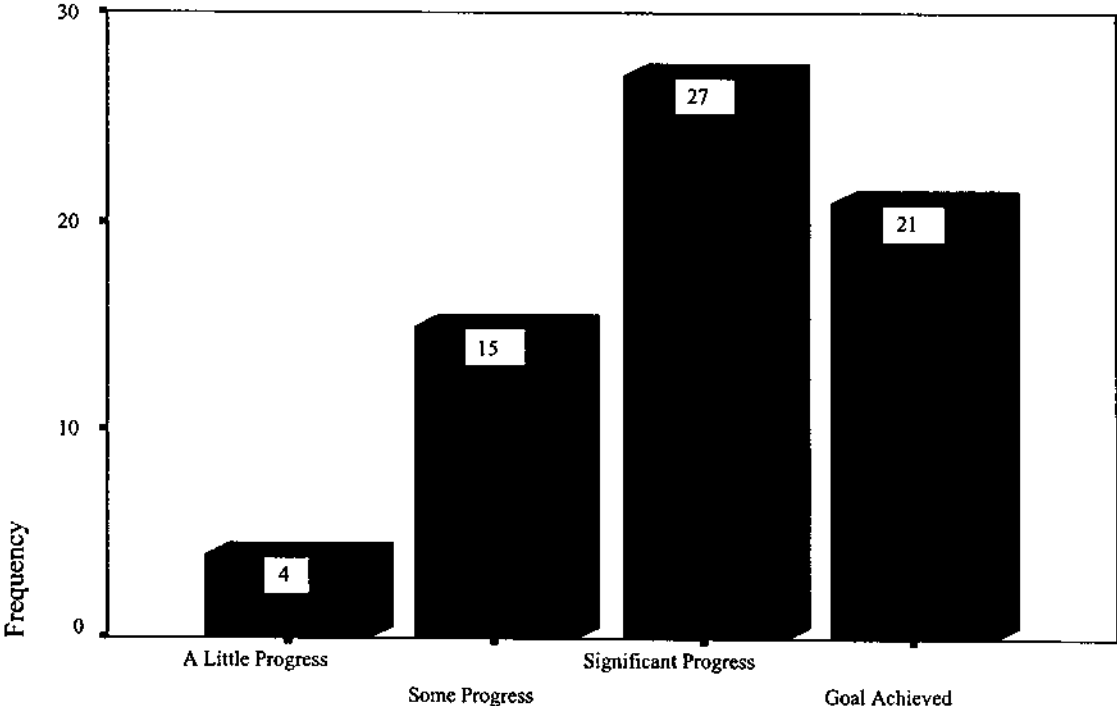


Table 14 *Parents and Caregivers Are Welcomed in the School*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	4	5.9	6.0	6.0
Some Progress	15	22.1	22.4	28.4
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.3	68.7
Goal Achieved	21	30.9	31.3	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

*Note. n = 67*

Figure 12 Parents and caregivers are welcomed in the school





3) What were the financial, capacity-building, and human resource barriers to implementing systemic reform?

As a small urban district, there are several challenges that must be addressed at the district and school levels in order to initiate and sustain systemic reform. Fiscal limitations, community support, and time constraints represent three examples of barriers to successful implementation of change. Respondents were asked to identify the most significant barriers to their school's implementation of whole school reform. Table 17 displays the crosstabulations between the most commonly identified barriers and the respondent's school level. Twenty-seven responses to the open-ended question revealed that the two most frequently noted barriers were "lack of knowledge of whole school reform" and "budget constraints." "Lack of knowledge of whole school reform" was considered by 18.5% of the respondents ( $n = 5$ ) as a significant barrier at the middle and high school, while 18.5% of the elementary school respondents ( $n = 5$ ) indicated that "budget constraints" represented their most significant barrier. Analysis of open-ended responses revealed three respondents at the elementary level indicated "no barriers" impede the implementation of whole school reform at their school.

Data gathered during interview sessions with central office personnel and the Comer Facilitators supported the open-ended responses at the school level. Respondents stated that:

"Because planning takes place at the individual schools, there is a lack of consistency regarding positions available and planned for at the elementary schools." (Comer Facilitator)

“Budget constraints by the State Department of Education have resulted in the elimination of previously required positions. As per the DOE, if the position was not full time in the 2002-2003 school year, it could not be added to the 2003-2004 budget.” (Cabinet Member)

“We were required by the State via mandate [to add positions these positions to the budget], however, the State failed to provide adequate funding to maintain the positions.” (Cabinet Member)

“Continuous staffing changes at all levels.” (Comer Facilitator)

“Budget restrictions; [the] level funding and level spending has help deteriorate programs. Without full financial support, you cannot achieve the goals of whole school reform.” (Cabinet Member)

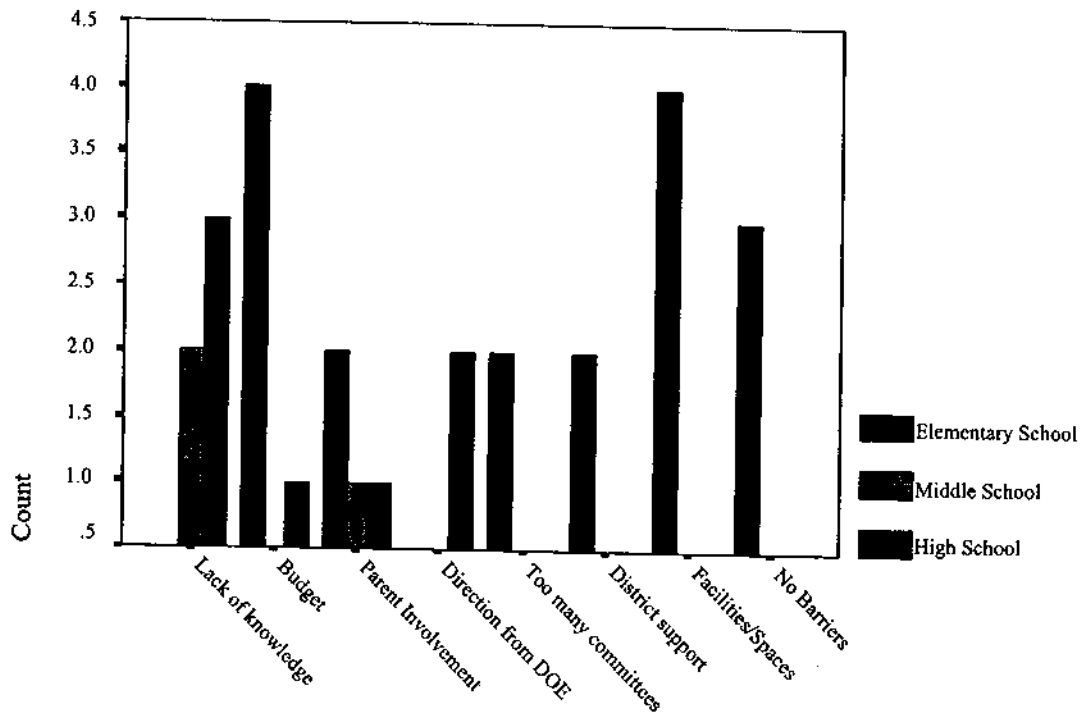
“Lack of time, lack of money, conflicting messages from the DOE, and too much paperwork.” (Cabinet Member)

Table 15 *Significant Barriers \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
Lack of knowledge of WSR		2	3	5
Budget	4		1	5
Parent Involvement	2	1	1	4
Lack of direction from DOE			2	2
Too many committees	2			2
Lack of support from central office	2			2
Lack of space	4			4
No barriers	3			3
Total	17	3	7	27

*Note. n = 27*

Figure 13 Significant barriers \* school level crosstabulation.



What mechanisms are in place to determine the effectiveness of implemented initiatives?  
How will you know when you have reached your goal(s)?

4. What mechanisms are in place to determine the level of successful implementation of the whole school reform model?

Survey data to determine the effectiveness of whole school reform included: “100% proficiency on standardized tests, minimal attendance and discipline referrals” (Comer Facilitator). However, the interview data revealed that the only standard evaluation tool available was the School Implementation Questionnaire-Annotated survey (SIQ-A) (Cabinet Member). The data collected and analyzed via the SIQ-A survey is the respondents’ perceptions of school climate and culture, and the functioning level of the Parent Team, SSST, and School Planning and Management Team. As evidenced by the interview data collected, one central office staff member stated, “currently,[we have] no evaluation tool to make a seamless assessment [other than] the use of Comer’s SIQ-A data.” Respondents indicated that outside of the SIQ-A survey data and test score analysis, the district had no internal mechanism to assess the effectiveness of implemented reforms nor to determine the level of successful implementation of whole school reform.

3. What progress indicators provide evidence of improved student achievement and growth as a result of implementing the Comer process?

To gain insight into the alignment between the district’s goals and priorities to improve student achievement, improve parent participation, and faithfully replicate the

Guiding Principles of the Comer School Development Program, respondents indicated that the decrease in out-of-school suspensions represent a positive indicator of student achievement and growth. Interview data from central office staff indicated that test score data is a significant progress indicator to determine the breadth of student growth and achievement. The cabinet member was quoted as saying “improved test scores equals the model is working; low test scores equals the model is not working.” Interview data suggested that math scores were significantly improved.

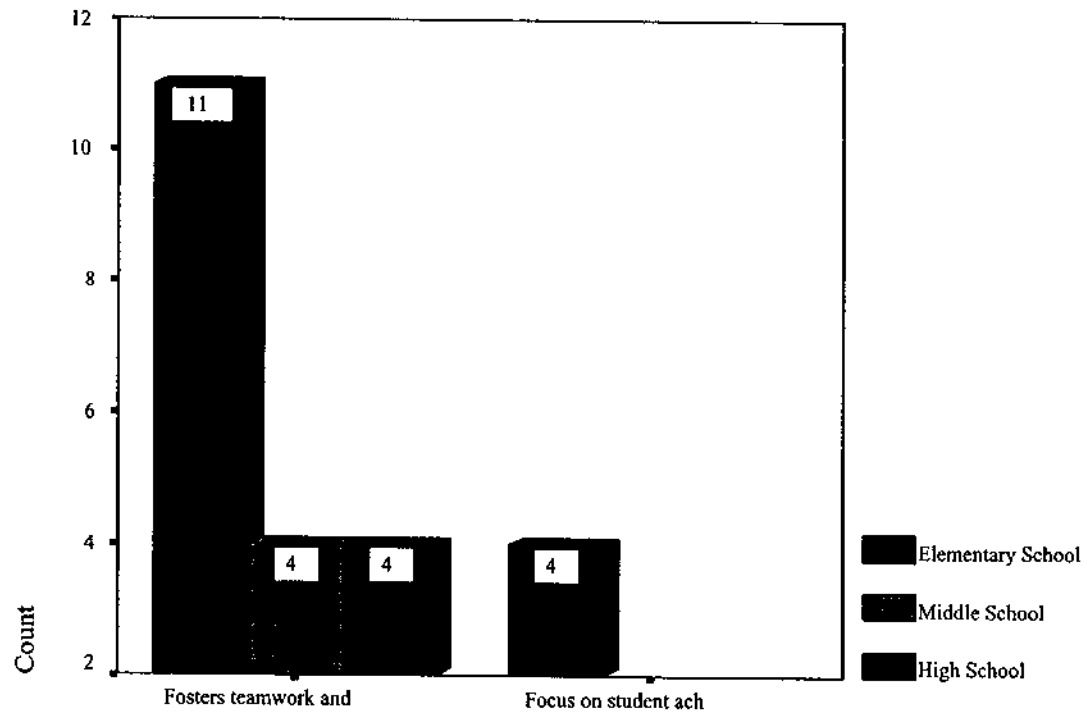
School level participants were asked what was different about their school. The question sought to illuminate the benchmarks of progress that provided evidence of student achievement and growth. Table 18 presents disaggregated data by school level, which indicated that teamwork and collaboration were significantly different as a result of whole school reform. Eleven respondents (48%) at the elementary level ( $n = 11$ ), four respondents at the middle ( $n = 4$ ) and high schools ( $n = 4$ ) respectively indicated similar perceptions. However, only four respondents at the elementary level (17%) viewed the focus on student achievement as the benchmark of progress that provide evidence of student achievement and growth ( $n = 4$ ).

Table 16 *What Is Different About Your School As A Result of WSR \* School Level**Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
Teamwork and collaboration	11	4	4	19
Focused on student achievement	4			4
Total	15	4	4	23

*Note. n = 23*

Figure 14 What is different about your school as a result of WSR \* school level  
crosstabulation.





### *Subsidiary Questions*

#### 1. What role does/did central office play in the change process?

Fullan (1994) suggested that the role of central office is a critical predictive factor in the success or failure of any district-wide change initiative. He further suggested developing a decentralized top-down/bottom-up management partnership between the school and central office with clearly defined roles for the purpose of successfully implementing the reform process.

Interview data collected from central office cabinet members suggested that central office had redefined its previous relationship with schools to become more supportive of school-based management. Although central office perceived schools to be more autonomous, they have continued to assist with data collection as well as disseminating information from state and federal governments. In some areas of the decentralization process, central office personnel have become more involved in the Comer process at the school level, while working to redistribute the balance of power and relinquishing control of functions reserved for central office personnel.

Tables 17-21 present crosstabulation data between the respondent's school level and areas of perceived support from central office. A review of the data suggested that school-level perceptions were that central office has made "some progress" in key areas of support for the School Leadership Council. For example, interview data suggested that schools now have more autonomy to identify, interview and make staffing recommendations for Board approval. Decentralization of the hiring process is supported by one cabinet member who stated that "central office played a greater role in hiring

[prior to whole school reform]. With whole school reform Principals and SLC members review resumes and discuss possible candidates at monthly SLC meetings.”

Referring to the mean comparison data in Section I, School Leadership Council members indicated making “little progress” in training to hire personnel for their school. With more discretion in the hiring process, and not receiving adequate training, are school management teams capable of selecting the most qualified individuals to realize its goal of improved student achievement?

Regarding the role played by central office, the data suggested that central office may have to increase its level of visibility at school-level team meetings, curriculum meetings, and assist the teams to develop capacity to accomplish the goals of high student achievement, increase parent participation, and reduce the level of bureaucracy.

The use of data to drive decision-making is critical to school improvement and student achievement. The use of multi-level data provided a more in-depth and comprehensive pool of data from all levels of the organization. Central office must concentrate its efforts on providing timely performance data for decision making. Respondents reported central office as making “little progress” in this area ( $M = 2.98$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). One Comer Facilitator indicated an example of schools that received standardized test scores too late in the year for teachers to make informed decisions about pedagogy to address students’ strengths or areas of concern. Another major concern of school personnel, was the lack of time to review and analyze data. Marzano (2003) analyzed the time needed to provide instruction in a standards-based curriculum versus the actual time allotted in a given school year. He concluded that only 9,042 hours per year are available for instruction, when approximately 15,465 are required to address the

increasing number of standards in the curriculum. With the increasing amount of student performance data, evidence suggested that respondents perceive little time is available to teach and analyze the results of instruction and assessment. Not only is the availability of data important, but the ability of school level personnel to interpret the data, and make informed decisions based on the interpretation, is essential. It is critical for school personnel to become adept at filtering information that is relevant to improving student performance.

Table 17 *Central Office Support to Align Curriculum and District Assessments to State Standards \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
No progress	1	1	1	3
A Little Progress	6	3	3	12
Some Progress	9	1	9	19
Significant Progress	8	6	3	17
Goal Achieved	7	1	1	9
Total	31	12	17	60

*Note.*  $n = 60$

Figure 15 Central office support to align curriculum and district assessments to state standards \* school level crosstabulation.

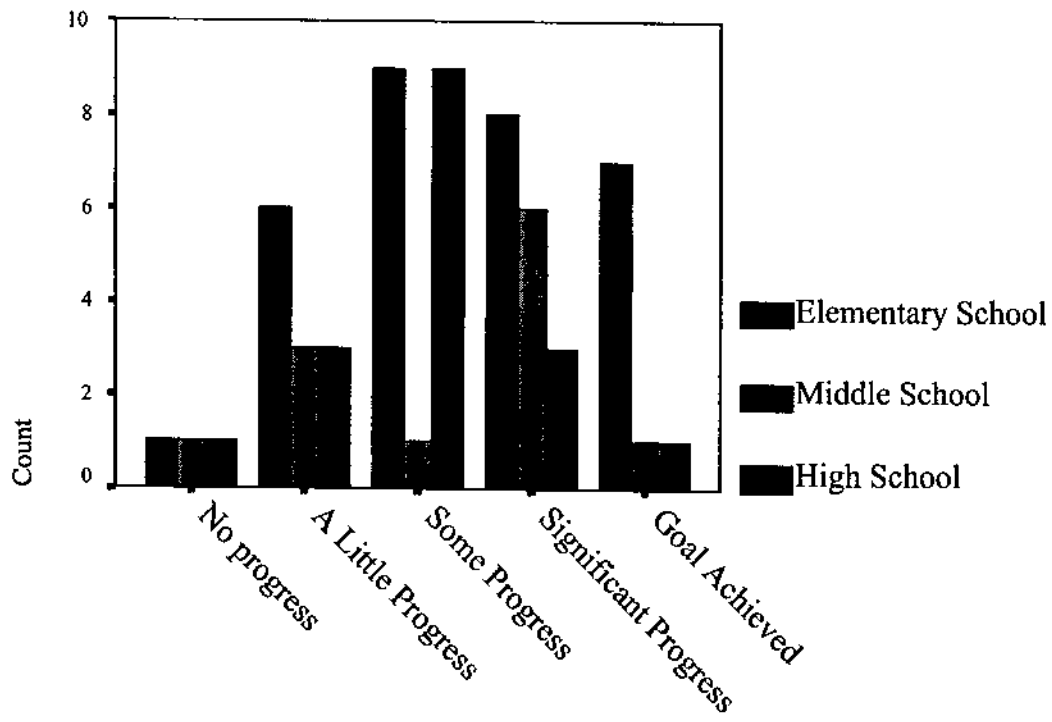


Table 18 *Central Office Support by Providing Professional Development \* School Level**Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
No progress	1		1	2
A Little Progress	5	3	3	11
Some Progress	11	4	8	23
Significant Progress	9	5	3	17
Goal Achieved	5		2	7
Total	31	12	17	60

*Note. n= 60*

Figure 16 Central Office support by providing professional development \* school level  
crosstabulation

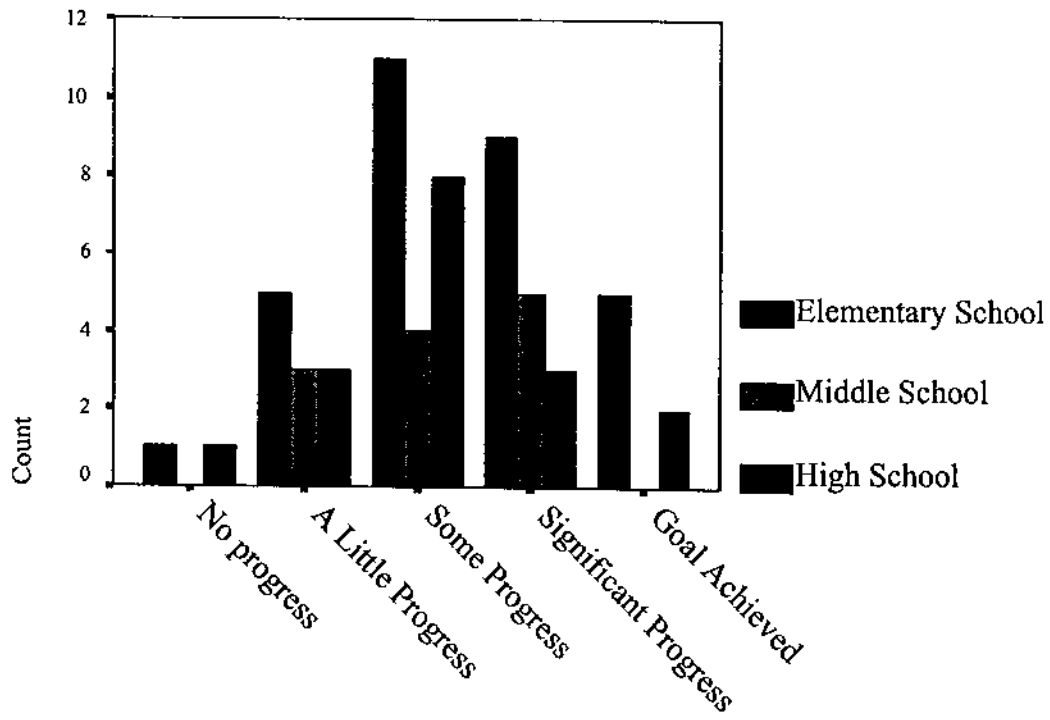


Table 19 *Central Office Support of the School Budget \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
A Little Progress	2	1	4	7
Some Progress	14	3	7	24
Significant Progress	11	6	2	19
Goal Achieved	4	2	4	10
Total	31	12	17	60

*Note.* n= 60

Figure 17 Central office support of the school budget \* school level crosstabulation.

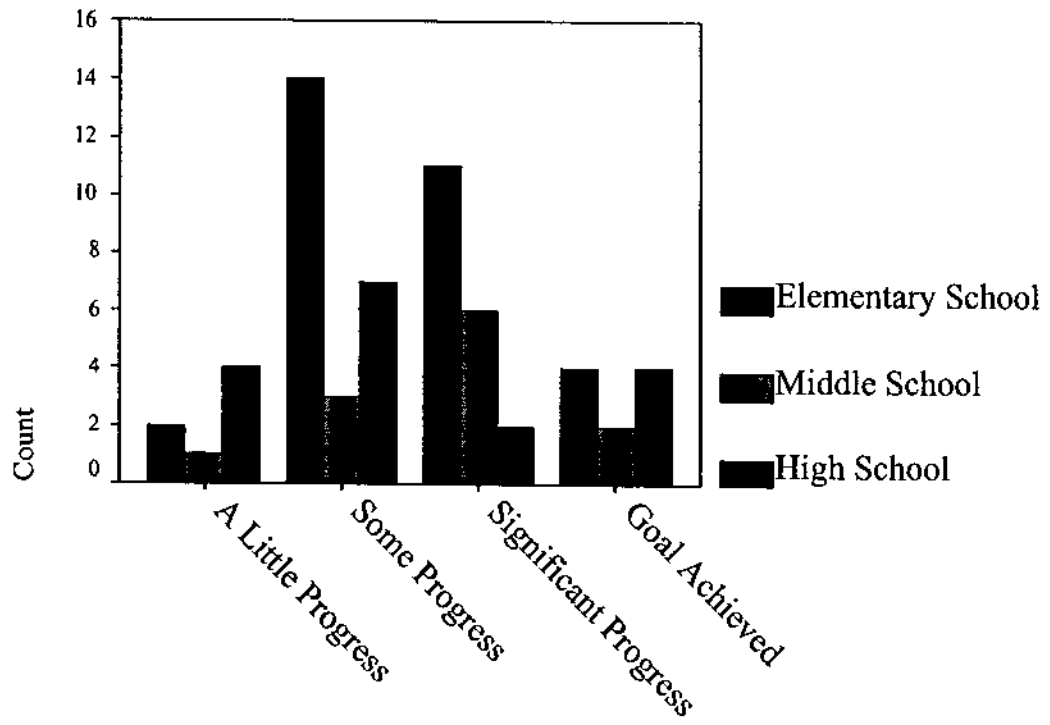




Table 20 *Central Office Support by Hiring Appropriate Personnel \* School Level*  
*Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
No Progress	2			2
A Little Progress	7	4	3	14
Some Progress	8	4	8	20
Significant Progress	9	2	3	14
Goal Achieved	4	2	2	8
Total	30	12	16	58

*Note. n = 58*

Figure 18 Central office support by hiring appropriate personnel \* school level  
crosstabulation.

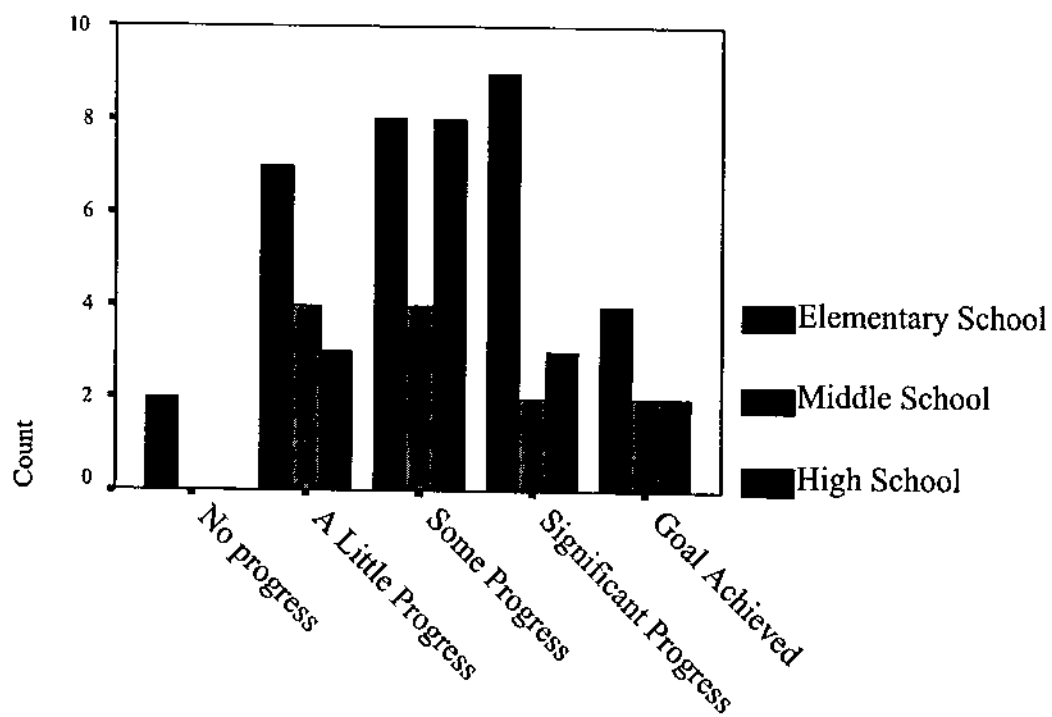
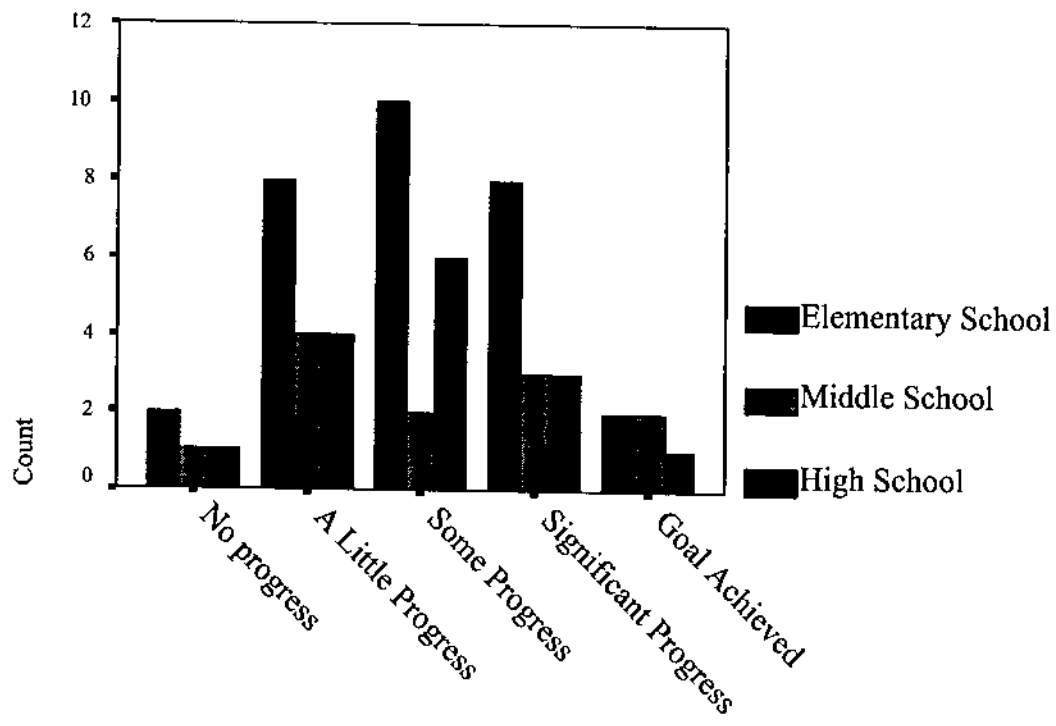


Table 21 *Central Office Support by Providing Meaningful and Timely Performance Data for Planning and Decision-Making \* School Level Crosstabulation*

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School	Total
No Progress	2	1	1	4
A Little Progress	8	4	4	16
Some Progress	10	2	6	18
Significant Progress	8	3	3	14
Goal Achieved	2	2	1	4
Total	30	12	15	57

*Note. n = 57*

Figure 19 Central office support by providing meaningful and timely performance data for planning and decision-making \* school level crosstabulation



2. What impact did district-wide implementation of the Comer School Development Program have on stakeholders' support of whole school reform?

A single model implemented district-wide reduced the number of whole school reform models students and staff are introduced to, which was important in a district with high student mobility and student intra-district transfers. Respondents were asked their opinions and perceptions of the impact of district-wide implementation of the Comer School Development Program. Interview data revealed that respondents concurred that increased professional development offered by the Comer School Development Program at Yale University has involved more people in the change process.

“More people [are] involved in decision-making, although not always.” (Comer Facilitator)

“The consistent use of data to drive instruction.” (Cabinet Member)

“Salary guides are now competitive to attract highly qualified teachers.” (Cabinet Member)

“[The Comer School Development Program offers basic and intermediate training via] Comer 101 and 102. Principal’s Academies , in-service training provide by Yale staff, and the annual New Jersey Comer Network are offered to participating School Development Program member schools.” (Comer Facilitator)

“The Comer School Development Program provides a myriad of activities, for example, professional development academies and school level turnkey opportunities that Directors, parents, Principals, the Board of Education, and SLC members have experienced.” (Cabinet Member)

“Again it varies from school to school. At our school most of our professional development comes from the Facilitator as a cost saving measure.” (Comer Facilitator)

“I haven’t a clue. Supposedly test scores are up a fraction.” (Comer Facilitator)

“I’ve seen a positive change in school climate, culture, and problem-solving using the Guiding Principles.” (Cabinet Member)

“I’ve seen collaboration of all stakeholders in the change process.” (Cabinet Member)

“Giving each School Leadership Council the opportunity to write its own plan and develop its own budget.” (Cabinet Member)

3. Does variance in implementation of whole school reform exist between the school levels represented by the sample population?

Effective reform initiatives are institutionalized components of the school culture. The process of transforming school culture from a static to an adaptive system, reflective of what Peter Senge called a “learning organization” (as cited in Henderson & Hawthorne, 2000, p. 162), requires that people must...develop the ability to understand and engage in the politics of change.

Survey data was collected to determine the degree of institutionalization change at the school levels within the sample population. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was developed between School Level and the respondents’ experiences in critical areas of the systemic reform process prior to membership on the School Leadership Council: (a) aligning instruction to the CCCS, (b) analyzing test data for needs assessment, (c) determining program needs based on test data, (d) making curriculum decisions based on the review of test score data, (e) developing a professional development plan that relates to the implementation of WSR, (f) developing a professional development plan, (g) making school-based personnel decisions with respect to hiring, (h) developing a school based budget, and (i) developing a school-based reward system.

An ANOVA was used to compare the mean scores of different groups, usually groups of three or more. The ANOVA helped determine the amount of variance of the dependent variable due to the differences in respondents’ perceptions of the level of whole school reform implementation and whether the variability between the groups was significant as opposed to random variability. This analysis examined the *F* value, (the ratio of variability between groups to the variability within groups), the mean score and

standard deviation, and the significance level. Understanding the variance in respondents' perceptions provided a gauge on whether the reform activities have been institutionalized across the grade levels in this study.

Table 22 *One-way ANOVA of Professional Development to Align Curriculum to State Standards \* School Level*

(I) Elementary, Middle or High School	(J) Elementary, Middle or High School	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Elementary School	Middle School	.26	.310	.397	-.36	.88
	High School	.70*	.279	.015	.14	1.26
Middle School	Elementary School	-.26	.310	.397	-.88	.36
	High School	.44	.354	.221	-.27	1.14
High School	Elementary School	-.70*	.279	.015	-1.26	-.14
	Middle School	-.44	.354	.221	-1.14	.27

\*. Note. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 22 displays the results of the ANOVA performed to examine the difference in the dependent variable respondents' perception of their training to align curriculum to state standards and the independent variable school level (Elementary, Middle or High School). The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) being tested was that school level is not a factor in respondents' perceptions of the training received to align curriculum to state standards.



On a scale from 1 (No Progress) to 5 (Goal Achieved), respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of the training received to align curriculum to state standards. Table 22 indicated significant differences in perception between the three groups of respondents ( $F = 3.166$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .049$ ). Post Hoc Tests for multiple comparisons indicated that when asked to rate the training received to align curriculum to state standards, Elementary School respondents, for example, perceived making “some progress” ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .965$ ), as compared to High School respondents who perceived making “little progress” ( $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = .958$ ) when asked the same question. The difference in perception between the two groups was significant at  $p = .015$ . However, there were no statistically significant differences in the mean score between the elementary and middle school respondents, or the middle and high school respondents. Therefore, in this example, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis for the elementary school respondents and accepted the null hypothesis for the middle and high school respondents.

To a greater degree than middle and high school respondents, elementary School respondents perceived achieving “some progress” in training to align curriculum to state standards. Team members at both middle and high school levels with limited knowledge of curriculum alignment may not possess practical skills to initiate and contribute to curriculum development and alignment to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Team members with limited knowledge of curriculum alignment may not possess practical skills to initiate and contribute to curriculum development and alignment to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Therefore, recommendations for successful implementation of district wide reform included (a)

examining how elementary schools incorporate professional development into the instructional day and after school; (b) determining the type of professional development offered and how it is aligned to the schools' goals; and (c) finally determining how the higher perceptions of goal attainment translate into efficient, effective planning, decision-making and overall school operation.

Table 23 *One-way ANOVA of Prior Experience Developing a School Based Budget \**

*School Level*

(I) Elementary, Middle or High School	(J) Elementary, Middle or High School	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Elementary School	Middle School	-.39	.391	.320	-1.18	.39
	High School	.20	.381	.596	-.56	.97
Middle School	Elementary School	.39	.391	.320	-.39	1.18
	High School	.60	.454	.195	-.32	1.51
High School	Elementary School	-.20	.381	.596	-.97	.56
	Middle School	-.60	.454	.195	-1.51	.32

Table 23 displays the results of the ANOVA performed to examine the difference in the dependent variable, respondents' prior experience in School Leadership Council functions, and the independent variable school level (Elementary, Middle or High

School). The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) being tested was that school level is not a factor in respondents' prior experience with the functions of the School Leadership Council.

On a scale from 26 (No Experience) to 29 (A Lot of Experience) respondents were asked to rate their experiences with School Leadership Council functions prior to their membership on the School Leadership Council. Using developing a school-based budget as an example, respondents at each grade level indicated having little experience in developing a school based budget prior to their membership on the School Leadership Council ( $M = 27.40$ ,  $SD = 1.132$ ,  $N = 53$ ). Although slight differences existed the ANOVA table shows no statistically significant difference in the responses disaggregated by grade level ( $F = .897$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .414$ ). Therefore, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis that school level was not a factor in respondents' experience with developing a school-based budget.

To a greater degree, respondents at each academic level indicated having "no" to "little experience" in the area of developing a school based budget prior to their membership on the management team. Experience and implementation skills provide the foundation for effective school-based leadership. The lack of experience in the area of budgeting can have a negative effect on the team's ability to effectively development a fiscally sound program to complement a well developed three year operational plan.

Recommendations for successful district-wide implementation include providing school management teams with intensive fiscal training and consistent hands-on support from State Department personnel and the model developer. Without such support, the management team may develop a budget that is misaligned with the school's operational plan, which does not make efficient use of limited dollars and lacks vision.

Table 24 *One-way ANOVA of Perceptions of the Impact of Abbott Funding \* School Level*

(I) Elementary, Middle or High School	(J) Elementary, Middle or High School	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Elementary School	Middle School	.67*	.324	.044	.02	1.32
	High School	.65*	.290	.028	.07	1.23
Middle School	Elementary School	-.67*	.324	.044	-1.32	-.02
	High School	-.02	.362	.962	-.74	.71
High School	Elementary School	-.65*	.290	.028	-1.23	-.07
	Middle School	.02	.362	.962	-.71	.74

\*. Note. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 24 displays the results of the ANOVA performed to examine the difference in respondents' perceptions of the impact of Abbott funding disaggregated by grade level. The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) being tested is that the respondents' school level has no impact on his or her perceptions of the impact of Abbott funding.

On a scale of 1 (No Progress) to 5 (Goal Achieved) respondents were asked to rate their perception of the impact of Abbott funding. With respect to the respondent's school level, table 26 indicates statistically significant differences in the respondents' perception of the impact of state funding. ( $F = 3.55$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .035$ ). The ANOVA table indicates statistically significant differences in respondents' perceptions. For

example, in response to “As a result of Abbott funding, my school has sufficient textbooks, materials, and supplies for all students Post Hoc Test for multiple comparisons reveal that elementary school respondents perceived achieving “significant progress” ( $M = 4.21, SD = .88$ ) when compared to the middle school respondents’ perceptions of achieving “some progress” ( $M = 3.54, SD = 1.13$ ) and high school respondents’ perceptions of making “some progress” ( $M = 3.56, SD = 1.01$ ). The differences were significant at  $p = .028$ .

The data revealed that the findings by Muirhead et al. (2001), where first, second, and second-year-mid-year cohort respondents reported low perceptions of the impact of state funding, third cohort study participants shared similar perceptions about the impact of state funding.

Currently, parity funding has raised Abbott district’s per pupil expenditure to \$10,700. With a high per pupil expenditure, the researcher expected to find higher perceptions of the impact of state funding at all three grade levels. Crosstabulation data may explain the current findings. For example, at the elementary level 46.7% of the teachers with more than 5 years of experience in their current position (37.5% of the total respondents at the elementary level) indicated that prior to their membership on the School Planning and Management Team, they had “little” to “no experience” in developing a school-based budget. One hundred percent of the middle school respondents with 1-3 years of experience (45.5% of the total respondents at the middle school level) indicated that prior to their membership on the School Planning and Management Team, they had “some” to “very little experience in developing a school-based budget. At the high school level, 100% of the respondents with 4-5 years of

experience in their current position indicated that prior to their membership on the School Leadership Council they had “some” to “no experience” in developing a school-based budget.

As previously discussed, School Leadership Council members indicated having “little experience” in developing a school-based budget. (elementary  $M = 27.36$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ; middle school  $M = 27.75$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ; high school  $M = 27.15$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ). Effective allocation of Abbott funding and planning (aligning resources to meet students’ needs) are integral to successful implementation of whole school reform, skills that the research reflects are lacking at the school management level. The evidence provides additional support for increasing the professional development opportunities in fiscal resource allocation and aligning fiscal resources to effective programs. Through a collaborative process, schools, along with district personnel and central office, should review how they communicate goals and expectations for reform, how they evaluate progress towards accomplishing its stated goals and objectives, then provide tangible solutions to realign their practices with their desired outcomes.

Table 25 *One-way ANOVA of Perceptions of Central Office Support \* School Level*

(I) Elementary, Middle or High School	(J) Elementary, Middle or High School	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Elementary School	Middle School	-.08	.377	.826	-.84	.67
	High School	.07	.349	.849	-.63	.77
Middle School	Elementary School	.08	.377	.826	-.67	.84
	High School	.15	.428	.727	-.71	1.01
High School	Elementary School	-.07	.349	.849	-.77	.63
	Middle School	-.15	.428	.727	-1.01	.71

Support from Central Office is critical in the systemic reform process. In a bureaucratic environment, central administration's efforts to decentralize the processes for realigning school-level policy, personnel, and fiscal resources can provide a significant contribution to the reform process. Fullan (1994) suggested implementing a top-down/bottom-up paradigm that promotes true collaboration between central office administrators and the building level School Leadership Councils.

Table 25 displays the results of the ANOVA that was performed to examine the difference in the dependent variable respondents' perceptions of central office support in the implementation of whole school reform and the independent variable school level (elementary, middle or high school). The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) being tested was that school level is not a factor in respondents' perceptions of central office support in the

implementation of whole school reform. On a scale from 1 (No Progress) to 5 (Goal Achieved) respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of central office support for site-based whole school reform. Table 25 indicates that middle school respondents perceived that central office was making “some progress” in its efforts to support school level reform ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.31, n = 12$ ). Elementary school respondents also perceive central office is making “some progress” ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.05, n = 30$ ), and high school respondents perceived that central office was making “little progress” to support school level reform ( $M = 2.93, SD 1.03, n = 15$ ). However, the ANOVA table shows no statistically significant difference in mean score between the groups ( $F = .062, df = 2, p = .940$ ). Although the members of each group reported various levels of perception, the Post Hoc Test for multiple comparisons showed no statistically significant differences in the between group responses.

The evidence suggested random variability in the school management team members’ perceptions of central office support. Therefore, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis that school level was not a factor in members’ perceptions of central office support. The perception of lack of central office support, direction, and guidance may be a contributing factor to the schools’ inability to successfully navigate through court-ordered whole school reform mandates, State DOE policy, and school-level structural changes. This fact was further supported by the mean score rating of 2.93 and standard deviation of 1.08, indicating a perception of “little progress” being made by central office by providing timely performance data for planning and decision-making (See Table 2).



*Length of Time in Current Position, Role on the SLC, and Training*

In order to determine if a relationship existed between the team member's length of time served in current position, role on the School Leadership Council, and training, a Pearson  $r$  test was conducted. Correlation does not suggest causality; rather it identifies the relationship or association between two variables. The correlation coefficient is a number between  $-1.0$  and  $+1.0$  that indicates the degree of association, or the linear relationship, between pairs of variables. The closer the coefficient is to  $-1.0$  or  $+1.0$  indicates a stronger negative (positive) correlation. The following represents an analysis of the statistical data, which includes a report on the size of the Pearson  $r$  coefficient, the direction of the correlation (either positive or negative), and the significance of the relationship.

Table 26 *Correlation Between Length of Time in Current Position, Role on SLC, Perceptions of Training*

	Role on SLC r value	Training in teamwork and consensus building	Training to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment
How long have you served in your current position?	-.170	-.276*	-.274*
Total	N = 58	N = 59	N = 59

Note. \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Survey data was analyzed to determine the relationship between length of time served in current position and role on the School Planning and Improvement Team, Training in Teamwork and Consensus Building, and Conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Table 26 suggests that there was little, if any, negative correlation between the length of time an individual has served in their current school position and the role they represented on the School Leading Council. The Pearson  $r$  was  $-.17$  and was not statistically significant. However, the correlation between Length of time in current position and the School Leadership Council receiving training in teamwork and consensus building showed low and negative correlation with a Pearson  $r = -.28$  and was statistically significant at  $p = .05$ . Similarly, the correlation between Length of Time in current position and the SLC Receiving Training to Conduct a Comprehensive Needs

Assessment showed a low correlation with a Pearson  $r$  of  $-.27$  and is statistically significant at  $p = .05$ .

The data suggested an inverse relationship between Length of Time in Current Position and the perception of Training received. Specifically, as the participant's length of time increased, his or her perception was that of receiving less training in the areas of teamwork and consensus building, and conducting a comprehensive needs assessment. Or, the quality of the training could be compromised due to lack of knowledge by in-house personnel. One possible explanation for this occurrence was the lapse of the district's contract with the model developer. However, continued training over time, from expert sources, may positively impact their problem-solving and needs assessment skills.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications for New Policy

After 3 years of trial and error with court-mandated whole school reform, respondents in the sample district perceived having made modest gains in the implementation and maintenance of their reform initiative. Fullan (1991) argued that one must see and address the total system when initiating change. Piecemeal change without consideration of professional development, assessment strategies, and school climate are doomed to fail. One can extrapolate from the data that issues of concern in 2001 during first, second, and second year mid-year cohort implementation of whole school reform remained unresolved for the third cohort school-based management teams participating in this 2003 study.

Also, evident in the analysis of participants' responses was that many staff members were comfortable having very little input into strategic planning, budgetary or personnel matters. The more traditional management paradigm of the building principal who sets the agenda, is primary decision-maker, and forces change represented the more popular organizational structure. Maintaining the status quo has become the prevailing attitude among line staff.

Building capacity through skill development was another area respondents indicated as critical to the successful implementation of whole school reform. Goertz et al. (1996) outlined a five-step strategic plan to build capacity within the school organization. One strategy was to reconfigure the governance and organizational structures to facilitate learning among members of the management team. School

Leadership Council members must have clearly defined procedures for decision-making and effective interpersonal skills to work together regardless of personality differences.

School Leadership Councils should work collaboratively to revise the criteria for SLC member selection to include, as criteria for participation on the team, those relevant skills and experiences necessary to make effective organizational management decisions. The selection process would be enhanced by identifying and recruiting team members who possess a variety of skills including curriculum development and alignment, data analysis, personnel/hiring, and knowledge of the systemic reform process.

The sample population's self-assessment of modest whole school reform implementation progress indicated that there were still areas of concern. The data analysis identified specific areas of concern that must be addressed by stakeholders, in order to maintain the momentum of the reform initiative. Consistent, thorough professional development and hands-on technical assistance is required from the model developer, State DOE and central office staff.

These two elements are the critical lynchpins to empowering school-level management teams with valuable skills and support to recognize inefficient fiscal spending and reallocate those funds to more practical and effective programs and services. However, with 72% of respondents indicated having "some" to "no experience" in developing a school-based budget, that is aligned to state standards and incorporates instructional best practices is counterproductive to effective school-based management and whole school reform implementation (See Appendix M, p. 291).

Another emerging issue was the lack of curriculum alignment across grade levels. Specifically, there was little articulation of content material taught between the

elementary, middle, and high school levels. Curriculum in the sample district was developed according to grade level (i.e., K-6, 7-8, and 9-12), and only involved the teachers in that grade level. Unfortunately, teachers at one grade level may have little or no knowledge of the curriculum guide or pedagogy at other grade levels. School Leadership Council members indicated a moderately positive view of their role in reviewing assessment data to determine program and curriculum needs. The respondents' ambivalent views towards this area may be attributed to their lack of experience in this critical area.

Providing students with developmentally appropriate and challenging curricula is critical to student achievement. Professional development in this area provides a foundation for understanding the problem at hand, a tool for identifying the adaptive or technical strategies required to resolve the problem to accomplish organizational goals. However, the research suggested that staff development and training were among the most commonly miscalculated components of program implementation with regard to time allotted, frequency of training, intensity of training, and follow-up support. Research now indicates that school resources do influence student performance. For example, Ferguson (1991) reported that "better teacher literacy skills smaller class sizes and more years of teacher experience are correlated with better student performance." (as cited in Rossi & Montgomery, 1994, p. 1)

Study participants at each grade level were asked to rate their perceptions of the level and quality of the professional development received. Respondents indicated only a moderately positive view of training and professional development received. Odden and Wohlstetter (1995) stated that professional development is on going and involves the

whole school, and is most successful when a part of a multi year professional development plan that is aligned with the district's goals and priorities. It is clear that the district and model developer must create more opportunities, sustained over time, for professional staff development in understanding the "how to" of systemic reform. Consequently, monitoring the implementation process to insure congruence and vertical and horizontal articulation among schools and between grade levels must be an integral tool to gauge the district's progress in this area.

The data suggested that professional development in the area of implementing instructional strategies may not be systematic or focused, nor reaching the classroom level. Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987) suggested that in order for professional development to change teaching, it must include presentation of theory, modeling, time to practice, and immediate, supportive feedback. The importance of professional development was further captured by Darling-Hammond (1990) who stated that not only is teacher knowledge and certification critical, but policy makers must develop policies to provide ongoing professional development, supervision and evaluation (as cited in Goertz et al., 1996, p.4). Recommendations for improvement in this area would be to review staff qualifications and certifications to insure alignment with current assignments. Utilize the Comer Facilitators as Master Teachers to model Comer in the Classroom using the Balanced Curriculum, with consistent follow-up visits from the building administrator, District Facilitator, and Comer School Development staff to insure that instructional best strategies are fully integrated as daily teaching practices.

When individuals or groups are under pressure to problem-solve, they revert to performing the more familiar routine tasks. Therefore, it is incumbent upon stakeholders

to develop an internal audit mechanism to insure that the innovation is uniformly implemented throughout the system. McManus (2003) suggested developing a management review tool that if used effectively, can move individuals from low-risk, routine tasks that maintain status quo, to more change activities that require a degree of risk-taking on the part of staff.

Based on Leo McManus's Eight Critical Factors in Selection, Promotion, and Career Planning, (2003) this matrix can also be utilized to accurately align human capital to maximize organizational capacity for change and ultimately efficient productivity (i.e., instructional best practices, and student achievement). Collaboration between the building principals and central office to specify the:

1. Professional competencies and knowledge required to produce the desired outcome. Qualities to identify are (a) knowledge of content area, (b) experience, (c) academic preparation, and (d) certification
2. Professional skills required to do the job. Qualities to identify are (a) interpersonal skills, (b) problem-solving skills, (c) competitive drive, (d) circle of influence, (e) confidence, and (f) impact on others (leadership potential)
3. After human resource assessment, stakeholders can begin the process of assessing their current state of organizational capacity for implementing a new innovation. The organization now develops a profile of how they are currently performing.
4. Reframing positions the organization towards its maximum potential – or the desired state of operating.
5. Develop a plan of action (goals and objectives) to achieve the vision.



Maintaining status quo will not suffice in a reform-driven environment. Effective implementation of systemic reform requires allocating sufficient time for people to learn new concepts and develop new skills. The School Leadership Councils need the time to implement innovations. One recommendation is for planning teams to work on Saturdays and during the summer months when team members have uninterrupted time to focus on the reform process.

In addition, the district should work to develop collaborative partnerships and networks with successful Comer districts and local universities. The interdistrict collaborations would provide the sample district with additional implementation support, and can serve as a resource of knowledge for team members. Seton Hall University faculty have advanced research on whole school reform in New Jersey's Abbott districts. As experts on whole school reform, Seton Hall University staff members would provide the added benefit of academic expertise in whole school reform to supplement the limited support from the model developer.

### *Gauging Implementation Progress*

Three critical dilemmas have limited the sample population's ability to gauge its reform process and level of progress. First, lapsed contracts between the schools and the model developer have resulted in a decreased number of on-site implementation visits from the Comer School Development program staff. With a lack of professional support from the model developer, and no internal mechanisms to determine the level of effective implementation, the School Leadership Councils are left to self-diagnose and self-prescribe the "best" course of reform actions. Second, as information from the New

Jersey State Department of Education changes, School Leadership Councils are required to make reactive adjustments in planning, professional development and budget allocations, for example, to meet inconsistent and often conflicting State mandates.

It does little good to implement a model design with basic tenets that are misaligned with the district's goals. Thus, the third concern from a district perspective is the alignment of expectations and priorities with the appropriate reform initiative. There was an apparent misalignment between the district's goals and priorities and the whole school reform model it has adopted. Based on central office interviews, the district held as its goals and priorities: (a) high student achievement; (b) increased parent participation; and (c) to faithfully implement the Comer Process, district-wide. Although the Comer school Development Program offers two curriculum components - the Balanced Curriculum and Students Achieving Reading Success (STARS), the strength of the Comer model is its ability to reorganize school structures to improve organizational efficiency and capacity for change. Although organizational efficiency and capacity building are important to the systemic reform initiative, they are neither a district goal nor priority. In addition, the Comer School Development Program does not directly measure the correlation between the implementation of the Comer Process and student achievement, as evidenced by the 2002 SIQ-A data.

The one variable that is measured by the model developer, and that is aligned to the district's goals and priorities, is parent involvement. The Parent Team's focus is to incorporate parental involvement beyond fundraising and Parent/Teacher Association meetings. Its mission is to include parents and caregivers in the school level management and policy development processes. Participation on the Parent Team helps strengthen the

bond that exists between the family, community and school. However, respondents participating in this study rated their perception of parental involvement as achieving “little progress.” Natriello, McDill and Pallas (1990) suggested that an effective strategy for strengthening the school-family-community bond is to develop greater parental involvement activities at the school, and making the school more prominent in the lives of the family and community.

Epstein (1992) recommended a framework for educators to realize the goal of increased parental and community involvement:

1. School assistance for families, i.e., health, guidance, and supervision
2. School home communication via letters progress reports, phone calls and conferences
3. Family help for schools via parent volunteers in class and other areas of the school
4. Involvement in learning activities at home
5. Involvement in decision-making, governance and advocacy
6. Collaborations with community organizations

Mean comparison data indicated respondents perceived “little” to “some progress” being made in implementing the district’s whole school reform priorities. The ANOVA and correlation analyses provided insight into the relationship between elements of systemic reform and the respondents’ school level. Although elementary school respondents perceived making more progress with whole school reform implementation, one can draw the conclusion that systemic change was not institutionalized within the district’s culture. In addition to programmatic implementation concerns, School

Leadership Council members have indicated, on average, having “some experience” when asked about prior budgeting experience. While team members are not expected to become fiscal experts, they must develop the necessary skills to effectively and strategically allocate limited financial resources to achieve the optimal desired programmatic goals.

Fragmented implementation on all academic levels has hampered the district’s ability to maximize the potential benefit of systemic reform. Successful systemic reform requires developing a framework that recognizes academic success as the cultural norm, makes the learning activities relevant to future aspirations, helps students develop positive relationships within the school; and provides supportive relationships beyond the school.

Recommendations for improvement include developing a district-wide collaborative committee of central office staff, the Comer School Development Facilitators, school-level and community stakeholders to develop a unifying vision for the district. School based management, as mandated by Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts (2003) gives school management teams more control over policy, procedures, and internal school operations.

Within the framework of collaboration is developing a mission and vision statement that is also reflective of community concerns. Stakeholders must develop a shared mission and vision statement that rallies the community around the change initiative. The community, as a major stakeholder, must remain in the dialog continuum, and have a forum to provide feedback. Collaboration between stakeholders through brainstorming of viable solutions is essential to reform. Whole school reform requires

individuals to expand their network of inclusion through collaboration, developing a shared agenda, and creating a culture and climate for change. In the absence of collaboration and consensus on possible solutions, those individuals who are responsible for implementing and monitoring the change process can become the restraining force that stalls productivity and growth.

The research clearly indicated that schools do not have the internal capacity to make effective fiscal and programmatic school-based decisions to improve student achievement. It is also clear that the current language of the Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts (2003) is limited in providing a specific process for “how” the Local Support Team and central office administration will collaborate with the School Leadership Council to implement systemic reform. In examining Urban Education Reform in the Abbott Districts (2003), the State DOE outlined each entity’s responsibilities in the change process. However, N.J.A.C. did not provide a methodology for accomplishing the goals of systemic reform. This ambiguity and “lack of commitment” to a particular methodological process (or blueprint) on the part of State DOE officials has created “mini school districts” within the larger school district, with each School Leadership Council serving as Chief School Administrators.

The role of the Local Support Team must be reviewed to determine the level of collaboration that exists between the State DOE and the local school district. The traditional role of educational officials represents a patriarchal, monitoring role. The adversarial relationship between school-level leadership councils, central office, and the State DOE did not facilitate the free exchange of information, knowledge and expertise

for improved student achievement, and organizational efficiency and decision-making for improved student achievement.

It is recommended that State officials review the Abbott regulations and make revisions that provide clearly defined processes for how Local Support Teams and central office will engage School Leadership Councils in the adaptive challenge of systemic reform. Each stakeholder must be included as an active member of the decision-making process from the initial planning stages of implementation into program evaluation and modification. The proposed revised language can effectively move key stakeholders from the sidelines into the active playing field of the change process, where each entity is held accountable for the success or failure of the reform initiative, thus creating a new climate of ownership of the process.

#### *Topics for Future Research*

What is the relationship between whole school reform and improved student achievement in the Orange Public School district? Whole school reform in New Jersey's Abbott schools was implemented as a method for improving student achievement as measured by standardized test scores. With only two out of seven elementary schools meeting adequate yearly progress as defined by No Child Left Behind (2002), 50% of all elementary school students demonstrating proficiency on the Language Arts and Mathematics sections of the New Jersey Ask 4, 42% and 13% of middle school students demonstrating proficiency, respectively, on the Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics sections of the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment. In light of students' low

performance and the demands placed on schools to improve via whole school reform, has the promise of achievement in New Jersey's Abbott schools been realized? Further analysis is required to statistically measure the impact of the third cohort model implementation on improving student performance on state mandated standardized tests in Abbott School Districts. By examining student achievement levels on standardized tests before whole school reform implementation compared with achievement levels on standardized tests after whole school reform implementation, a two-tailed  $t$  test can validate with statistical significance, the impact the model adoption and implementation has made on test scores in Abbott districts:

$H_0$  = that the implementation of a whole school reform model has no impact on student achievement levels as measured by standardized tests would drive the study.

$H_1$  = The implementation of a WSR model has made a positive impact on student achievement levels as measured by standardized tests.

$H_2$  = The implementation of a WSR model has made a negative impact on student achievement levels as measured by standardized tests.

Further study should be conducted incorporating a larger third cohort Abbott district sample size, State Department of Education officials, and central office personnel. With the recent Abbott decision (Abbott v. Burke, 2002), the State Supreme Court has ordered the formation of collaborative committees to investigate the barriers to whole school reform implementation. Of specific concern is the lack of progress in implementing the mandates from Abbott V (Abbott v. Burke, 1998), and supplemental

programs for secondary schools. A more extensive multi-level study would give stakeholders necessary data to make informed decisions about whole school reform implementation.



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**Appendix A– Letters of Informed Consent**

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
1 8 5 8

Dear Central Office Cabinet Member or School Facilitator:

March 26, 2003

1) Researcher's Affiliation with Seton Hall University

I am a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services Executive Ed.D Program at Seton Hall University. I am conducting research on the efficacy of the systemic reform initiative in your school.

2) Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of implementation of the Comer School Development Program in this small Abbott school district. This case study will incorporate historical data, individual interviews with central office staff members, and survey data. The information gleaned will provide insight into the elements of systemic reform initiatives, in juxtaposition to this district's progress towards developing a solid foundation for successful whole school reform implementation. In addition, the data will illuminate stakeholders' perceptions of the level of implementation, and indicators for quality and effectiveness of the district's systemic reform initiative via the Comer School Development Program. In the final analysis, this study will illuminate the degree of implementation, resource capacity to implement the Court's mandates, barriers to implementation of the whole school reform, and the role of central office leadership in facilitating the reform efforts at the school level.

3) Procedures

A 16-question verbal script will be administered individually to Central Office staff members and the Comer Facilitator. The open-ended questions have been tailored to elicit the respondents' perceptions regarding central office capacity to assist schools in systemic reform and the role it has played in that process. The interview will take approximately twenty-five minutes to complete. After each interview, the researcher will answer any follow up questions from the respondents.

4) Statement of Voluntary Participation

Please be advised that your participation in this study is voluntary. You may opt not to participate or discontinue participation at any time during this process without penalty.

5) Anonymity

In order to maintain the integrity of anonymity, please do not place your name or any identifying marks on the survey other than your school.

6) Storage

The original data material will be stored in a secured locked cabinet in the researcher's office at Orange High School.

College of Education and Human Services  
Executive Ed.D. Program  
Tel. 973.275.2728  
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

APPROVED  
JUL 07 2003  
IRB  
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

SEARCHING THE INTERNET FOR HEADS AND TAILS

Page 2

7) Confidentiality

The information collected as a result of this study is confidential, and will only be used for this research project. No other individual besides the researcher will have access to the original data material.

8) Anticipated Risks

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

9) Associated Benefits

There are no foreseeable benefits for the respondents who consent to participate in this study.

10) Compensation and Referral Mechanism

At no time will the participants be exposed to an emotional, mental or physical health risk or research-related injury. Therefore compensation, medical treatment, or referral mechanisms to reduce undue stress or personal harm are not warranted

11) Alternative Procedures

The non-medical nature of this study does not warrant identifying alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be advantageous to the participants.

12) Contact Information

The information collected will be analyzed and disseminated to initiate discussion on a best practices approach to implementing and sustaining systemic reform. If you have any questions regarding this research project, or the research subject's rights, please call my office at the Orange Alternative High School, 400 Lincoln Avenue, room 243, Orange, NJ 07050. The telephone number of the office is 973-677-4099 ext. 575.

13) The Use of Video or Audio-tape

With your consent, and for the purpose of accurately capture data during the individual interview with central office staff and the Comer Facilitator of each School Management and Improvement Team, the researcher will use a 2-in-1 Microcassette Recorder #43-476, with a Optimus Boundry microphone #33-3022. You have the right to review all or any portion of your taped interview, and request that it be destroyed. After the data has been transcribed, the recorded data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at Orange High School.

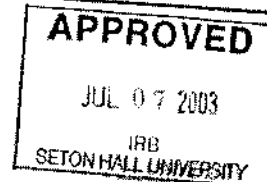
This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is 973-275-2974

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Antoine L. Gayles  
Executive Ed.D Candidate

Subject or Authorized Representative

Date





Dear School Management and Improvement Team Member:

March 26, 2003

1.) Researcher's Affiliation with Seton Hall University:

I am a doctoral student in the College of Education and Human Services Executive Ed.D Program at Seton Hall University. I am conducting research on the efficacy of the systemic reform initiative in your school.

2) Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the level of implementation of the Comer School Development Program in this small Abbott school district. This case study will incorporate historical data, individual interviews with central office staff members, and survey data. The information gleaned will provide insight into the elements of systemic reform initiatives, in juxtaposition to this district's progress towards developing a solid foundation for successful whole school reform implementation. In addition, the data will illuminate stakeholders' perceptions of the level of implementation, and indicators for quality and effectiveness of the district's systemic reform initiative via the Comer School Development Program. In the final analysis, this study will illuminate the degree of implementation, resource capacity to implement the Court's mandates, barriers to implementation of the whole school reform, and the role of central office leadership in facilitating the reform efforts at the school level.

3) Procedures

Anonymous surveys will be distributed to the SMIT members of the selected school at one of their regularly scheduled team meetings. The survey instrument will use a 5 point Likert scale with 1 = No Progress and 5 = Goals Achieved, and solicit responses to open-ended questions. The survey will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. After each person has completed a survey, the researcher will collect the surveys and answer any follow up questions from the respondents.

4) Statement of Voluntary Participation

Please be advised that your participation in this study is voluntary. You may opt not to participate or discontinue participation at any time during this process without penalty.

5) Anonymity

In order to maintain the integrity of anonymity, please do not place your name or any identifying marks on the survey other than your school.

6) Storage

The original data material will be stored in a secured locked cabinet in the researcher's office at Orange High School.

College of Education and Human Services  
Executive Ed.D. Program  
Tel. 973.275.2728  
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685



RECEIVED BY: [REDACTED] DATE: [REDACTED] TIME: [REDACTED]

Page 2

7) Confidentiality

The information collected as a result of this study is confidential, and will only be used for this research project. No other individual besides the researcher will have access to the original data material.

8) Anticipated Risks

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study.

9) Associated Benefits

There are no foreseeable benefits to the respondents who consent to participate in this study.

10) Compensation and Referral Mechanism

At no time will the participants be exposed to an emotional, mental or physical health risk or research-related injury. Therefore compensation, medical treatment, or referral mechanisms to reduce undue stress or personal harm are not warranted.

11) Alternative Procedures

The non-medical nature of this study does not warrant identifying alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be advantageous to the participants.

12) Contact Information

The information collected will be analyzed and disseminated to initiate discussion on a best practices approach to implementing and sustaining systemic reform. If you have any questions regarding this research project, or the research subject's rights, please call my office at the Orange Alternative High School, 400 Lincoln Avenue, rm 243, Orange, NJ 07050. The telephone number of the office is 973-677-4099 ext. 575.

13) The Use of Video or Audio-tape

There will be no video or audio equipment in use during the survey process.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the Office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is 973-275-2974.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Antoine L. Gayles  
Executive Ed.D Candidate

Subject or Authorized Representative

Date

<b>APPROVED</b>
JUL 07 2003
IRB SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

**Appendix B – Letter of Request to Use Survey Tool – George Washington University**



13 Tall Oaks Lane  
Budd Lake, NJ 07828  
973-691-0887 (H)  
973-691-1799 (Fax)

.....  
*Antoine L. Gayles*

March 13, 2003

Marilyn Muirhead  
The George Washington University  
Center for Equity and Excellence in Education  
Region III Comprehensive Center  
1730 North Lynn Street, Suite 401  
Arlington, VA 22209

Dear Ms. Muirhead:

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University examining systemic reform in an urban district. The Orange Township Public Schools is currently implementing the Comer School Development Program as its whole school reform model. As a part of the district's implementation process, I am conducting research on the efficacy of the systemic reform initiative in Orange. I am interested in gathering information on the level of implementation of the Comer Process, perceived barriers to implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of the established initiatives for a third cohort Abbott school. My research design includes collecting survey data from the School Management and Improvement Teams of the high school, middle school, and three randomly selected elementary schools. The survey tool used in the Study of Whole School Reform Implementation in New Jersey Abbott Districts is designed to get the opinions of staff members about the reform process in Orange.

I am requesting your permission to collect data on whole school reform implementation in Orange using the survey tool developed by the Region III Comprehensive Center. Your timely response would be most appreciated.

Respectfully submitted

*Antoine L. Gayles*  
Executive Ed.D Program  
Seton Hall University

.....

**Appendix C – George Washington University Consent Reply Letter**

RE: Request for Permission to Use Survey Tool



Close

From: Marilyn Muirhead (SMTP:mmuirhead@ceec.gwu.edu)  
To: Antoine Gayles  
Cc:  
Subject: RE: Request for Permission to Use Survey Tool  
Sent: 3/24/2003 10:01 PM

Importance: Normal

Hi Antoine,

You are more than welcome to use the survey instrument in your study.

God luck in your work! I would love to see the results.

All the best,

Marilyn Muirhead

-----Original Message-----

From: Antoine Gayles (mailto:GaylesAn@mail.orange.k12.nj.us)  
Sent: Thu 3/13/2003 4:05 PM  
To: Marilyn Muirhead  
Cc:  
Subject: Request for Permission to Use Survey Tool

13 Tall Oaks Lane  
 Budd Lake, NJ 07828  
 973-691-0887 (H)  
 973-691-1799 (Fax)

.....  
*Antoine L. Gayles*

March 13, 2003

Dr. Elaine Walker  
 Seton Hall University  
 College of Education and Human Services  
 Office of Graduate Studies  
 Kozlowski Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
 South Orange, NJ 07079

Dear Dr. Walker:

I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University examining systemic reform in an urban district. The Orange Township Public Schools is currently implementing the Corner School Development Program as its whole school reform model. As a part of the district's implementation process, I am conducting research on the efficacy of the systemic reform initiative in Orange. I am interested in gathering information on the level of implementation of the Corner Process, perceived barriers to implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of the established initiatives for a third cohort Abbott school. My research design includes collecting survey data from the School Management and Improvement Teams of the high school, middle school, and three randomly selected elementary schools. The school management team survey tool used to study whole school reform implementation in New Jersey Abbott Districts is designed to get the opinions of staff members about the reform process in Orange.

I am requesting your permission to collect data on whole school reform implementation in Orange using the survey tool developed by Seton Hall University. Your timely response would be most appreciated.

Respectfully submitted

*Antoine L. Gayles*  
 Executive Ed.D Program  
 Seton Hall University  
 .....

**Appendix E – Seton Hall University Consent Reply Letter**

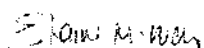
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY  
1 8 5 6

April 10, 2003

Dear Mr. Gayles:

You have permission to use the school-based management questionnaire that I developed for your dissertation.

Sincerely,



Elaine M. Walker

College of Education and Human Services  
Department of Education Leadership, Management and Policy  
(Formerly Department of Educational Administration and Supervision)  
Tel. 973.761.9397  
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685

**Appendix F - Letter of Solicitation to the Interim Superintendent**

13 Tall Oaks Lane  
 Budd Lake, NJ 07828  
 973-691-9887 (phone)  
 973-691-1799 (fax)

.....  
*Antoine L. Gayles*

Constance L. Frazier  
 Interim Superintendent of Schools  
 Orange Public Schools  
 451 Lincoln Avenue  
 Orange, NJ 07050

March 7, 2003

Dear Ms. Frazier:

I am a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University studying systemic reform in urban districts. The Orange Township Public Schools is currently implementing the Comer School Development Program as its whole school reform model. As a whole school reform model, the Comer Process is designed to improve school climate via reorganizing the current organizational structure for the purpose of increasing students' opportunities for social, emotional and intellectual growth. As a part of your district's implementation process, I am conducting research on the efficacy of the systemic reform initiative in your district. I am interested in gathering information on the level of implementation of the Comer Process, perceived barriers to implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of the established initiatives for third cohort Abbott schools.

My research design includes collecting survey data from the School Management and Improvement Teams of Orange High and Orange Middle Schools, and three randomly selected elementary schools. At the district level, I would like to interview central office cabinet members who are directly involved in whole school reform implementation in the Orange Public School district. The survey is designed to get the opinions of staff members about the reform process itself. It is not a critique of the Comer Process, rather, a tool to gauge how well your schools are implementing systemic reform pursuant to the 1997 Abbott v. Burke ruling.

I am requesting your permission to collect data at these sites throughout the district. The information that is collected will be analyzed and identify best practice strategies for implementing and sustaining systemic reform. Your timely response would be most appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

*Antoine L. Gayles*  
 Antoine L. Gayles

Cc: File

.....

*Approved  
 Constance Frazier  
 3-7-03*



*Appendix G – Interim Superintendent’s Consent Reply Letter*



ORANGE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
451 Lincoln Avenue Orange, New Jersey 07050  
Tel: (973) 677-4005 Fax: (973) 677-2509  
Website: <http://www.orange.k12.nj.us>

Constance L. Frazier  
*Interim Superintendent of Schools*

April 21, 2003

Mr. Antoine L. Gayles  
13 Tall Oaks Lane  
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

Mr. Gayles:

Please be advised that you have my permission to continue collecting data for your doctoral thesis regarding the study of *Systemic Reform Within Urban Districts*.

I hope this information you receive will benefit your studies, as well as your understanding of how to better assist our children. You may count on my continued support.

Sincerely,  
*Constance L. Frazier*

Ms. Constance L. Frazier  
*(Interim) Superintendent of Schools*

CF/ndw

c: Dr. Caufield, Seton Hall University

**Appendix H – Sample Letter of Solicitation to Principal**

400 Lincoln Avenue, Room 243  
 Orange, N.J. 07050  
 973-678-4099 (phone)  
 973-678-1256 (fax)

*Antoine L. Gayles*

Erica Stewart, Principal  
 Lincoln Avenue Elementary School  
 Orange, NJ 07050

June 3, 2003

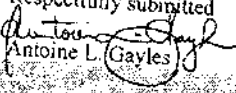
Dear Ms. Stewart:

I am a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University studying systemic reform in urban districts. The Orange Township Public Schools is currently implementing the Comer School Development Program as its whole school reform model. As a whole school reform model, the Comer Process is designed to improve school climate via reorganizing the current organizational structure for the purpose of increasing students' opportunities for social, emotional and intellectual growth. My research focus is on the efficacy of the systemic reform initiative at Lincoln Avenue Elementary School. I am interested in gathering information on the level of implementation of the Comer Process, perceived barriers to implementation, and the perceived effectiveness of the established initiatives for third cohort Abbott schools.

My research design includes collecting survey data from your School Management and Improvement Team members. The survey is designed to get the opinions of staff members about the reform process itself. It is not a critique of the Comer Process, rather, a tool to gauge how well your schools are implementing systemic reform pursuant to the 1997 Abbott v. Burke ruling.

I am requesting your permission to administer the survey tool at your next School Management and Improvement Team meeting. The information that is collected will be analyzed to identify best practice strategies for implementing and sustaining systemic reform.

Please indicate in your response the most convenient time to meet with your School Management and Improvement Team.

Respectfully submitted  
  
 Antoine L. Gayles

cc: File

**Appendix I – Sample Consent Reply from Principal**



**ORANGE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
Lincoln Avenue School  
216 Lincoln Avenue Orange, New Jersey 07050  
Tel: (973) 677-4130 Fax: (973) 677-6669  
Website: <http://www.orange.k12.nj.us>

Erica L. Stewart  
Principal

Helen M. Tinsley  
Assistant Principal

TO: Mr. Antoine Gaudes  
FROM: Erica L. Stewart  
DATE: June 4, 2003  
RE: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH REQUEST

It is with great pleasure that I grant permission for you to perform your research at Lincoln Avenue School. You have access to our faculty or facilities as necessary to conduct your research.

Cc: Constance L. Frazier, Interim Superintendent

*Appendix J – Survey Instrument*

**New Jersey Whole School Reform  
School Staff Survey  
Fall 2003**

**Section 1: Whole School Reform Implementation**

Indicate the amount of progress you feel your school has made in each of the following aspects of whole school reform by circling the answer that is most appropriate.

	No Progress ▼	A Little Progress ▼	Some Progress ▼	Significant Progress ▼	Goals Achieved ▼
<b>A. Planning</b>					
1. My school has conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to select a WSR model.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our school has developed the WSR three-year operational plan based on a comprehensive needs assessment data.	1	2	3	4	5
3. A wide range of stakeholders are engaged in the WSR planning process.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My school conducted an informed search for a reform model that best meets the needs of the students and the school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My school uses data on an on-going basis to evaluate WSR implementation and make adjustments and improvements.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>B. School Management and Improvement Team</b>					
6. Our SMIT is involved in the development of the school-based budget.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Our SMIT provides input towards the development of the school-based budget.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Our SMIT reviews student assessment results to determine program and curriculum needs.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Our SMIT creates work groups that include both SMIT and non-SMIT members.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Our SMIT members work effectively together to accomplish WSR goals.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Our SMIT is constituted in accordance with state regulations.	1	2	3	4	5



	No Progress ▼	A Little Progress ▼	Some Progress ▼	Significant Progress ▼	Goals Achieved ▼
12. Our SMIT makes student achievement a priority.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Our SMIT respects the principal's ideas about how things should be done in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Our SMIT has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Our SMIT communicates well with the larger school community.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Our SMIT deals constructively with differences of opinion.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Critical decisions of the SMIT are made by consensus.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>C. School-Based Budgeting</b>					
18. The school's budget concentrates all resources to support objectives for meeting WSR goals.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The school's budget is adjusted to reflect annual assessments of school needs and goals.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>D. Personnel</b>					
20. School personnel decisions are made to support the goals of the WSR Implementation Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The school has sufficient faculty and staff to fully implement the WSR program.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>E. Training/Professional Development</b>					
22. The SMIT has been trained in their roles & responsibilities as team members.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The SMIT has been trained in teamwork and consensus building.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The SMIT has been trained to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The SMIT has been trained to identify needs for additional programs and services.	1	2	3	4	5

	No Progress ▼	A Little Progress ▼	Some Progress ▼	Significant Progress ▼	Goals Achieved ▼
26. The SMIT has been trained to develop sound and realistic improvement goals and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The SMIT has been trained to align curriculum and instruction to the state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The SMIT has been trained to select personnel for their schools.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The SMIT has been trained to implement their Three Year Operational plan.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Teachers have received sufficient professional development to implement instructional practices aligned to the state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>F. Integration and Alignment of Resources and Functions</b>					
31. Staff roles and responsibilities are coordinated to support the school's WSR efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
34. School structures (e.g. schedules and workgroups) are coordinated to support WSR efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>G. School Environment</b>					
33. The school provides students and teachers with a safe and orderly environment for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Relationships between and among students and staff provide a positive and productive learning and working environment.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>H. Student and Family Services</b>					
35. A team is in place at our school that encourages parent involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
36. A team is in place at our school that trains parents for volunteer roles.	1	2	3	4	5
37. A team is in place at our school that intervenes to resolve student issues.	1	2	3	4	5
38. A team is in place at our school that acts on teacher referrals and recommendations.	1	2	3	4	5

	No Progress ▼	A Little Progress ▼	Some Progress ▼	Significant Progress ▼	Goals Achieved ▼
39. A team is in place at our school that links students to appropriate health and social service agencies.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Programs are in place to identify and refer students in need of alternative educational services.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Programs are in place to provide students with a code of conduct and adequate security.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Programs are in place to provide access to health and social services deemed essential for educational achievements of students.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>I. Family Involvement</b>					
43. Parents/caregivers are partners in decisions related to the school.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Parents/caregivers are welcomed in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
45. The school provides ongoing support to strengthen the home-school relationship to improve student learning.	1	2	3	4	5

Indicate how the central office has supported your efforts to implement WSR by circling the choice that best described your situation.

	No Progress ▼	A Little Progress ▼	Some Progress ▼	Significant Progress ▼	Goals Achieved ▼
46. Central Office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by aligning curriculum and district assessments to state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Central Office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by providing professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Central Office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by supporting the development of a school budget and its implementation.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Central Office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by hiring personnel to support WSR.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Central Office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by providing meaningful and timely performance data for planning and decision making.	1	2	3	4	5

Indicate how the following items correspond with this statement by circling the choice that best describes your situation: "As a result of Abbott funding, my school has..."

	No Progress ▼	A Little Progress ▼	Some Progress ▼	Significant Progress ▼	Goals Achieved ▼
51. Sufficient textbooks, materials, and supplies for all students.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Additional teachers to reduce class size to state mandated rates.	1	2	3	4	5
53. Sufficient computers to meet the state ratio of 1:5.	1	2	3	4	5
54. Sufficient security guards and equipment to insure a safe and orderly environment.	1	2	3	4	5
55. Sufficient training on the CCCS and other pertinent WSR topics.	1	2	3	4	5
56. Additional support for students in need of additional assistance and remedial services (e.g. tutoring, before and after school programs, and summer school).	1	2	3	4	5
57. Health and social services referral and other support services for students.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section II: Model Adoption**

58. How satisfied is your school with its choice of model?

- Very Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

59. Indicate the reasons why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your schools whole school reform model.

60. In your opinion, what has been the most important achievement of your school's WSR efforts to date? Please describe only one factor in the space provided below.

61. In your opinion, what has been the most significant barrier to your school's implementation of WSR to date? Describe only one factor in the space provided below.

62. What is different about your school as a result of WSR? Describe in the space provided below.

**Section III: General Information**

63.  Elementary School  Middle School  High School

64. How was the model chosen?

Solely on the basis of teacher participation with strong teacher support [ ]

Solely on the basis of teacher participation with low teacher support [ ]

Teacher vote with principal input [ ]

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

65. What position or role do you represent on your School Management and Improvement Team (SMIT)?

Please mark an x by the choice that best applies to you.

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Teacher
- Teacher Assistant/Paraprofessional
- Support Staff
- Parent
- Community Representative
- Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

66. How long have you served at the school in your current position? Please mark an x by the choice that best applies to you.

- This is my first year
- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- More than 5 years

67. Prior to your membership on the SMIT, have you had any experience in any of the following activities?

Activity	Capacity/Position	Length of Experience (Months/Years)
a) Aligning curriculum		
b) Conducting needs assessment		
c) Working on designing or reviewing professional development programs		
d) Working on developing technology plans		
e) Involvement in developing school-based reward systems		
f) Involved in school-based hiring decisions		
g) Involved in school-based budgeting decisions		

68. Please indicate how much experience you have in each of the following areas:

Area of SMIT Responsibility	Level of Experience			
	A lot of experience	Some experience	Very little experience	No experience
h) How to align instruction to the core curriculum content standards.				
i) How to review test score data for needs assessment.				
j) How to determine program needs based on the review of test score data.				
k) How to make curricular decisions using test score data.				
l) How to develop a professional development plan that relates to the implementation of whole school reform				
m) How to develop a technology plan.				
n) How to make school-based personnel decisions with respect to hiring.				
o) How to develop a school-based budget.				
p) How to develop a school-based reward system.				

## Appendix K – Verbal Script for Individual Interviews

## Verbal Script for Cabinet Members and School Facilitator Spring 2003

- 1) What is your current position/role within the district?
- 2) How long have you served in this capacity?
- 3) Please describe the process by which you (the district) selected the Comer School Development process?
- 4) What impact does district-wide implementation of the Comer Process have on stakeholders' support of the model?
- 5) What were the district's priorities/goals when establishing a foundation for systemic change? How will you know when you have reached your goal(s)?
- 6) What role does central office play in the change process?
- 7) What changes have been made at central office to support decentralized governance at the school site; support the governance process, budgeting and planning?



- 8) What progress has the district made in hiring staff to support the whole school reform implementation process?
  - a) Technology Coordinators
  - b) Dropout Prevention Officers
  - c) Health and Social Services Coordinators
  - d) Teachers
  - e) Security Guards
  - f) School Facilitator
  
- 9) Please describe the type of professional development opportunities offered to stakeholders implementing the Comer School Development Program.
  
- 10) Please describe the degree of professional development provided by the Comer School Development Program, and who participates.
  
- 11) In your opinion, what has been the most important achievement of your district's whole school reform efforts to date?
  
- 12) In your opinion, what has been the most significant barrier(s) to your district's successful implementation of the Comer School Development Program?
  
- 13) What is different in the schools/district as a result of implementing the Comer School Development Program?
  
- 14) What mechanisms are in place to determine the level of successful implementation of the whole school reform model?

- 15) What mechanisms are in place to determine the effectiveness of implemented initiatives?
- 16) What progress indicators provide evidence of improved student achievement and growth as a result of implementing the Comer Process?

**Appendix L – Frequency Distribution Charts**

My School has conducted a comprehensive needs assessment to select a WSR model?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.6	1.6
A Little Progress	2	2.9	3.1	4.7
Some Progress	14	20.6	21.9	26.6
Significant Progress	23	33.8	35.9	62.5
Goal Achieved	24	35.3	37.5	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100		

Our school has developed the WSR 3 Year Operational Plan based on a comprehensive needs assessment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.6	1.6
Some Progress	16	23.5	25.0	26.6
Significant Progress	21	30.9	32.8	59.4
Goal Achieved	26	38.2	40.6	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		

A wide range of stakeholders are engaged in the WSR planning process?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	5	7.4	8.1	8.1
Some Progress	16	23.5	25.8	33.9
Significant Progress	26	38.2	41.9	75.8
Goal Achieved	15	22.1	24.2	100.0
Sub Total	62	91.2	100.0	
Missing	6	8.8		
Total	68	100.0		

A wide range of stakeholders are engaged in the WSR planning process?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	5	7.4	8.1	8.1
Some Progress	16	23.5	25.8	33.9
Significant Progress	26	38.2	41.9	75.8
Goal Achieved	15	22.1	24.2	100.0
Sub Total	62	91.2	100.0	
Missing	6	8.8		
Total	68	100.0		

My school conducted an informed search for the reform model that best meets the needs of students/school?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	4	5.9	7.1	7.1
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.8	8.9
Some Progress	18	26.5	32.1	41.1
Significant Progress	14	20.6	25.0	66.1
Goal Achieved	19	27.9	33.9	100.0
Sub Total	56	82.4	100.0	
Missing	12	17.6		
Total	68	100.0		



My school uses data on an on going basis to evaluate WSR implementation?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.0	3.0
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.6	10.6
Some Progress	14	20.6	21.2	31.8
Significant Progress	34	50.0	51.5	83.3
Goal Achieved	11	16.2	16.7	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC was involved in the development of the school-based budget?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.5	3.0
Some Progress	10	14.7	15.2	18.2
Significant Progress	21	30.9	31.8	50.0
Goal Achieved	33	48.5	50.0	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC provided input towards the development of the school-based budget?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	2	2.9	3.0	4.5
Some Progress	10	14.7	14.9	19.4
Significant Progress	23	33.8	34.3	53.7
Goal Achieved	31	45.6	46.3	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC reviewed student assessment results to determine program and curriculum needs?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	9	13.2	14.3	14.3
Some Progress	14	20.6	22.2	36.5
Significant Progress	22	32.4	34.9	71.4
Goal Achieved	18	26.5	28.6	100.0
Sub Total	63	92.6	100.0	
Missing	5	7.4		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC created work groups that included both SCL and non-SLC members?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	6	8.8	9.1	9.1
Some Progress	20	29.4	30.3	39.4
Significant Progress	15	22.1	22.7	62.1
Goal Achieved	25	36.8	37.9	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC works effectively together to accomplish WSR goals?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	4	5.9	5.9	5.9
Some Progress	7	10.3	10.3	16.2
Significant Progress	28	41.2	41.2	57.4
Goal Achieved	29	42.6	42.6	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Our SLC is constituted in accordance with state regulations?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Some Progress	9	13.2	13.6	15.2
Significant Progress	20	29.4	30.3	45.5
Goal Achieved	36	52.9	54.5	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC makes student achievement a priority?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Some Progress	15	22.1	22.1	23.5
Significant Progress	27	39.7	39.7	63.2
Goal Achieved	25	36.8	36.8	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	



Our SLC has a clear understanding of its role and responsibilities?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	2	2.9	2.9	2.9
Some Progress	11	16.2	16.2	19.1
Significant Progress	28	41.2	41.2	60.3
Goal Achieved	27	39.7	39.7	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Our SLC communicates well with the larger community?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.6	9.1
Some Progress	24	35.3	36.4	45.5
Significant Progress	22	32.4	33.3	78.8
Goal Achieved	14	20.6	21.2	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Our SLC deals constructively with differences of opinion?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	3	4.4	4.5	4.5
Some Progress	11	16.2	16.7	21.2
Significant Progress	31	45.6	47.0	68.2
Goal Achieved	21	30.9	31.8	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Critical decisions of the SLC are made by consensus?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Some Progress	8	11.8	11.9	13.4
Significant Progress	17	25.0	25.4	38.8
Goal Achieved	41	60.3	61.2	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

The school's budget concentrates all resources to support objectives for meeting WSR goals?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	4	5.9	6.2	6.2
Some Progress	12	17.6	18.5	24.6
Significant Progress	25	36.8	38.5	63.1
Goal Achieved	24	35.3	36.9	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

The school's budget is adjusted to reflect annual assessments of school needs and goals?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	8	11.8	12.1	12.1
Some Progress	9	13.2	13.6	25.8
Significant Progress	28	41.2	42.4	68.2
Goal Achieved	21	30.9	31.8	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

The school has sufficient faculty and staff to implement WSR program?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	8	11.8	12.1	13.6
Some Progress	24	35.3	36.4	50.0
Significant Progress	24	35.3	36.4	86.4
Goal Achieved	9	13.2	13.6	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

School personnel decisions are made to support the goals of the 3 year operational plan?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	4	5.9	6.1	7.6
Some Progress	20	29.4	30.3	37.9
Significant Progress	23	33.8	34.8	72.7
Goal Achieved	18	26.5	27.3	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		



The SLC has been trained in their role and responsibilities as team members?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	6	8.8	8.8	8.8
Some Progress	19	27.9	27.9	36.8
Significant Progress	27	39.7	39.7	76.5
Goal Achieved	16	23.5	23.5	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	

The SLC has been trained in teamwork and consensus building?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.5	7.5
Some Progress	14	20.6	20.9	28.4
Significant Progress	30	44.1	44.8	73.1
Goal Achieved	18	26.5	26.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

The SLC has been trained to identify needs for additional programs and services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	6	8.8	9.1	9.1
Some Progress	19	27.9	28.8	37.9
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.9	78.8
Goal Achieved	14	20.6	21.2	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

The SLC has been trained to align curriculum and instruction to state standards?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	3	4.4	4.6	4.6
A Little Progress	7	10.3	10.8	15.4
Some Progress	29	42.6	44.6	60.0
Significant Progress	20	29.4	30.8	90.8
Goal Achieved	6	8.8	9.2	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		

The SLC has been trained to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	9	13.2	13.4	13.4
Some Progress	18	26.5	26.9	40.3
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.3	80.6
Goal Achieved	13	19.1	19.4	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

The SLC has been trained to develop sound and realistic improvement goals and strategies?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	6	8.8	9.1	9.1
Some Progress	23	33.8	34.8	43.9
Significant Progress	28	41.2	42.4	86.4
Goal Achieved	9	13.2	13.6	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

The SLC has been trained to select personnel for their schools?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	9	13.2	14.5	14.5
A Little Progress	11	16.2	17.7	32.3
Some Progress	19	27.9	30.6	62.9
Significant Progress	18	26.5	29.0	91.9
Goal Achieved	5	7.4	8.1	100.0
Sub Total	62	91.2	100.0	
Missing	6	8.8		
Total	68	100.0		

The SLC has been trained to implement their 3 year operational plan?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	3	4.4	4.6	4.6
A Little Progress	7	10.3	10.8	15.4
Some Progress	15	22.1	23.1	38.5
Significant Progress	30	44.1	46.2	84.6
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	15.4	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		



Teachers have received sufficient professional development to implement instructional strategies aligned to state standards?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.5	9.0
Some Progress	32	47.1	47.8	56.7
Significant Progress	23	33.8	34.3	91.0
Goal Achieved	6	8.8	9.0	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

Staff roles and responsibilities have been coordinated to support the school's WSR efforts?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.5	9.0
Some Progress	25	36.8	37.3	46.3
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.3	86.6
Goal Achieved	9	13.2	13.4	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

School structures (i.e., schedules and team meetings) are coordinated to support WSR efforts?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.5	9.0
Some Progress	25	36.8	37.3	46.3
Significant Progress	24	35.3	35.8	82.1
Goal Achieved	12	17.6	17.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

The school provides students and teachers with a safe and orderly environment for learning?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	6	8.8	8.8	10.3
Some Progress	16	23.5	23.5	33.8
Significant Progress	35	51.5	51.5	85.3
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	14.7	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Relationships between and among students and staff provide a positive, productive learning and working environment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	8	11.8	11.8	11.8
Some Progress	15	22.1	22.1	33.8
Significant Progress	35	51.5	51.5	85.3
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	14.7	100.0
Total	68	100.0	100.0	

A team is in place at our school that encourages parent involvement?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.0	3.0
A Little Progress	7	10.3	10.4	13.4
Some Progress	25	36.8	37.3	50.7
Significant Progress	23	33.8	34.3	85.1
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	14.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

A team is in place at our school that trains parents for volunteer roles?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	8	11.8	12.5	12.5
A Little Progress	18	26.5	28.1	40.6
Some Progress	28	41.2	43.8	84.4
Significant Progress	6	8.8	9.4	93.8
Goal Achieved	4	5.9	6.3	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		

A team is in place at our school that encourages parent involvement?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.0	3.0
A Little Progress	7	10.3	10.4	13.4
Some Progress	25	36.8	37.3	50.7
Significant Progress	23	33.8	34.3	85.1
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	14.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		



A team is in place at our school that intervenes to resolve student issues?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	32	4.4	4.5	4.5
A Little Progress	6	8.8	9.0	13.4
Some Progress	19	27.9	28.4	41.8
Significant Progress	28	41.2	41.8	83.6
Goal Achieved	11	16.2	16.4	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

A team is in place at our school that acts on teacher referrals and recommendations?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.1	3.1
A Little Progress	6	8.8	9.4	12.5
Some Progress	21	30.9	32.8	45.3
Significant Progress	22	32.4	34.4	79.7
Goal Achieved	13	19.1	20.3	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		

A team is in place at our school that links students to appropriate health and social service agencies?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	8	11.8	11.9	13.4
Some Progress	27	39.7	40.3	53.7
Significant Progress	13	19.1	19.4	73.1
Goal Achieved	18	26.5	26.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

Programs are in place to identify and refer students in need of alternative educational services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	6	8.8	9.1	10.6
Some Progress	23	33.8	34.8	45.5
Significant Progress	15	22.1	22.7	68.2
Goal Achieved	21	30.9	31.8	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
System	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

Programs are in place to provide students with a code of conduct and adequate security?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	4	5.9	6.2	6.2
Some Progress	23	33.8	35.4	41.5
Significant Progress	24	35.3	36.9	78.5
Goal Achieved	14	20.6	21.5	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		

Programs are in place to provide access to health and social services deemed essential for educational achievements of students?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
A Little Progress	9	13.2	13.8	15.4
Some Progress	28	41.2	43.1	58.5
Significant Progress	8	11.8	12.3	70.8
Goal Achieved	19	27.9	29.2	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		

Parents and caregivers are partners in decisions related to the school?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	3	4.4	4.6	4.6
A Little Progress	19	27.9	29.2	33.8
Some Progress	23	33.8	35.4	69.2
Significant Progress	17	25.0	26.2	95.4
Goal Achieved	3	4.4	4.6	100.0
Sub Total	65	95.6	100.0	
Missing	3	4.4		
Total	68	100.0		

Parent and caregivers are welcomed in the school?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	4	5.9	6.0	6.0
Some Progress	15	22.1	22.4	28.4
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.3	68.7
Goal Achieved	21	30.9	31.3	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		



The school provides ongoing support to strengthen the home-school relationship to improve learning?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	8	11.8	12.5	12.5
Some Progress	25	36.8	39.1	51.6
Significant Progress	23	33.8	35.9	87.5
Goal Achieved	8	11.8	12.5	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Central office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by aligning curriculum and district assessments to state standards?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	3	4.4	4.9	4.9
A Little Progress	12	17.6	19.7	24.6
Some Progress	20	29.4	32.8	57.4
Significant Progress	17	25.0	27.9	85.2
Goal Achieved	9	13.2	14.8	100.0
Sub Total	61	89.7	100.0	
Missing	7	10.3		
Total	68	100.0		

Central office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by providing professional development?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.3	3.3
A Little Progress	11	16.2	18.0	21.3
Some Progress	24	35.3	39.3	60.7
Significant Progress	17	25.0	27.9	88.5
Goal Achieved	7	10.3	11.5	100.0
Sub Total	61	89.7	100.0	
Missing	7	10.3		
Total	68	100.0		

Central office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by supporting the development and implementation of the school budget?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A Little Progress	7	10.3	11.5	11.5
Some Progress	25	36.8	41.0	52.5
Significant Progress	19	27.9	31.1	83.6
Goal Achieved	10	14.7	16.4	100.0
Sub Total	61	89.7	100.0	
Missing	7	10.3		
Total	68	100.0		

Central office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by hiring appropriate personnel?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.4	3.4
A Little Progress	14	20.6	23.7	27.1
Some Progress	21	30.9	35.6	62.7
Significant Progress	14	20.6	23.7	86.4
Goal Achieved	8	11.8	13.6	100.0
Sub Total	59	86.8	100.0	
Missing	9	13.2		
Total	68	100.0		

Central office has supported our efforts to implement WSR by providing meaningful and timely performance data for planning and decision-making?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	4	5.9	6.9	6.9
A Little Progress	17	25.0	29.3	36.2
Some Progress	18	26.5	31.0	67.2
Significant Progress	14	20.6	24.1	91.4
Goal Achieved	5	7.4	8.6	100.0
Sub Total	58	85.3	100.0	
Missing	10	14.7		
Total	68	100.0		

As a result of Abbott funding, my school has sufficient textbooks, materials and supplies for all students?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.0	3.0
A Little Progress	5	7.4	7.6	10.6
Some Progress	12	17.6	18.2	28.8
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.9	69.7
Goal Achieved	20	29.4	30.3	100.0
Sub Total	66	97.1	100.0	
Missing	2	2.9		
Total	68	100.0		

As a result of state funding, my school has additional teachers to reduce class size to state mandated ratios?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	5	7.4	7.8	7.8
A Little Progress	8	11.8	12.5	20.3
Some Progress	29	42.6	45.3	65.6
Significant Progress	16	23.5	25.0	90.6
Goal Achieved	6	8.8	9.4	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		



As a result of state funding, my school has sufficient computers to meet the state's 1:5 ratio?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	1	1.5	1.6	1.6
A Little Progress	4	5.9	6.5	8.1
Some Progress	20	29.4	32.3	40.3
Significant Progress	26	38.2	41.9	82.3
Goal Achieved	11	16.2	17.7	100.0
Sub Total	62	91.2	100.0	
Missing	6	8.8		
Total	68	100.0		

As a result of state funding, my school has sufficient security guards and equipment to insure a safe and orderly environment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	3	4.4	4.5	4.5
A Little Progress	10	14.7	14.9	19.4
Some Progress	19	27.9	28.4	47.8
Significant Progress	27	39.7	40.3	88.1
Goal Achieved	8	11.8	11.9	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

As a result of state funding, my school has sufficient training in the CCCS and other pertinent WSR topics?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.4	3.4
A Little Progress	12	17.6	20.3	23.7
Some Progress	24	35.3	40.7	64.4
Significant Progress	16	23.5	27.1	91.5
Goal Achieved	5	7.4	8.5	100.0
Sub Total	59	86.8	100.0	
Missing	9	13.2		
Total	68	100.0		

As a result of state funding, my school has additional support for students in need of additional assistance and remedial services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.0	3.0
A Little Progress	8	11.8	11.9	14.9
Some Progress	24	35.3	35.8	50.7
Significant Progress	18	26.5	26.9	77.6
Goal Achieved	15	22.1	22.4	100.0
Sub Total	67	98.5	100.0	
Missing	1	1.5		
Total	68	100.0		

As a result of state funding, my school has health and social services referral and other support services for students?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No Progress	2	2.9	3.3	3.3
A Little Progress	10	14.7	16.7	20.0
Some Progress	21	30.9	35.0	55.0
Significant Progress	13	19.1	21.7	76.7
Goal Achieved	14	20.6	23.3	100.0
Sub Total	60	88.2	100.0	
Missing	8	11.8		
Total	68	100.0		

How satisfied is your school with its choice of model?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very satisfied	26	38.2	40.6	40.6
Somewhat satisfied	32	47.1	50.0	90.6
Dissatisfied	5	7.4	7.8	98.4
Very dissatisfied	1	1.5	1.6	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		

Indicate why you are satisfied or dissatisfied with your school's WSR model.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fosters teamwork and collaboration	15	22.1	48.4	48.4
Addresses the whole child	7	10.3	22.6	71.0
Some progress can be seen	5	7.4	16.1	87.1
Does not address academics	4	5.9	12.9	100.0
Sub Total	31	45.6	100.0	
Missing	37	54.4		
Total	68	100.0		

What role or position do you represent on your SLC?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Principal	5	7.4	7.8	7.8
Asst. Principal	2	2.9	3.1	10.9
Teacher	32	47.1	50.0	60.9
Paraprofessional	5	7.4	7.8	68.8
Support Staff	8	11.8	12.5	81.3
Parent	3	4.4	4.7	85.9
Community Representative	2	2.9	3.1	89.1
Other	7	10.3	10.9	100.0
Sub Total	64	94.1	100.0	
Missing	4	5.9		
Total	68	100.0		



How long have you served at the school in your current capacity?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 <sup>st</sup> year in current position	2	2.9	3.3	3.3
1-3 years in current position	22	32.4	36.7	40.0
4-5 years in current position	9	13.2	15.0	55.0
More than 5 years in current position	27	39.7	45.0	100.0
Sub Total	60	88.2	100.0	
Missing	8	11.8		
Total	68	100.0		

What has been the most important achievement of your school's WSR efforts to date?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Social service support for students	3	4.4	11.1	11.1
Sharing information with the community	10	14.7	37.0	48.1
Improved student achievement	6	8.8	22.2	70.4
Collaboration	6	8.8	22.2	92.6
Addresses the whole students	2	2.9	7.4	100.0
Sub Total	27	39.7	100.0	
Missing	41	60.3		
Total	68	100.0		

What is different about your school as a result of WSR?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Teamwork and collaboration	19	27.9	82.6	82.6
Focus on student achievement	4	5.9	17.4	100.0
Sub Total	23	33.8	100.0	
Missing	45	66.2		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience aligning instruction to the CCCS?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	17	25.0	30.9	30.9
Some experience	26	38.2	47.3	78.2
Very little experience	4	5.9	7.3	85.5
No experience	8	11.8	14.5	100.0
Sub Total	55	80.9	100.0	
Missing	13	19.1		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience analyzing test data for needs assessment?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	18	26.5	32.1	32.1
Some experience	28	41.2	50.0	82.1
Very little experience	5	7.4	8.9	91.1
No experience	5	7.4	8.9	100.0
Sub Total	56	82.4	100.0	
Missing	12	17.6		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience determining program needs based on test score data?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	11	16.2	20.4	20.4
Some experience	31	45.6	57.4	77.8
Very little experience	8	11.8	14.8	92.6
No experience	4	5.9	7.4	100.0
Sub Total	54	79.4	100.0	
Missing	14	20.6		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience in making curriculum decisions based on the review of test score data?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	11	16.2	20.4	20.4
Some experience	29	42.6	53.7	74.1
Very little experience	7	10.3	13.0	87.0
No experience	7	10.3	13.0	100.0
Sub Total	54	79.4	100.0	
Missing	14	20.6		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a professional development plan that relates to the implementation of WSR?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	8	11.8	14.8	14.8
Some experience	28	41.2	51.9	66.7
Very little experience	14	20.6	25.9	92.6
No experience	4	5.9	7.4	100.0
Sub Total	54	79.4	100.0	
Missing	14	20.6		
Total	68	100.0		



Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a technology plan?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	8	11.8	15.1	15.1
Some experience	15	22.1	28.3	43.4
Very little experience	17	25.0	32.1	75.5
No experience	13	19.1	24.5	100.0
Sub Total	53	77.9	100.0	
Missing	15	22.1		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience making school-based personnel decisions with respect to hiring?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	11	16.2	21.6	21.6
Some experience	17	25.0	33.3	54.9
Very little experience	12	17.6	23.5	78.4
No experience	11	16.2	21.6	100.0
Sub Total	51	75.0	100.0	
Missing	17	25.0		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a school-based budget?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	15	22.1	27.8	27.8
Some experience	14	20.6	25.9	53.7
Very little experience	13	19.1	24.1	77.8
No experience	12	17.6	22.2	100.0
Sub Total	54	79.4	100.0	
Missing	14	20.6		
Total	68	100.0		

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a school-based reward system?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A lot of experience	13	19.1	23.6	23.6
Some experience	20	29.4	36.4	60.0
Very little experience	13	19.1	23.6	83.6
No experience	9	13.2	16.4	100.0
Sub Total	55	80.9	100.0	
Missing	13	19.1		
Total	68	100.0		

What has been the most significant barrier to our school's implementation of WSR to date?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Knowledge of WSR	5	7.4	18.5	18.5
Budget	5	7.4	18.5	37.0
Parent Involvement	4	5.9	14.8	51.9
Direction from DOE	2	2.9	7.4	59.3
Too many committees	2	2.9	7.4	66.7
Support from central office	2	2.9	7.4	74.1
Lack of space	4	5.9	14.8	88.9
No barriers	3	4.4	11.1	100.0
Sub Total	55	80.9	100.0	
Missing	13	19.1		
Total	68	100.0		

**Appendix M - Prior Membership \* School Level Crosstabulation**

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience aligning instruction to the CCCS? \* School Level Crosstabulation?

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	10	1	6	17
Some experience	13	7	5	25
Very little experience		1	3	4
No experience	4	3		7
Total	27	12	14	53

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience analysing test score data for needs assessment \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	8	4	6	18
Some experience	16	5	6	27
Very little experience	1	2	2	5
No experience	3	1		4
Total	28	12	14	54



Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience determining program needs based on test score data \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	30	4	4	11
Some experience	19	5	6	30
Very little experience	3	2	3	8
No experience	2	1		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>52</b>

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience making curriculum decisions based on the review of test score data \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	5	2	4	11
Some experience	17	5	6	28
Very little experience	2	2	3	7
No experience	3	3		6
Total	27	12	13	52

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a professional development plan that relates to the implementation of WSR \* School Level

Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	60		2	8
Some experience	12	7	8	27
Very little experience	7	3	3	13
No experience	3	1		4
Total	28	11	13	52

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a technology plan \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	5	1	2	8
Some experience	7	3	5	15
Very little experience	8	4	4	16
No experience	7	4	2	13
Total	27	12	13	52

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience making school-based personnel decisions with respect to hiring \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	8		3	11
Some experience	8	3	4	15
Very little experience	4	4	4	12
No experience	7	3	1	11
Total	27	10	12	49

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a school-based budget \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	8	2	5	15
Some experience	8	3	3	14
Very little experience	6	3	3	12
No experience	6	4	2	12
Total	28	12	13	53

Prior to your membership on the SLC have you had any experience developing a school-based reward system \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
A lot of experience	5	3	5	13
Some experience	12	2	5	19
Very little experience	7	3	2	12
No experience	4	4	1	9
Total	28	12	13	53

**Appendix N - Professional Development \*School Level Crosstabulation**



Teachers have received sufficient professional development to implement instructional strategies aligned to state standards \* School Level Crosstabulation

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
No progress		1		1
A little progress	1		4	5
Some progress	12	9	9	30
Significant progress	17	2	4	23
Total	35	13	17	65

**Appendix O - Criteria for Designating Abbott Districts**

The New Jersey State Department of Education has established criteria for determining which district qualifies as an Abbott district. (Taken from the Education Law Center's webpage-[www.educationlawcenter.org](http://www.educationlawcenter.org))

- 1) Classification by the New Jersey State Department of Education as an urban district.
- 2) Classified as a low socio-economic community and a low district factor group.
- 3) Quantifiable evidence of substantial failure to achieve a thorough and efficient education as measured by standardized tests scores.
- 4) Large percentage of disadvantaged students who need an education "beyond the norm."
- 5) Existence of an "excessive" tax for municipal services in the locality where the district is located.
- 6) A large percentage of students of color

**Appendix P – List of Approved Whole School Reform Models**

Accelerated Schools  
America's Choice  
Coalition of Essential Schools  
Communities for Learning/Adaptive Learning Environments Model  
Co-NECT  
Microsociety  
Modern Red Schoolhouse  
Paideia  
Comer School Development Program  
Success for All (Roots and Wings)  
Talent Development  
Ventures in Education  
Alternative Program Design

**Appendix Q – Nine Elements of Whole School Reform**

## Matching Whole School Reform, the Ecology of Excellence and Comer

Abbott/WSR	Ecology of Excellence	Comer SDP
1. Improved Student Performance	Core Curriculum & Life Experience	SPMT, CSP, Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee, Balanced Curriculum, Developmental Pathways, Relationships,
	Cross-content work readiness	Developmental Pathways, SSST, Social Climate Subcommittee
	Assessment/Evaluation	Assessment & Modification
2. Research-Based Program	Instructed Learning	SDP, Balanced Curriculum, Essentials of Literacy, SIQ-A, Climate Surveys, PDI, NJ Assessment, Action Research, study groups
3. School Based Leadership & Decision-making	Organization and Management - SEEP	SPMT, Sub-committees, Parent Team, CSP
4. Integration and Alignment of School Functions	Organization and Management - SEEP	CSP, SPMT, Sub-committees, Constituency Groups, School-wide Calendar, staff development
5. Educational Technology	Student/Staff/Resource Development	Technology Subcommittee, Computer Assisted Instruction, PT, CSP, staff/parent development
6. Professional Development	Staff/Resource Development	Staff/ Parent Professional Development Subcommittee, CSP, PT
7. Safe School Environment Conducive to Learning	Student Resource Development - health & Social Resources, Code of Conduct, Facilities	Social Climate Subcommittee, SSST, Budget Subcommittee, Developmental Pathways, Relationships, Parent Team
8. Student & Family Services/ Coordination of Resources	Collaborative Community/ Business Partnerships	SSST, PT, Developmental Pathways
9. Accountability System	Assessment/ Evaluation	Assessment/ Modification, SPMT, Public Relations & Budget Subcommittees

Appendix R – Memo dated May 9, 2000 from State Department of Education



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State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PO BOX 500  
TRENTON, NJ 08645-0500

*Felle*

CHRISTINE TOOD WHITMAN  
Governor

DAVID C. HESPE  
Commissioner

May 9, 2000

Superintendent  
School District  
369 Main Street  
New Jersey 07050-2704

Dear Dr. [Signature]

As discussed in our telephone conversation last week, enclosed is the final report of the Review Team, summarizing its evaluation of *Ecology of Excellence* as a Whole School Alternative Program Design. The team was impressed by the constructive preparation and positive attitude of the district and school staff, many of whom expressed their eagerness to begin the level of systemic school reform required to ensure that all the district's students become successful learners.

After careful consideration, the team concluded that *Ecology of Excellence*, while promising in concept, does not currently meet the requirements of New Jersey law and code pertaining to whole school alternative program design. Within the framework of an approved whole school reform model, however, schools may choose to incorporate brain-based strategies in collaboration with a model developer.

The following steps toward implementing a WSR model should be pursued during May and June 2000:

1. Representative staff from each school should visit WSR model demonstration sites, prior to choosing an approved WSR model. Contact Eunice Cousselo, PIRC North, for information on these demonstration sites and visits that can be made during the months of May and June 2000.
2. School staff should participate in professional development and training on the Urban Education Reform Code provided by PIRC North during the months of May and June 2000. Participation in this training should be ongoing and sustained, and should be coordinated with Eunice Cousselo, PIRC North.

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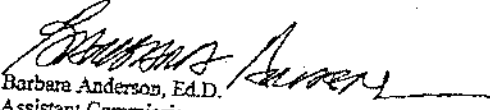
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- 3. School staff should attend department-approved training sessions.
- 4. If Elementary School and Middle School choose to continue as Comer schools, each should work with the developer to assess their current level of implementation and to develop a WSR implementation plan. These schools may work with the Comer staff developer to incorporate brain-based strategies.

I look forward to working with you and the staff of School District to begin the process of systemic school reform.

Sincerely,

  
 Barbara Anderson, Ed.D.  
 Assistant Commissioner  
 Division of Student Services

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Attachment

- c: David Hespe
- Madeleine Mansier
- Tom McMahon
- John Sherry
- Jacqueline McConnell
- Scott Henry
- Orlando Castro
- Eunice Cousoelo
- Anthony Marino