

HIGH SCHOOL REFORM:
A CASE STUDY USING THE *BREAKING RANKS II* FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Julie D. Spencer: High School Reform: A Case Study Using the *Breaking Ranks II* Framework
(Under the direction of Dr. Fenwick English)

The purpose of this case study is to unpack the complex process of high school reform in six different high schools in the Seaboro School District. Seaboro School District, like others across the United States, is facing the many challenges that are surfacing in high schools.

In the study, the researcher examined how a school district implemented the thirty-one strategic recommendations for high school reform identified in *Breaking Ranks II* (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004). Specifically, the case study was aimed at discerning if: (1) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by stakeholders was related to the depth and breadth of the implementation of the recommendation; (2) those recommendations perceived as having a higher degree of importance resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan; and (3) those recommendations perceived as having a higher degree of implementation resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years.

The data revealed that the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations were perceived as being important by the stakeholders at the beginning of the reform effort, as well as after three years. Additionally, the Seaboro School District increased the level of

implementation from 2004 to 2007. However, there was not a relationship between the degree of importance of the recommendations and the longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007). Moreover, there was a slight relationship between the degree of current practice of the recommendations in 2004 and the longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007). Those recommendations that had a lesser degree of implementation in 2004 saw the greatest gains after three years while the recommendations that had a greater degree of implementation in 2004 saw smaller gains in practice after three years.

Chapter Five presents implications and recommendations for school districts that are interested in doing a reform effort similar to the one that Seaboro initiated.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The success or failure of the American high school will determine the quality of our democracy, the strength of our economy, the security of our defense, and the promise of our ideals. The time has come for America to stand behind its belief in public education. (Boyer, 1983, p. 297)

As we enter the 21st Century, education officials are quickly realizing that there is a need to better align schools to the needs of society. Secondary education is under scrutiny as politicians, business leaders, and society as a whole are finding gaps between high school and the workplace or post secondary education (Ashby, 2005; Bush, 2005; California Department of Education, 2007; Houston; 2006; Lichtenstein, 2003;). Statistics suggest that increasingly more occupations today require post secondary education than previously. Because only 69.6% of students graduated from high school in 2003 and many more students entered post secondary education than completed it, it is evident that high schools have great challenges to face (Barton, 2005; Barton 2006; Diplomas Count, 2006; Harvey & Housman, 2004; Thornburgh, 2006).

Statement of Problem

The topic of high school reform has been gathering increasing national and state attention. Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), there has been a great debate about how to improve America's public education system. More recently, the debate has shifted to the American high school. The call for high school reform seems to be loud and clear and the reasons are not hard to discern: our global economy has drastically changed workplace needs; data suggest that the structure of high schools does not meet the needs of all students; statistics reflect that many students are not successful in high school; additional data indicate that most students do not complete their post-secondary education plans following high school (Diplomas Count, 2006; Smith, 2006; Tewel, 1995).

With high school reform being a "hot topic," school officials all over the United States are searching for answers. School district leaders are looking at other districts that were in the initial wave of reform to see what strategies were implemented and to analyze the results of the reform efforts. It is timely to study the reform process, including educator perceptions about the importance and the implementation of recommended best practices. Additionally, studying how stakeholders in a school perceive the importance and the implementation of well-researched best practices will provide direction for future studies.

The findings of this study may be beneficial for school district leaders who are in the process of reforming their high schools. There is relatively little recent research on the topic of high school reform, especially in the era of post-*No Child Left Behind*. With schools being required to improve student achievement to meet the current accountability demands, educational leaders are looking for models of reform. Additionally, school district leaders

are looking to prevent the mistakes and problems of other reform efforts. With little research to assist in the decision-making, studies, such as this one, may provide guidance in how districts should proceed in reforming its high schools. Moreover, this study provides insight into the types of changes that were perceived as more important by stakeholders, the types of changes that were implemented to a higher degree, and the relationship between the recommendations and the longitudinal implementation of the reform effort. As educators try to reform schools, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of change, including the potential problems. This study provides a glimpse of the intricacies of school reform as revealed through one school district's reform initiative that began in 2004 and continued through 2007.

In looking at the call for reform, a major indicator of the need for reform is that many of America's students are not finishing high school. Based on information from the Education Research Center, the report included an estimate that 1.23 million students, or about thirty percent of the class of 2007, would fail to graduate from high school. Moreover, the report noted a higher percentage of Native American, Hispanic, and African-American students among the groups with the lowest graduation rates. Specifically, one in ten of the fifty major urban school districts graduate less than half of their students. For example, the Detroit School System graduates less than 25 percent of its students annually (Diplomas Count, 2006).

The high dropout rate contributes to personal and societal financial issues. In the *Education Week* special edition, Diplomas Count (2006), two national databases were used to examine the distribution of jobs nationally and within each state, and the relationship between education and pay level. The data indicate that those employees with high school

diplomas or more have greater salaries than the individuals who did not complete high school.

A recent study from the Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina (PEFNC) and the Friedman Foundation revealed that the state of North Carolina loses approximately \$169 million each year from high school dropouts, ultimately costing \$8.5 billion from just one cohort of students over a period of 50 years. The financial loss is reflected in the dropouts' lower earning potential, reduced tax revenue, and heavier reliance on government assistance programs such as Medicaid. Ultimately, the loss includes additional expenses, such as the cost of incarceration and crime (Gottlob, 2007).

With growing pressure from the business community, politicians, students, and parents, school district leaders are being forced to seek solutions to reform their high schools. The need to improve high schools has been highlighted in numerous publications including: *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Breaking Ranks* (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1996), and *Breaking Ranks II* (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004), as well as key educational policies, such as: *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965, and the Reauthorization of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 2001 (also known as *No Child Left Behind*).

When reviewing documents related to high school reform, statistics that support the need for reform are not hard to find. The National High School Alliance compiled a report of meeting agenda and conference content that emerged in 2003. The report notes that there is no shortage of information and data to define the areas that need improvement and the apparent “crisis” that has emerged. However, as reflected in the report, there is a shortage of

possible solutions and strategies that provide the answer to questions of *how* high school reform should happen (Harvey & Housman, 2004).

As a result of legislative changes and the heightened emphasis on student achievement and success for all, the high school reform movement was officially launched in 2005. With a focus on high school reform in President George Bush's 2005 State of the Union Address; a Governor's Summit on High School Reform in 2005; the National Conference of State Legislatures in 2006; and various initiatives throughout the country, including North Carolina's, that focused on high school redesign; state department of education leaders and school district leaders have been given a challenge by governmental leaders to find solutions and formulate plans for school reform in high schools (*Subject to Changes*, 2006).

More recently, business leaders have made statements about the need to better prepare students for the workplace. Organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have increasingly become more involved in setting the agenda for educational reform. For example, in a speech to the National Governor's Association, Microsoft CEO and foundation head Bill Gates (2005) stated, "America's high schools are obsolete... Training the workforce of tomorrow with the high schools of today is like trying to teach kids about today's computers on a 50-year old mainframe. It's the wrong tool for the times." With a database that suggests that applicants are being rejected for employment because of inadequate skills in such areas as literacy, math, oral communication, problem-solving, teamwork, vocational training, businesses are becoming more involved in voicing their opinions about workplace readiness (Barton, 2006).

There is a growing need to face the many challenges facing high schools. Low graduation rates, increased dropout rates, high teacher turnover, and ineffective curriculum and instruction are prevalent in school districts throughout the United States. With increased pressure from the business community and politicians, it is important for educators, policy makers, the business community, and parents to better understand school reform efforts that are in place in order to better institute change and improvement within high schools. With much money, time, and energy being poured into high school reform efforts throughout the United States, an examination of these efforts is beneficial in helping to reveal the thinking of educators in the field about the importance of potential solutions and the selection of strategies to reform high schools. Additionally, it is helpful to know if schools implementing best practices are finding positive results.

With expectations of *No Child Left Behind* set to be met by 2013, school district leaders are quickly running out of time and are becoming more aggressive in their efforts to reform. According to the legislation, schools across the United States are in jeopardy of being taken over by state departments and teams of outside educators. From a moral perspective, our high school youth are depending on the experts to have a high school program that prepares them for the future. From an economic perspective, our country cannot continue to absorb the loss incurred by dropouts. Moreover, time is of the essence as our global economy has made it even more necessary to adequately prepare our young people for the workplace.

Purpose/Significance of the Study

This case study used the conceptual framework *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004), which was developed from research and compiled by educational experts. *Breaking Ranks II*

(NASSP, 2004) was selected as the conceptual framework because it is the structure in which the school district that is the subject of the study employed as a framework to identify needs and to outline changes. The leaders of the district included in this study saw this document as one that provided accurate, well-researched recommendations that could be used as an outline to develop a plan of action. Thus, for the purpose of this study, *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) provided the most appropriate lens through which to examine the reform effort.

Breaking Ranks II (NASSP, 2004) provides thirty-one well-researched, specific recommendations for high school reform. The purpose of this study was (1) to provide a description of the relationship between stakeholder perceptions about the importance of and implementation of high school best practices, revealed in the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations (see Appendix A), and (2) to examine the relationship between the both the importance and the implementation of the recommendations as it relates to the longitudinal implementation of the recommendations.

This study used data collected from a survey given to a categorical representative group of stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, counselors) prior to the implementation of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations, which were compared to the results of the same survey administered to the group three years later. Consequently, this study provided a description of how the stakeholders reported their perceptions of the importance of the various recommendations and their perceptions of the level of implementation of the recommendations.

As a result of this case study, the researcher unpacked the complex process of high school reform in one urban school system in North Carolina, hereafter referred to as Seaboro

School District. Facing the same challenges as other school districts, Seaboro School District leaders undertook a comprehensive reform initiative beginning in 2003 to improve its high schools.

The data yielded in this study were not the result of either a random selection of a site or of the treatments within the site. Rather the selection of the site represented a convenience sample and the researcher was limited to the information gathered by district officials. The data included stakeholder perceptions of recommended and researched strategies, as well as the stakeholder perceptions of the level of implementation of the reform effort. This descriptive data could be beneficial for other school districts as they seek improvement in their high schools.

Assumptions of the Study

1. The participants in the reform plan effort (teachers, counselors, and administrators) had a generally clear set of expectations with specific goals in mind.
2. The participants in the reform plan effort (teachers, counselors, and administrators) targeted specific outcomes that could be linked to data and subsequently analyzed.
3. The reform plan would cause both intended and unintended consequences.
4. Teachers, counselors, and administrators were serious in the process and truthful when completing the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) survey both in 2004 and 2007.
5. By having teachers, counselors, and administrators participate in the survey, a more holistic examination of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) survey data was provided.

6. The *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations are well-researched and accepted as best practices providing strategies for fundamental changes.
7. The “successful longitudinal implementation” of the reform plan is described by the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) self-assessment survey data. The successful longitudinal implementation was defined by calculating the difference between the perception of current practice of a recommendation in 2004 and the perception of the same recommendation in 2007. This allowed the researcher to determine the increase or decrease in the perception of implementation of the recommendation over time.

Limitations of the Study

1. *Characteristics of the school district and schools:* The case study was limited to six high schools in one school district. The school district is one diverse urban community. One of the six high schools is a magnet school. Two of the six high schools were deemed “low performing” by the state department due to lagging test scores. Additional information regarding personnel changes, as well as additional information about the schools and school district can be found in Chapters 3 and 4.
2. *Absence of student achievement data:* This study did not perform thorough examination of student achievement scores. With changes made in test methods and proficiency levels at the state and federal levels, the researcher determined not to include state standardized test scores as the primary method of examining the reform plan. In order to examine the overall impact of the reform effort, the researcher reviewed student achievement data such as: SAT scores, Advanced Placement scores, Performance Composites, and the percentage of AYP goals met. Due to

- changes in the data collection, these scores were not included in drawing any conclusions from the study.
3. *High School Reform Plan:* There was a district-wide plan for reform in the high schools in the school district. Additionally, each of the high schools had a school-wide plan that included a diverse range of measures and interventions, causing a degree of variability among high schools.
 4. *Stakeholder perceptions:* All aspects of this study are dependent on teacher, counselor, and administrator perceptions as revealed in a self assessment that was administered in 2004 and then again in 2007. The survey that was given to members of the High School Reform Committee relied on the perceptions of what is important and perceptions of the degree to which the reform initiative had been implemented.
 5. *Researcher relationship to Seaboro School District:* The researcher has worked in the school district over the past seven years in a middle school and a high school. However, the researcher has not played a role in the planning or implementation of the system's High School Reform Plan. While school district officials were supportive of the researcher's efforts, the researcher was under no pressure to report the findings in any particular manner, nor were officials particularly sensitive about the outcome.
 6. *Conceptual framework:* The case study used the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) framework to examine this reform initiative. The conclusions drawn from the study were limited to the characteristics of effective high schools identified through *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004). *Breaking Ranks II* was selected because the school district used this as a framework for its reform.

7. *Reform Plan inconsistencies:* The district-wide reform initiative was not conceptually or operationally precise, with much flexibility in what each school could do within the effort. Thus, any report of the results must consider the variability of the implementation and the lack of uniformity among schools. However, the case study method allowed the researcher to probe the complexity of the effort over an extended time period.
8. *Determining “successful longitudinal implementation”:* The successful longitudinal implementation of the study was determined by calculating the difference between current practice in 2004 and current practice in 2007, as described by the High School Reform Committee members. The committee members described their perceptions on a self-assessment survey that included ranking the current level implementation of the 31 recommendations on a 1.0-5.0 scale. During the planning phase of the reform initiative, the Seabro School District selected for examination additional data that typically describe effective schools. The areas of the data included were: attendance, suspension, retention, teacher turnover, dropout, graduation, cohort graduation, SAT scores, Performance Composites, percentage of AYP goals met, and Advanced Placement test data.
9. *The case study method:* Case study methodology was employed to allow an in depth probe of one particular reform effort in one school district. Having only one case (a single school district with six high schools) may limit how the data will be used and how others may view the data. One must consider the characteristics of the school district and the context of the operations of the district to fully understand the results and how they can link the findings to other school districts.

Research Design

The research of this study focused on the Seaboro School District, an urban school district in North Carolina that implemented a multi-pronged school reform plan for high schools from 2004-2007. The case study format was used to examine the reform effort in this school district.

This case study employed descriptive statistics to examine a survey that was given to the Seaboro High School Reform Committee before the reform initiative and repeated after three years of reform efforts. The survey focused on the perceptions by teachers, counselors, and administrators of the importance of various change recommendations, as well as the level of implementation of various change recommendations.

The research method chosen enabled the researcher to examine the depth of the reform. Yin (2003) states that a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). He then presents a second part of the definition by stating that case study inquiry “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (pp. 13-14). He suggests that case studies are especially important in uncovering contextual conditions.

The case study allowed for the context of the district, including policy issues, personnel issues, and specific school situations to be included in the research in order to

reveal the intricacies of the reform process. Schools and school districts are very complex and have many variables that can influence processes and outcomes. The use of the case study method allowed for the variables to be exposed and to be considered when enumerating the results.

Research Questions

In the study, the researcher examined how a school district had implemented the strategic recommendations identified in *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) from the perceptual perspective of participants involved in the change effort and determined whether the perceived importance or implementation of the recommendations was connected to a more successful longitudinal implementation of the reform effort.

Specifically, the study was aimed at discerning if:

- 1) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) was related to a more intense implementation;
- 2) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan; and
- 3) a recommendation perceived as having a higher degree of implementation by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan.

In order to examine all three research questions, the survey data was used. Although the initial plan was to compare the data to typical descriptors of effective high schools, the researcher determined that a more effective way to portray the data was to use the perceptions of the implementation of the recommendations over time. This decision is discussed further in Chapter 5. The researcher examined the following data in order to better understand the longitudinal implementation: attendance rates, suspension rates, retention rates, teacher turnover rates, dropout rates, graduation rates, cohort graduation rates, SAT scores, Performance Composites, percentage of AYP goals met, and Advanced Placement test data. These data points were selected because they were included in the district's planning process as specific areas to address with the reform effort. Most of the areas were calculated in similar methods from 2003-2007. The data were calculated in the same way for each school during this time period. Additionally, there was little variability in the way the district and/or state education departments reported the data. Thus, this study allowed a detailed view of the results of the implementation of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations. There are many different ways one could report the "successful longitudinal implementation" of the effort. For the purpose of this study, the difference between how the current practice was perceived in 2004 and again in 2007 provided the description of the longitudinal implementation that is referred to in Research Questions 2 and 3.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Goals: According to the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, “test scores must be disaggregated by major racial and ethnic groups, English language proficiency status, students with disabilities as compared to all other students, economically disadvantaged students as compared to students not economically disadvantaged, migrant status, and gender” (English, 2005, 408). Schools and school districts must report their AYP results annually to the state and federal governments both by school and by subgroup. During the time period of the study, the standard increased for a school to reach the goal. However, the same standard applied to all schools. Thus, the percentages tended to decrease following the standard increase. However, all schools decreased at the same time.

Breaking Ranks II Recommendations: The National Association of Secondary School Principals published a handbook of research-based best practices, examples of reformed high schools, steps for school improvement, challenges, and possible resources for high schools and school districts to use as a tool to reform high schools. The framework offers 31 core recommendations for schools to implement to achieve high school renewal (NASSP, 2004).

Carnegie Unit: According to the Carnegie Unit, each high school course counted for one equal unit of credit. The Carnegie Unit is attained after a student completes a designated length of time in the course. For example, a school district may require a student to earn twenty-eight units of credit in order to graduate from high school.

Cohort Graduation Rate: The cohort graduation rate reflects the percentage of ninth graders who had graduated from high school four years later. The cohort graduation rate is used in

reporting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Schools must show that they are improving cohort graduation rates through *No Child Left Behind*.

Committee of Ten: In 1892, the National Educational Association appointed the Committee of Ten to evaluate the field of secondary education and to make recommendations for public high schools. Charles W. Elliot, president of Harvard University, was appointed as chairman. The membership was composed of various representatives from colleges, universities, and schools. The findings of this committee are still very evident in high schools across the United States today (Villaverde, 2003).

Dropout Rate: The dropout rate is the percentage of dropout events recorded in grades 9-12 in a year's time. Hence, a student may dropout multiple times in one year and it will be counted multiple times.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): NCLB is the most recent reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Authorization Act* of 1965. The reauthorized law added strict new accountability changes and mandated that every child be taught by a "highly qualified" teacher. The law emphasized new standards for teachers and new consequences for Title I schools that do not meet student achievement standards for two or more consecutive years. The law's major goal is for every school to be one hundred percent proficient in reading/language arts and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year, as measured by state mandated tests.

Performance Composites: The Performance Composite is configured on an annual basis for all high schools in the state in which Seaboro is located. The figure includes data regarding select test scores, graduation data, attendance data, and the number of students in a college track. There were modifications made to various tests for certain subjects. However, all schools had the same standard and all Performance Composites were reported in the same way for each year.

School Improvement Team/Site-Based Decision Making Committee: This committee is comprised of various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, and students within a school who are brought together to plan for the improvement of the school. North Carolina General Statute 115C-105.27 requires that schools develop a school improvement team that is made up of the principal, teachers, support staff, and parents of children enrolled in the school. Annually, the group is required to develop a plan for school improvement (School-Based Management, 2004).

Seaboro School District High School Reform Committee: Each of the six high schools in Seaboro School District formed a committee of seven representatives. The representatives included the principal, an assistant principal, a counselor, and four teachers. The committees later added a parent representative to the group. The principals selected the committee members. The principals were encouraged to develop a diverse committee with various perspectives, including experience, race, and “buy in.” The school committees convened with the Superintendent, Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the Executive Director of High School

Curriculum and Instruction, and the Executive Director of Middle School Curriculum and Instruction. (Although the titles of the participants included changed throughout the reform effort, there were a limited number of changes in the school district administration during this time period. Additional information on personnel changes is in Chapter 3 and 4.)

Seaboro School District High School Reform Initiative/Plan: In 2003, leaders of the Seaboro School District initiated a dialogue about creating a high school reform team. From 2004-2007, each school had a designated High School Reform Team/Committee who joined the High School Reform Team/Committees from the other schools to form a school-district Committee, and they were charged with the development and implementation of a High School Reform Initiative/Plan for the school district. The plan included strategies that were implemented throughout the district, as well as strategies developed for each school (See Appendix C).

Stakeholders: For the Seaboro School District High School Reform effort, the stakeholders included: students; teachers, both in the high school, as well as the other grade levels; school-level administrators; school district administrators; elected officials, including School Board members; and community members.

Successful longitudinal implementation: For the purpose of this study, the successful longitudinal implementation of the recommendations is defined as the calculation of the difference in perception of current practice in 2004 and the perception of the current practice in 2007. Thus, the researcher can include how the importance of the current practice may be

related to the overall increase or decrease in the implementation of recommendations. Additionally, in preparing for the high school reform initiative in the Seaboro School District, the committee and staff reviewed the following data to establish goals and to describe the overall successful longitudinal implementation of the reform effort with data, such as: attendance, graduation, End-of-Course Test Results, ABCs Status over last four years (Performance Composites), teacher turnover data, SAT scores, suspension rate, dropout rate, *No Child Left Behind* outcomes, promotion and retention data, level of preparedness of rising ninth graders (8th grade EOG results), the NC Report Card (which includes teacher preparation and teacher turnover data) and the University of North Carolina Freshman Performance Report. All of the data were used to determine strategies for reform (Seaboro School District, 2005, pp. 5-6). For the purpose of this study, the data could not be portrayed in a way that would address the research questions for this study.

Teacher Turnover Rate: Teacher turnover rate is usually computed annually. The teacher turnover rate includes the percentage of teachers who leave a school or school district during or after a school year. Teacher turnover rates are reported to the state department of education annually.

UNC admission requirements: For the class of 1990 and beyond, the following courses are required for admission into the 16 Institutions of the University of North Carolina, in addition to an institution's own specific requirements: four units of English; three units of mathematics, including Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry; three units of science, including

a biological, physical, and laboratory science; and two courses of social studies, including US history. It is also recommended that the student have two units in one foreign language.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To further understand the complexities of high school reform, including the Seaboro Public Schools High School Reform Initiative, there must be an understanding of the history of high schools, school reform, and even more specifically, high school reform, and the Seaboro Public Schools High School Reform Plan. In addition, information on *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004), the conceptual framework chosen for this study, has been included in this section.

History of High Schools

The foregoing changes in society, in the character of the secondary-school population, and in educational theory, together with many other considerations, call for extensive modifications of secondary education. (NEA, 1918, p.9)

With the passing of legislation mandating compulsory education in 1635 in Boston and the opening of Harvard College in 1636, there was a new emphasis on secondary

schools, including debate surrounding the areas of purpose, curriculum, and resources (Villaverde, 2003).

Prior to the first public high schools, secondary schools varied greatly. The first type of secondary school was the Latin Grammar School, with the first one being established in Boston in 1635. Shortly after the creation of grammar schools, the academy then became the school that students attended – offering a stronger focus on training the mind and developing good character. Early secondary schools were supplemented by local taxes and generally required parents to pay additional tuition on an as-needed basis, thus creating the demand for public secondary schools (Villaverde, 2003).

The first public high school in the United States was founded in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1821. However, the typical American public high school was created during the 1880s and 1890s (Schaller, 2000). The earliest public high schools mirrored the previously created privately financed college preparatory schools.

Following much debate about the purpose of school, the Report of the Committee of Ten that was presented in 1893 provided a series of standards for secondary schools. Within the report, the group distinguished four different courses of study:

- Classical – a college preparatory sequence;
- Latin-Scientific – a less rigorous curriculum;
- Modern Language – a focus on language; and
- Life Curriculum – a focus on well-roundedness for all subjects.

It was after the *Report of the Committee of Ten's* recommendations were implemented that America's public high schools drastically increased the number of students who were finishing high school. The number of graduates increased from 16,000 in 1870 to

32,000 in 1883, 65,000 in 1894, and 129,000 in 1908. The numbers continued to increase in the early 1900s, and by the 1990s, the country was producing an average of 2.5 million graduates annually. Thus, it is suggested that this report is what focused our country on graduating students from high school (Schaller, 2000).

The secondary school curriculum was shaped by the *Report of the Committee of Ten* (NEA, 1893) for the first part of the twentieth century with a focus on college preparation. Two decades after the *Report of the Committee of Ten* was written, the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (NEA, 1918) provided further direction to the American high school. The following objectives of education were established with this report: health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home-membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character. It was in this document that the comprehensive high school was recognized as the standard type of secondary school. Many of the traits of today's high schools evolved from this document, including vocational education, health education, guidance services, a Principal's Council, civic education, and the split of secondary education into what is now known as middle and high school (NEA, 1918).

Following the Great Depression and World War II, the labor market helped reshape secondary schools. As fewer skill-related jobs became available, schools focused more on life education and the general curriculum. The Civil Rights movement and the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s provided even more controversy when developing curriculum and standards for schools (Villaverde, 2003).

The debate continued with the publication of such documents as *The American High School Today* (Conant, 1959), *Horace's Compromise* (Sizer, 1984), and *The Failed Promise of the American High School, 1890-1995* (Angus & Mirel, 1999). In spite of this ongoing

dialogue, the comprehensive American high school is little changed from the early standards in place for many years.

School Reform

Schools do change; but they seem to change only when the gap between schools and society is extreme and at the same time the demand for formal education is growing. (Sizer, 1964, p. 17)

There are so many influences on the educational system that one could not possibly give a simple answer as to how or why school reform happens. From documents to legislation to historical events, there are multiple explanations for what drives the decision to reform schools, as well as the actual process of school reform. What can firmly be said is that from the days of Horace Mann to *No Child Left Behind*, there has always been pressure to improve and reform America's schools. Historically, much of the debate about school reform revolves around the question, "What are the goals of public education?" Some would explain that school reform was simply a cycle of complaints and solutions (Friedman, 2004).

In examining the topic of school reform, one may look at various eras of school reform and how they have shaped the successes and failures of our schools today. With the Lancasterian Reform Plan in the early 1800s, the focus was on the provision of education to the masses through a monitorial system (Lancaster, 1973). With large classes and students as monitors, more students could be educated. In the mid-1800s, Horace Mann's efforts began the Age-graded Plan which helped shape our current public education system. This reform effort provided the framework in which we teach children in classrooms and in schools based

on their age. In the early 1900s, the Gary Plan provided a work (industrial)-study-play plan that allowed students to rotate through the three areas of their schooling. In 1956, J. Lloyd Trump, in conjunction with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, helped to provide a framework of proposals for schools. This framework included many of the same principles and recommendations that are surfacing in other documents, such as *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004). This plan provided a focus on the need for schools to be more student-centered with the principal as the “instructional leader.” The Trump Plan included requirements for student learning, flexible scheduling, additional teacher planning, additional classified staff, improved community relations, and an evaluation system to assess student learning. It was with the Trump Plan that the school day schedule was changed based on the needs of individual students.

In 1968, James Comer developed the Comer School Development Plan which would require schools to be more child-centered and data-driven to address the needs of individual students. There was a strong focus on the relationship between the home and the school, requiring a collaborative atmosphere in which to identify and provide for student needs.

With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in the 1980s, TheodoreSizer began examining and documenting the need for changes in high school education. With his work with the Coalition of Essential Schools, he would provide a framework of principles that would challenge the ideas of secondary schools. The framework addressed issues such as organizational structure, essential skills and areas of knowledge, personalization, the requirements of a diploma, collaboration with parents, and teacher caseloads (Tharp, 2007). In the post-*No Child Left Behind* era, or the accountability era, schools and school districts throughout the United States are looking for answers and creating their own reform plans that

focus on student achievement, graduation, and school-to-work. With documents such as *Breaking Ranks I and II*, schools and school districts are currently examining possible solutions and implementing changes to address the requirements set forth by this legislation.

With controversy as to whether our educational system has ever truly reformed, in 2003, the Koret Task Force, a Hoover Institution education committee, identified factors causing the lack of impact of contemporary educational reform. The factors identified as barriers for school reform included: resistance from special interest groups that reside within the K-12 education system; colleges of education's independence and resistance in the training of teachers; a large silent majority who feel that schools are effective for their children; reform efforts focused on increasing resources and services that have not proven to increase educational performance; the fact that the availability of higher quality teachers does not always translate into higher quality classroom effectiveness; and higher standards without adequate resources and proper training (Koret Task Force, 2003).

Shields and Knapp (1997) completed a national study and identified six dimensions of successful school reform models. According to the results of the study on school reform, more effective reform models include the following: a realistic scope; a focus on curriculum and instruction; appropriate time frames with increased planning time; a combination of top-down and bottom-up authority allowing for the necessary funding and support, as well as the buy-in and ideas from primary stakeholders; collaboration in a meaningful way; and rich and viable professional development opportunities (as cited in Noblit & Patterson, 2001).

Joseph Murphy and Amanda Datnow (2003) identified common principles about reform and leadership in a study of Comprehensive School Reforms (CSR) that present various types of reform designs, such as well-known national reform models including New

American Schools designs, Modern Red SchoolHouse, Accelerated Schools, Success for All, Coalition of Essential Schools, and the Comer School Development Program. With a thorough review of the models considered effective by many educators, the authors and editors identified implications and themes that can be drawn about leadership within reform efforts. This publication identifies leadership as one of the most important parts of school reform. From teacher leadership to principal leadership to school district leadership, this work identifies numerous works that produce evidence of the importance of leadership on school reform, school improvement, overall school effectiveness, school climate, effective urban education, professional development, and the many different intricacies of schools (Murphy & Datnow, 2003).

In examining school district reform, Togneri and Anderson (as cited in Supovitz, 2006) found a set of school improvement strategies that were similar among five high-poverty districts. These districts shared these seven traits in their efforts to improve student achievement: an acknowledgement of poor performance and willingness to change, a vision focused on student learning and instructional improvement, system wide approach to curriculum and instruction, data driven decision making, changes in professional development, redefined leadership roles, and commitment to reform sustainability.

For many theorists, leadership is the core of school reform and of the successful functioning of schools (Fullan 1993; 2001). Prominent theories of leadership include transformation leadership, total quality management, servant leadership, situational leadership, and instructional leadership. Additionally, theorists such as Warren Bennis, Peter Block, Marcus Buckingham and David Clifton, Richard Elmore, Michael Fullan, Ronald

Heifetz and Marty Linsky, and James Spillane have all contributed greatly to the work of school reform and school leadership.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) completed a meta analysis of 69 studies using quantitative analysis to examine the correlation between the leadership behavior of the principal and the academic achievement of students. Overall, the study suggests that principals can have a major effect on student achievement. This work provides an outline of responsibilities of effective school leaders that can be quantitatively supported through studies.

In creating reform within schools, educational leaders must be strategic in their efforts. Schlecty outlines three types of change for schools: procedural, technological, and structural and cultural (systemic) change. Procedural change refers to altering the methods of change often in regards to sequencing specific events. Technological change consists of changing the means by which a job is done. With rapid advances in technology, this type of change is not unusual for schools as more and more resources are available to them. The last type of change, structural and cultural (systemic) change, is perhaps best described as renaming the purpose, in which both the structure of the organization and the culture are altered. According to Schlecty, schools are regularly faced with procedural and technological changes. However, systemic change can be more difficult as it brings more debate about the purpose, beliefs, and values of an organization (Schlecty, 1997).

As the demands on schools continue to rise and the needs of schools become more complex, school leaders are required to think more holistically and in ways that are intentionally focused on the desired outcomes.

High School Reform

America's high schools are obsolete. By obsolete, I don't just mean that our high schools are broken, flawed, and under-funded – though a case could be made for every one of those points. By obsolete, I mean that our high schools – even when they're working exactly as designed – cannot teach our kids what they need to know today. Training the workforce of tomorrow with the high schools of today is like trying to teach kids about today's computers on a 50-year old mainframe. It's the wrong tool for the times.

(Gates, 2005)

In thinking about high school reform, one must first realize that public high schools have remained very similar to the first ones built in the late 1800s. After surviving multiple reform efforts, including the focus on math and science with Sputnik in 1957 and the recommendations listed in the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and the *Carnegie Report* (1983), high schools have managed to remain much as they were. After the *Carnegie Report* in 1983, a series of goals to make America's public high schools more effective were outlined and communicated to schools and school districts. The following goals were outlined as a part of this reform effort:

- Shared purpose by students, teachers, administrators, and parents including a focus on mastery of language (written and oral English), a core of common learning, preparation for work and further education, and community and civic service;

- A core of common learning including: literature, history, mathematics and science, foreign language, the arts, civics, non-Western studies, technology, the meaning of work, and the importance of health;
- A focus on helping students transition from school to work or to further their education by offering a common curriculum with a variety of electives with guidance services and career advisement being instrumental in this area;
- A new Carnegie Unit that requires the completion of a service requirement;
- Improved working conditions and schooling for teachers;
- Rich teacher instruction to facilitate student learning, including using a variety of teaching styles, high standards, increased primary source materials, and the use of appropriate materials;
- A focus on increasing technology use to learn about computers, with computers, and from computers;
- A focus on flexibility within the school, including the schedule, the location, the organization (smaller units), and the offerings for students with special needs (gifted and remedial);
- The principal as the leader with top authority and as the key educator;
- The need for connections with first through eighth grade schools, as well as with colleges and businesses;
- A focus on the need for increased support from parents, community members, and governmental officials (Boyer, 1983).

The Carnegie Report on Education was instrumental in shaping the American high school as many of the focus areas remain intact in our schools today.

It was only after school violence and a growing need for improved achievement surfaced in data that change in high schools erupted in the late 1990s and in the early years of the 21st century when the call for reform increased with both the politicians and the business community calling for reform (Daniels, Zemelman, & Bizar, 2001). Reports from the National Association of Secondary Principals, such as *Breaking Ranks: A Changing Institution* (NASSP, 1996) and *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) continued to highlight the problems associated with America's high schools and to provide recommendations for improvement.

With the approval of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation in 2001, the federal government once again provided mandated guidelines for both elementary and secondary schools. The following components were included in the act: greater accountability for student performance, focus on research-based programs and practices, increased fiscal flexibility to states and school districts, and parent empowerment. The legislation included positive reinforcement for desired results and negative consequences for schools and school districts that did not achieve the desired results.

The conversations and focus on high school reform have drastically increased since 2003 as governors, state legislatures, the business community, non-profit foundations, and most significantly, school systems across the United States began to have summits, conferences, publications, and many discussions about how to reform one of the longest standing institutions, America's public high school (Harvey & Housman, 2004).

In looking at high school reform efforts, there are several components that frequently surface as school leaders look for strategies to improve the results. Through the work of the National High School Alliance (Harvey & Housman, 2004), there were seven areas which were continually debated in dialogue among educators, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders as areas needing change in order to improve high schools: (1) commitment to K-16, (2) college preparation for all, (3) teacher competence, (4) literacy and language acquisition, (5) decreasing the dropout rate and increasing college readiness, (6) scale and size, and (7) the need to revisit the standards. Additionally, the report noted that it was evident that the work of high school reform must not be addressed only in the context of whole school reform, but rather needed direct attention.

Breaking Ranks II

There are many themes throughout this work, but if one theme could be extracted that is overarching and paramount, it is a message that the high school of the 21st century must be much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor. (NASSP, 1996, p. vi)

The conceptual framework that will be used in this study is *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (NASSP, 2004). *Breaking Ranks II* includes the ideas and work of many theorists, practitioners, and researchers. The work of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), TheodoreSizer (1984), and Ernest Boyer (1983) is embedded in the suggestions and recommendations outlined in this publication. Moreover,

the recommendations from *A Nation at Risk* by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1983), *Prisoners of Time* by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994), and *Turning Points* by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) are also woven into the framework.

Breaking Ranks II (NASSP, 2004) provides 31 specific recommendations for improving high schools. Recommendations may be clustered into one of three categories:

- Collaborative Leadership and Professional Learning Communities;
- Personalization; and
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

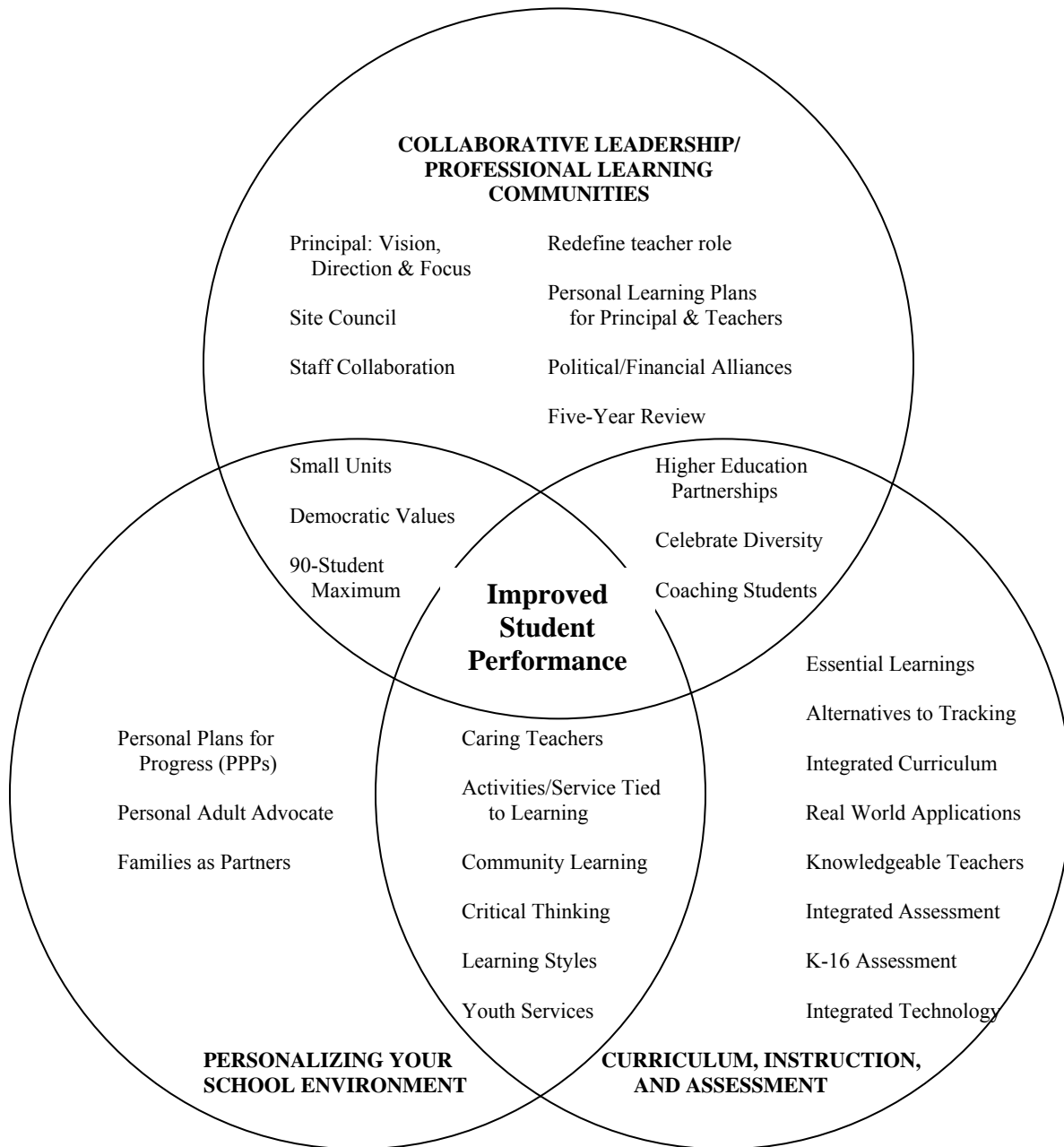
Figure 1 provides a visual of how the 31 recommendations relate to one another. These researched, core recommendations comprise the framework of *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) which are described in this chapter. The recommendations range from developing business/financial partnerships to creating personalized education plans for all students.

According to the authors, there are seven cornerstone strategies provided to allow for the interdependence of changes within schools. The seven cornerstone strategies to improve student performance include:

- Establish the essential knowledge a student is required to master in order to graduate, and adjust the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal.
- Increase the quantity and improve the quality of interactions among students, teachers, and other school personnel by reducing the number of students for which any adult or group of adults is responsible.

- Implement a comprehensive advisory program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to plan and assess his or her academic and social progress with a faculty member.
- Ensure that teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and assessments to accommodate individual learning styles.
- Implement schedules flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming and lesson planning.
- Institute structural leadership changes that allow for meaningful involvement in decision making by students, teachers, family members, and the community and that support effective communication with these groups.
- Align the school wide comprehensive, ongoing professional development program and the individual Personal Learning Plans of staff members with the content knowledge and instructional strategies required to prepare students for graduation. (NASSP, 2004, p.6)

Figure 1. Connecting *Breaking Ranks II* Recommendations in High School Renewal



From *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 16.

The overarching goal of *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) is to provide a framework to help high schools improve learning and achievement results for all students. The framework also provides a model for the process of school improvement (see Appendix B), including establishing an improvement team, including various stakeholders in the process, completing self-assessments, and then implementing the recommended strategies for improvement, as well as continually evaluating the results with current data.

The framework, strategies, and recommendations are supported by research and proven theory. When implemented, the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) framework is designed to improve performance for each student. With accolades from educational experts such as Michael Fullan, TheodoreSizer, and James Comer, this framework is predicted to be, as Tom Sergiovanni claims "...the most important work on improving the high school this decade" (p. 220).

With the initial work and publication of *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* in 1996, school districts and schools throughout the United States resumed the discussion of reforming America's high schools. The information presented in both editions of *Breaking Ranks* was uniquely created by a team of educators, mostly practitioners. Both publications include extensive bibliographies to provide the resources that outline the research involved in the selection of the recommendations. With the support of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the principles and recommendations outlined in *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) were created by individuals who were fully aware of the research challenging the effectiveness of America's high schools.

Various publications and studies have documented the research that precedes the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations. NASSP (2006) published an article concerning the research supporting *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* which provided the foundation of *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004). The article by NASSP (the same publisher as *Breaking Ranks I & II*) states that there were “two documents that were particularly useful in the creation of this document because they synthesized research around themes similar to those of *Breaking Ranks*” (2006, p.1). The first document, edited by Robert Hendricks of the US Department of Education, concerned the research authenticating the Blue Ribbon Schools. The descriptors of these award-winning schools are parallel to the recommendations within *Breaking Ranks*, thus, making the information relevant and beneficial to the development of the framework (as cited in NASSP, 2006). The second document, Cawelti’s work (1999), was used in the development of the recommendations, as this handbook of research provided additional relevant findings on improving student achievement.

Although not created as a “research document,” the recommendations evolved from the work of known practitioners and researchers. The emphasis on personalization, school and class size, instruction and assessment are closely aligned with the work of the Coalition of Essential Schools and Theodore Sizer’s writing on the study of high schools, including *Horace’s Compromise* (1984). The focus on interdisciplinary curriculum is drawn from Ernest Boyer’s (1983) work, *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*. The overall need for reform and the specific areas that have been addressed in *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) have been extracted from documents such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Prisoners of Time* (National

Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994), and *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council, 1989). Additionally, the Education Alliance at Brown University conducts ongoing research about the core recommendations of *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004), as well as provides assistance to high schools that are implementing the core recommendations.

For the purpose of this document, a summary of supportive research for the three overarching areas that organize the thirty-one recommendations has been included. Research by the individuals noted within the text of *Breaking Ranks* is included, as well as other relevant sources.

Collaborative Leadership and Professional Learning Communities

Recommendations in the area of collaborative leadership and professional learning communities include the following:

1. The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning.
2. Each high school will establish a site council and accord other meaningful roles in decision making to students, parents, and members of the staff in order to promote student learning and an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
3. A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school's learning goals.
4. Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role.
5. Every school will be a learning community for the entire community. As such, the school will promote the use of Personal Learning Plans for each educator and provide the resources to ensure that the principal, teachers, and other staff members can address their own learning and professional needs as they relate to improved student learning.

6. The school community will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and will offer substantive ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.
7. High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.
8. High schools will develop political and financial relationships with individuals, organizations, and businesses to support and supplement educational programs and policies.
9. At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a public description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations by state, regional, and other accrediting groups.

(National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 17-18)

All of the recommendations in the area of collaborative leadership and professional learning communities revolve around professional development, collaboration, partnerships, and redefining the roles of principal and teacher. Schools must be organized to provide for a collaborative environment and one that is a professional learning community. Several of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations suggest that an environment that includes collaboration and continual career development is one that promotes improved student performance. Teacher networks provide ongoing dialogue about the role of the teacher, best practices, and personal development.

Research verifies that when focusing on school improvement, building a strong learning community within the school result in more sustainable change (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Elmore, 1996; Lieberman, 1995; Little et al, 1987). Studies, such as the School

Restructuring Study, related to school reform have revealed a significant relationship between learning communities and improved student learning (Lieberman & Miller, 1992; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

As noted in the work of McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) and Newmann and Wehlage (1995), teachers in learning communities report open dialogue with other teachers, varied instructional methods that promote active learning, collegial relationships, more balanced relationships with sharing between novice and master teachers, and a technical culture that enhances student learning.

Personalization and the School Environment

Recommendations in the area of personalization and improving the school environment include:

10. High schools will create small units in which anonymity is banished.
11. Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.
12. Each student will have a Personal Plan for Progress that will be reviewed often to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and to allow students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning in an effort to meet high standards.
13. Every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience.
14. Teachers will convey a sense of caring to their students so that their students feel that their teachers share a stake in their learning.
15. High schools will develop flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow better use of time in order to meet the individual needs of students to ensure academic success.
16. The high school will engage students' families as partners in the students'

education.

17. The high school community, which cannot be value neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society.
18. High schools, in conjunction with agencies in the community, will help coordinate the delivery of physical and mental health and social services for youth.

(National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 17-18)

The recommendations in this area include items related to the teaching caseload, student advocates, family partnerships, small units, democratic values, student personal plans, caring teachers, and community agency partnerships which are all helpful in attaining a more personalized school environment. Sergiovanni (1994) claims that the need for community is essential and universal asserting that “a sense of belonging, of continuity, of being connected to others and to ideas and values that make our lives meaningful and significant— needs are shared by all of us. Their loss, for whatever reason requires us to search for substitutes which are not always functional” (p. xii).

In discussions about the personalization of the high school, inevitably size becomes an important topic to be addressed. The *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations include the creation of small units in which anonymity is banished, as well as the recommendation that teachers have no more than 90 students. Much of the research regarding personalization centers on school size. Studies suggest that when the size of a high school is within the range of 600-900, students have higher academic achievement, especially minority and low-income students (Gladden, 2000; Lee and Smith, 1997; Reywid, 1996).

In reference to recommendations regarding personalization, high schools are initiating various small learning communities, such as career academies, ninth grade academies, freshman seminar classes, teams, and consistent time with adult advocates within the schools. Although there is a limited amount of data, many of these small learning communities have seen improvements in the personalization aspect of high school. Quint (2006) provides data from studies that suggest that these types of interventions increased the students' feelings of support from their teachers.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Recommendations in the area of curriculum, instruction, and assessment include the following:

19. Each high school will identify a set of essential learnings--above all, in literature and language, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts--in which students must demonstrate achievement in order to graduate.
20. Each high school will present alternatives to tracking and to ability grouping.
21. The high school will reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the extent possible and emphasize depth over breadth of coverage.
22. The content of the curriculum, where practical, should connect to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future.
23. The high school will promote service programs and student activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.
24. The academic program will extend beyond the high school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building.
25. Teachers will design high-quality work and teach in ways that engage students, cause them to persist, and when the work is successfully completed, result in their satisfaction and their acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking and

problem-solving skills, and other abilities valued by society.

26. Teachers will know and be able to use a variety of strategies and settings that identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students.
27. Each high school teacher will have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area.
28. Teachers will be adept at acting as coaches and facilitators to promote more active involvement of students in their own learning.
29. Teachers will integrate assessment into instruction so that assessment is accomplished using a variety of methods and does not merely measure students, but becomes part of the learning process.
30. Recognizing that education is a continuum, high schools will reach out to elementary- and middle-level schools as well as institutions of higher education to better serve the articulation of student learning and to ensure that each stage of the continuum understands what will be required of students at the succeeding stage.
31. Schools will develop a strategic plan to make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize and improve the learning process.

(National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 17-18)

This area includes the provision of essential learnings; heterogeneous classes; technology; integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum; relevant applications; service programs and student activities; and instruction that provides opportunities for community learning, critical thinking, and varied learning styles. The impact that this set of recommendations has on student learning is well documented in research.

Authentic instruction, common curriculum, teachers who take responsibility for student learning, and the pressure on students to pursue academic excellence are four areas that were established in a study that examined which categories of restructuring practices

affected student achievement (Lee and Smith, 1995). An additional study, The School Restructuring Study, completed in 1995 (Newmann, Marks, and Gamoran, 1996), provided data on the positive effects of authentic instruction on high-quality student performance. In a compilation of studies involving performance assessments in the Coalition of Essential Schools, Darling-Hammond, Ancess, and Falk (1995) found common themes, including the impact of the assessments on teacher practice, student performance, and school organization.

According to *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004), all three of these major areas – Collaborative Leadership and Professional Learning Communities; Personalization of the School Environment; and Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment – contribute to the success of students in America’s high schools. Years of research in the field of education provide the research necessary to deem *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) an effective framework that will provide high schools specific direction in school improvement. Although the framework was generated by practitioners, one can see how the recommendations are aligned and supported by research that has been conducted throughout the years.

Seaboro High School Reform Plan

After analyzing data and investigating research-based practices, the committee will create a district plan for high school reform. Each school committee will also develop an action plan with specific goals. (Seaboro High School Reform Plan, 2005, p. 4)

During the 2003-2004 school year, the superintendent of the Seaboro School District began leading discussions about high school performance and high school reform. In the school district, dropout numbers were high, too few students were graduating, standardized test scores were flat, and suspension rates were high. The school leaders of the Seaboro School District declared the need for reform and began a high school reform initiative. In 2004, the district eagerly linked into a regional organization funded by five major corporations with a focus on high school reform in a five county region.

The administrators and high school principals convened a team of seven stakeholders from each of six high schools. The team, the High School Reform Committee, met twice or more a month for the next three plus years to identify best practices and to establish and implement a plan for high school reform in the Seaboro School District.

The process for the reform plan included using a district administrator skilled in Facilitative Leadership, a focus on outcomes, establishing ground rules, communicating meeting agendas and minutes to all stakeholders and the public, and a continual focus on the process. Beginning in April 2004, the plan followed three general phases: data collection and analysis, determining best practices, and designing strategies for the district to be implemented in the 2005-2006 school year and beyond. Meetings in subsequent years included discussing the implementation, analyzing data, and studying best practices throughout the country.

The data collection process included analyzing the following data: attendance, End-of-Course Test Results, ABCs Status over the last four years, SAT results, suspensions, dropouts, No Child Left Behind outcomes, promotion and retention data, level of preparedness of rising ninth graders, NC Report Cards including teacher preparation and

teacher turnover data, University of North Carolina Freshman Performance Report, and other sets of data generated and distributed by the district office. The group spent much time looking for trends and areas that need improvement.

When the district began determining best practices to consider for implementation in the school district, the committee members adopted *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (NASSP, 2004) as the primary means of diagnosing problems and planning. The group completed many learning activities focusing on the recommendations and strategies provided in the book. The group completed a self-assessment survey to identify the importance of each recommendation, as well as the level of current practice of each of the thirty-one recommendations. Additionally, the group participated in various other areas of information gathering through the 2004-2005 school year. The sessions including hosting speakers that focused on the following areas: the need for high school reform, scheduling, the regional view of high school reform, block schedule information, grading practices, Robert Marzano's *What Works in Schools and Classroom Instruction that Works*, school personalization framework, SAT Prep, curriculum alignment, national secondary school reform, and *American's Choice* high school reform model.

The school teams began establishing individual school plans in January 2005. The district began developing specific focus areas and strategies during the spring semester of 2005. The school reform plan strategies were designed to be implemented during the 2005-2006 school year and beyond.

For the district, the measurable goals of the initiative were:

- By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by the federal *No Child Left Behind* Adequate Yearly Progress standard).

- By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
- By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.
- In addition, individual schools set additional goals in their individual school plans. (Seaboro School District, 2005, p. 8)

The five focus areas of the district-wide reform plan are to:

- Increase the academic rigor of high school courses and provide expanded support for students so that they are successful in meeting the higher standards;
- Implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults;
- Align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide more personalized education;
- Involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform; and
- Recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers; provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

(Seaboro School District, 2005, p. 8)

The Seaboro School District High School Reform Plan provided a detailed plan of action for each of the five broad focus areas. The strategies include changes in policy,

technology, and culture in order to reform the Seaboro high schools. The reform plan included a series of strategies for the district to implement and then additional strategies established by the individual schools. Some of the action steps were to be implemented in 2005, while others were scheduled for 2006. Moreover, the reform committee continued to meet through the 2006-2007 school year to continue the process of reforming the Seaboro high schools. The plan is included in Appendix C of this research proposal.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research for this study employed a case study approach to examine a multi-pronged high school reform initiative in one urban school district in North Carolina, Seaboro School District. The research included data from five traditional high schools and one magnet high school. It focused on the perception of the importance and the implementation of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations as a part of a high school reform plan that was initiated by the Seaboro School District in late 2003.

This chapter describes the research methods and procedures used in this research and the rationale for using the selected methods. The intent of this study was to:

- Assess how the High School Reform Committee (teachers, counselors, and administrators) have perceived the importance of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations for their school district in 2004 and then again for their school and school district in 2007;
- Assess how the High School Reform Committee (teachers, counselors, and administrators) have perceived the level of implementation of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations for their school district in 2004 and then again for their school and school district in 2007;

- Describe any relationships between the perceptions of importance/practice of the recommendations and the overall implementation effort over three years

Research Design

As research methods in the field of education have evolved from predominantly quantitative research to an increasing amount of qualitative research methods, there has been growing discussion as to which research method provides more dimension to a study. Although this study has a quantitative design, the data included and the analysis of the data is quite descriptive, leaning closely to a qualitative study.

This study is a single-exposure case study. While such studies have some well known limitations, this study can nonetheless offer some important insights into educational change efforts. Some of the limitations to the validity of the study design include selection bias, history, mortality, and testing (Campbell and Stanley, 1969).

For this research, the following efforts were made to improve the efficacy of the study design validity:

Selection bias. The high schools within the school district, at the beginning of the study, included five traditional high schools, one magnet school, and one small secondary alternative school. The original survey was completed by the five traditional high schools and the magnet school. Additionally, all of the schools were involved in the implementation of the reform plan. For the post-reform plan survey, the same schools were included. Thus, the possible threat of selection was reduced by including all of the high schools that were a part of the reform effort. The participants who completed the pre and post surveys were the members of the Seaboro High School Reform Committee selected by the process outlined in

the original reform plan. Chapter 5 outlines changes in the committee over the three year period.

History. The reform plan began in late 2003 with discussions and initial planning, with added implementation strategies for school years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007. Although there were other district-wide initiatives during this time period, there was a district-wide effort to maintain the reform plan as originally set forth and to allow for stability in the leadership and planning of the high school reform team. Most of the other district-wide efforts were a direct result of the High School Reform Initiative. For example, a new mentor program was established evolving from discussion in the reform planning meetings. There were minor changes which affected the school system, including changes in the state standards for standardized testing, changes in how the state works with low-performing high schools, and advances in technology. Thus, the impact of history was minimized by the district having full oversight of the reform plan and the district initiatives. New initiatives were limited to those ideas that evolved from middle and high school reform committees.

Mortality. Over the time period of 2004-2007, membership of the high school reform teams had minimal turnover. Changes in personnel are outlined in Chapter 5. Most of the district and school-level administrators remained within the district administration during the first three years of the reform plan. There was an effort within the school district to promote leaders from within the district. Therefore, several key leaders, including the Executive Director of High School Reform, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services, were all promoted during the time of the study. However, they stayed within the district and continued in their roles with

High School Reform. The Superintendent retired after two and a half years of the reform process. However, the new Superintendent had been involved in a different role with the reform team from the outset. There were specific efforts to provide stability to the leadership of this effort. The High School Reform Facilitator retired during the period of the study, yet the district contracted with him to continue to provide leadership and facilitation of the initiative. There were teachers who retired or resigned and were replaced. However, the replacements on the Reform Committee were representative of the same position. For example, if a school counselor were no longer a member of the team, then the replacement would be a school counselor. This process allowed for as much stability in the planning team as possible. Thus, the possible threat of mortality was reduced by continuing to have the same central services leadership throughout the reform effort and replacing any individuals who left with individuals who were a part of the original planning team. Additionally, schools replaced any representatives who left with an individual from the same categorical representative group and school.

Testing. The threat of having a pretest may increase the respondent's sensitivity to the experiment. In this case, the experiment was the district reform plan. For this study, only a small percentage of individuals participated in the self-assessment survey in consideration of the many teachers who were responsible for implementing the reform plan. The survey was used to get an understanding of the status of the implementation of a series of best practices. The same self-assessment was given three years later to provide further guidance and direction to the reform effort. Thus, the threat of testing was minimized by having only a small representative group complete the surveys. Additionally, the threat was reduced

because the survey was not given as a means to reprimand or to define problems. The survey was used to identify areas in which the committee should focus its efforts.

Site and Participants

The Seaboro School District was selected because it is a school district that has recently embarked upon a comprehensive high school reform effort and the data was made available to the researcher, providing a convenience sample with which to conduct the research. Ease of gaining access to data was a primary factor in the selection process of the research site.

This school district has many characteristics that allow for comparisons with other schools and school districts, including state and federal accountability measures, size and scope of the schools, increase in standardized testing, increasing suspension and dropout rates, and decreasing graduation rates. The school district has a very diverse student population. The school district has faced many of the same pressures to reform its high schools as other school districts. Most importantly, the school district has finished four full years of planning and implementing a reform plan, as they were on the initial wave of high school reform.

After selecting the school district, the various high schools in the district were then considered. The school district has five traditional high schools, one magnet high school, one alternative high school, and, in 2007, two new “small schools” that were in the very early stage of development when the reform effort began and are now in their third year, as well as three other academies in their first year of operation. Thus, in order to best compare and to control for the variables, the five traditional high schools and one magnet school were

selected, eliminating the schools that were either smaller in size or those that received additional funding and/or resources. These six schools were all a part of the original reform planning process with members from their schools participating in the administration of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) survey.

Data Collection

As outlined by Brewer and Hunter (2006), the primary methods that are currently being used by social researchers include fieldwork, survey research, experimentation, and non-reactive research. The primary method for this research was survey research. Additionally, data from the school district were examined to have a better understanding of the reform effort. As stated by Brewer and Hunter (2006), the “diversity of methods implies rich opportunities for cross-validating and cross-fertilizing research procedures, findings, and theories” (p. 1).

The survey analyzed in this study was first administered by the district level administrators to the High School Reform Team in 2004. For the survey, various stakeholders (teachers, principals, and counselors) ranked the thirty-one *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations as to how they perceived both the importance of the recommendation and the level of current practice. The participants ranked the recommendations from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest.

The administration of the survey to the group in 2004 was done primarily as a self-assessment to help guide and direct the implementation of the reform initiative. In 2007, the survey was readministered to provide further direction and to identify which recommendations needed more intense implementation. In 2004, the final data were not

disaggregated by school or by participants (administrators, teachers, counselors). However, the 2007 survey was available by school district, as well as by school and participants.

The data used to describe the “successful longitudinal implementation” of the reform plan to address Research Questions 2 and 3 include both data from the survey, as well as the examination of data that are typically used to describe effective high schools. The data and the explanations of the data are included below:

Attendance Rate: The attendance rate is the rate of attendance for the school as reported to the state on a daily, monthly, and annual basis.

Suspension Rate: The suspension rate is the percentage of students who have been received a consequence of Out of School Suspension. The school and district must report the percentage of students who have received an Out of School Suspension.

Retention Rate: The retention rate is the percentage of students who were not eligible to be promoted to the next grade level at the end of the school year. School district policies provide the guidelines for promotion.

Dropout Rate: The dropout rate is the percentage of students who withdrew from school and who did not graduate or transfer to another school. The dropout rate can include the same student multiple times.

Cohort Graduation Rate: The cohort graduation rate is the percentage of students who graduated after four years in high school. Thus, this rate does not include students who get behind and/or dropout and still complete high school. This rate was not computed until the 2005-2006 school year.

Graduation Rate: The graduation rate is the percentage of high school seniors who graduate at the end of their senior year. This rate was computed for the 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005 school years. It was replaced by the Cohort Graduation rate in 2005-2006.

Teacher Turnover: This is the rate of teachers who do not return to the same school the following year for a variety of reasons.

Performance Composite: The Performance Composite is a figure, calculated by the state, using a formula that includes test score data in specific subjects, graduation rates, attendance rates, and the number of students who are on a college preparatory course of study.

Percentage of AYP Goals Met: Each school is given a number of goals based on the number of subgroups of students in their school (i.e., black, white, Hispanic, special education, free/reduced lunch, Limited English Proficient). There are math and reading proficiency goals. In North Carolina high schools, the data to determine proficiency is derived from the English I test, the 10th grade Writing Test, and the Algebra I End of Course test. The percentage of goals met is reported at the end of each school year.

SAT Scores: The scores for the well-known Scholastic Aptitude Test are reported annually. SAT scores are often used as an indicator of potential college performance. Most students complete a section of math, reading, and writing. High school students are not required to take this test.

Advanced Placement Tests with Percentage of Scores Greater or Equal to 3: Each year high school students are able to take Advanced Placement tests to receive college credit or advanced placement in college classes. This figure includes the percentage of scores that were equal to or above a 3, which is often considered a “passing” score. However, the

rewarding of college credits is dependent on the college. High school students are not required to take these tests.

Although the descriptor data was reviewed and examined, the data used to determine “successful longitudinal implementation” was the calculation of the difference between the perception of implementation in 2004 and in 2007, allowing a clearer picture of the implementation of the recommendations over time. The descriptor data for the school system from 2003-2007 was made available by the Seaboro School District. The Seaboro School District was eager for the researcher to examine the data.

Data Analysis

School reform is very complex, thus making it difficult to draw generalizable knowledge or to understand all of the intricacies of the process. This research provided data on how participants perceived the importance of specific recommendations (as outlined in *Breaking Ranks II*), as well as how they perceived the degree of implementation of the same recommendations. The study also described the relationship between how the participants perceived the importance and how the participants perceived the implementation. Moreover, the study provided data on the relationship between the perceptions (importance and implementation) of the recommendations and the overall implementation of the recommendations over the three year time period. Additionally, various datasets that typically describe effective high schools, such as attendance rates and SAT scores, were examined.

In this study, descriptive statistics were employed. The data provide a description of the status of the school district when the reform plan was first initiated, as well as after three years of implementing a comprehensive reform plan. For the data analysis, the researcher employed the use of descriptive statistics to provide great detail to address the research questions. The researcher used SPSS statistical software to provide calculations. A thorough description of the 2004 and 2007 data is provided in Chapter Four, as well as how the perceptions changed over the three year period.

To address Research Question 1, which was to discern if a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants was related to a more intense implementation, data from the 2004 and 2007 surveys were analyzed. The study included calculating and describing the differences between importance and current practice in both 2004 and in 2007. Additionally, the relationship between the perception of importance of the recommendations and the perception of current practice was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. A paired samples t-test was also conducted to see if the difference on average between importance and current practice was statistically significant.

To address Research Questions 2, which was to discern if the degree of importance of a recommendation was related to a more intense implementation, data from the 2004 and 2007 surveys were analyzed and compared. To describe the relationship between the importance and the overall implementation, a comparison of how importance of each recommendation was perceived in 2004 and then again in 2007 was completed. Additionally, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to further describe

the relationship and a paired samples t-test was performed to see if the difference on average between importance in 2004 and importance in 2007 was statistically significant.

To address the research question as to whether or not the importance of a recommendation was related to the successful longitudinal implementation, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed in 2004 and 2007. The correlation was done using the perception of importance in 2004 and the difference between practice in 2004 and 2007, reflecting the overall implementation of the reform effort.

To further examine Research Question 2, descriptor data that typically defines effective high schools were reviewed. However, the data analysis used the data from the surveys to describe the relationship. Additional information about this decision is presented in Chapter 5.

To address Research Questions 3, which was to discern if the degree of practice of a recommendation was related to a more intense implementation, data from the 2004 and 2007 surveys were analyzed and compared. To describe the relationship between the degree of practice and the overall implementation, a comparison of how the practice was perceived in 2004 and then again in 2007 was completed. Additionally, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to further describe the relationship and a paired samples t-test was performed to see if the difference on average between practice in 2004 and practice in 2007 was statistically significant.

To address the research question as to whether or not the practice of a recommendation was related to the successful longitudinal implementation, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. The correlation was done using the

perception of current practice in 2004 and the difference between practice in 2004 and 2007, reflecting the overall implementation of the reform effort.

To further examine Research Question 3, descriptor data that typically defines effective high schools were reviewed. However, the data analysis used the data from the surveys to describe the relationship. Additional information about this decision is presented in Chapter 5.

Researcher Identity

As an educator, the researcher has been involved in understanding, planning, and implementing school reform, and has a great desire to further understand school reform, especially in a comprehensive school district. This study allowed the researcher to better understand high school best practices, leadership, and the reform process. As a current middle school principal and former middle school teacher and assistant principal, as well as a former high school assistant principal, the researcher has spent many hours in classrooms and schools and seeks to understand the complexities of school reform.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that the researcher is a former assistant principal in one of the high schools included in this study and thus gained the ability to be a part of the group and to build rapport with the Central Services administrators, principals and teachers who were leading this effort. The researcher was not on the High School Reform Planning Team and actually left the high school in the very early stages of the reform effort. With intentional effort, the researcher was confident of a stance of objectivity and the absence of any deliberate biases regarding what she was examining. Furthermore, the researcher was encouraged by district officials that such a stance was welcome.

Summary

This study of one school district's attempt to reform its high schools provided details about the school reform process – about how important the various stakeholders perceived the recommendations for change, as well as how they viewed the current practice of research-based strategies for high school improvement over a three year period. Furthermore, the study provided insight into whether a recommendation perceived as being more important and/or being implemented at a higher level resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan.

With school districts all over the United States seeking answers for improving secondary education, there is a need for information about how school districts are approaching high school reform, implementing innovative ideas, and creating change. This study provides further guidance for school district leaders as they seek answers for the growing problems of high schools.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Using *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) as the conceptual framework, this case study investigated the relationships of stakeholder perceptions regarding the importance and implementation of recommended best practices for high school reform before and after a district wide reform effort.

In exploring the relationships, the data that were examined included: survey data collected in 2004 (at the beginning of the reform initiative); survey data collected in 2007 (after three years of planning and implementation); and data from the Seaboro School District regarding various indicators of school performance, such as dropout rate, SAT scores, and teacher turnover rate.

Specifically, this study was aimed at discerning if:

- 1) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) was related to a more intense implementation, and
- 2) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan, and

- 3) a recommendation perceived as having a higher degree of implementation by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan.

For Research Question 1, the study examined the relationship of the perception of importance and the perception of implementation as indicated in the *Breaking Ranks II* survey data for both 2004 and 2007. For Research Questions 2 and 3, the study described the relationship of the perception of importance and the perception of implementation as indicated in the *Breaking Ranks II* survey data for both 2004 and 2007. A comparison of the 2004 and 2007 data was used to answer these two research questions. The “successful longitudinal implementation” of the recommendations was quantitatively described by calculating the difference between the current practice (implementation) in 2004 and the current practice in 2007.

In addition to the survey data, the following data were examined to better understand the reform effort: attendance, suspension, retention, dropout, graduation rate, percentage of AYP goals met, performance composites, teacher turnover, SAT scores, and the percentage of 3 and above on Advanced Placement tests. The desire to improve these indicators was part of the rationale for district leaders to undertake the high school reform effort initially. It was therefore appropriate to examine them three years after the reform effort began to determine if there were changes. However, these data were not used to portray the relationships described in the research questions. Chapter 5 provides a rationale for this decision.

This chapter provides a description of the results of the analysis of the data described above. The chapter describes the survey administration and then addresses each research question individually.

Survey Administration

This study included the analysis of a survey (see Appendix D) that was given to the High School Reform Committee members in the Seaboro School District. The survey was given to teachers, counselors, and principals from six different schools. There were 78 participants in the 2004 survey and 54 participants in the readministration of the survey in 2007. Forty-five of the participants completed the survey in both 2004 and in 2007. Four of the six principals were included in both the 2004 and 2007 survey data. The decrease in the number of survey participants in 2007 may be attributed to the fact that the 2007 survey was distributed in the school rather than in a planning meeting, not all of the 2004 representatives were replaced in 2007, or not all of the representatives were available to complete the survey in 2007.

Although there were changes in the participants throughout the study, those participants who left were replaced with participants from the same categorical representative group (teachers, counselors, and administrators) and the same school. More information about the personnel changes and the impact of such changes can be found in Chapters 3 and 5.

The survey included the ranking of each of 31 recommendations outlined in *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004). The participants ranked both the degree of importance of each

recommendation on a 1.0-5.0 scale and the degree of current practice of each recommendation on a 1.0-5.0 scale.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 – If a recommendation is perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), was it related to a more intense implementation of the recommendation?

Research Question 1 focused on the relationship between the perceptions of the importance of a *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendation with the degree of practice of the same recommendation. The data collected in 2004 provided a self-assessment of the school district prior to the implementation of the Seaboro School District High School Reform Plan. The data collected in 2007 was after three years of intentional effort to implement the strategies outlined in the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) framework.

To examine this relationship, the following data were examined: the differences between importance and current practice of the 31 recommendations in 2004, the differences between importance and current practice of the 31 recommendations in 2007, the differences on average between importance and current practice of the 31 recommendations in 2004, the differences on average between importance and current practice of the 31 recommendations in 2007, the correlation coefficient for the relationship between the perception of importance and current practice in 2004, the correlation coefficient for the relationship between the perception of importance and current practice in 2007. The data for this question are organized by year (2004 and 2007).

2004 Data

Table 1 provides the results of the *Breaking Ranks II* 2004 survey. Each recommendation was given a rating on a 1.0-5.0 scale (with 1.0 being the lowest and 5.0 being the highest) for importance and current practice. Additionally, Table 1 includes a column that provides the difference for each recommendation between the importance and current practice.

Table 1. Breaking Ranks Survey Data, 2004

Recommendations		Importance	Current Practice	Difference
#	Text	Average rating	Average rating	
1	The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning	5.0	4.5	0.5
2	Each high school will establish a site council and accord other meaningful roles in decision making to students, parents, and members of the staff in order to promote student learning and an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.	4.8	3.0	1.8
3	A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school's learning goals.	4.8	2.8	2.0
4	Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role.	4.3	2.3	2.0
5	Every school will be a learning community for the entire community. As such, the school will promote the use of Personal Learning Plans for each educator and provide the resources to ensure that the principal, teachers, and other staff members can address their own learning and professional needs as they relate to improved student learning.	4.5	2.0	2.5

6	The school community will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and will offer substantive ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.	4.8	2.5	2.3
7	High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.	3.8	2.3	1.5
8	High schools will develop political and financial relationships with individuals, organizations, and businesses to support and supplement educational programs and policies.	3.0	3.0	0.0
9	At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a public description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations by state, regional, and other accrediting groups.	4.5	5.0	(0.5)
10	High schools will create small units in which anonymity is banished.	4.7	1.7	3.0
11	Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.	4.7	1.5	3.2
12	Each student will have a Personal Plan for Progress that will be reviewed often to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and to allow students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning in an effort to meet high standards.	4.3	2.7	1.6
13	Every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience.	4.7	1.5	3.2
14	Teachers will convey a sense of caring to their students so that their students feel that their teachers share a stake in their learning.	5.0	3.2	1.8
15	High schools will develop flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow better use of time in order to meet the individual needs of students to ensure academic success.	4.8	2.0	2.8
16	The high school will engage students' families as partners in the students' education.	4.7	2.3	2.4
17	The high school community, which cannot be value neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society.	4.7	3.3	1.4
18	High schools, in conjunction with agencies in the community, will help coordinate the delivery of physical and mental health and social services for youth.	4.7	3.0	1.7

19	Each high school will identify a set of essential learnings--above all, in literature and language, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts--in which students must demonstrate achievement in order to graduate.	5.0	2.8	2.2
20	Each high school will present alternatives to tracking and to ability grouping.	4.5	2.2	2.3
21	The high school will reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the extent possible and emphasize depth over breadth of coverage.	3.5	2.0	1.5
22	The content of the curriculum, where practical, should connect to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future.	5.0	2.8	2.2
23	The high school will promote service programs and student activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.	4.0	2.0	2.0
24	The academic program will extend beyond the high school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building.	4.3	1.8	2.5
25	Teachers will design high-quality work and teach in ways that engage students, cause them to persist, and when the work is successfully completed, result in their satisfaction and their acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and other abilities valued by society.	4.7	2.7	2.0
26	Teachers will know and be able to use a variety of strategies and settings that identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students.	4.7	2.8	1.9
27	Each high school teacher will have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area.	4.5	3.8	0.7
28	Teachers will be adept at acting as coaches and facilitators to promote more active involvement of students in their own learning.	5.0	3.0	2.0
29	Teachers will integrate assessment into instruction so that assessment is accomplished using a variety of methods and does not merely measure students, but becomes part of the learning process.	4.8	2.5	2.3
30	Recognizing that education is a continuum, high schools will reach out to elementary- and middle-level schools as well as institutions of higher education to better serve the articulation of student learning and to ensure that each stage of the continuum understands what will be required of students at the succeeding stage.	4.3	1.5	2.8
31	Schools will develop a strategic plan to make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize and improve the learning process.	4.3	2.5	1.8

Table 2 provides a description of the data collected in 2004. With a mean for all 31 recommendations of 4.529 on a scale of 1.0-5.0, the perception of the importance of the recommendations in 2004 was exceptionally high. With a mean of 4.529 on the perception of importance and a mean of 2.613 on the perception of current practice in 2004 of the recommendations, there was a clear discrepancy between the rating of importance and current practice of the 31 recommendations.

Table 2. Importance and Current Practice, 2004

	Importance 2004	Current Practice 2004
N=31		
Mean	4.529	2.613
Median	4.700	2.500
Mode	4.7 ^a	2.0 ^a
Std Deviation	0.454	0.805
Range	2.000	3.500
Minimum	3.000	1.500
Maximum	5.000	5.000

Note. ^a =Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

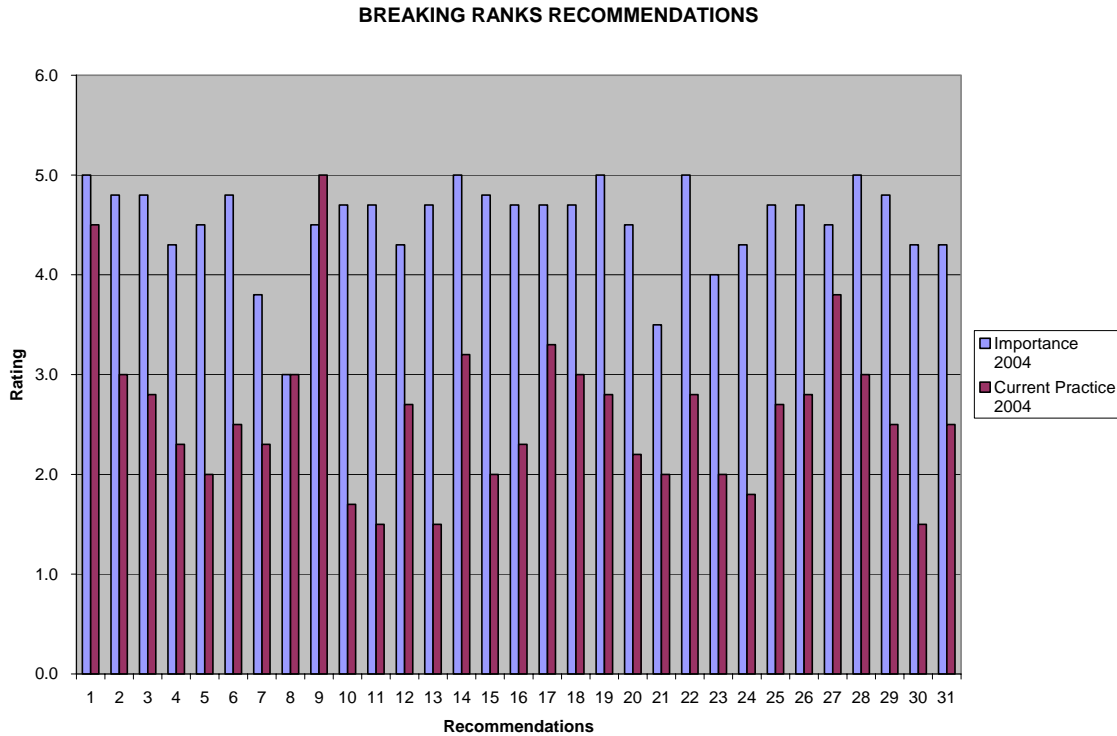
The data reflect that the degree of importance across the 31 recommendations was relatively high with most of the ratings falling between four and five. There was little variation throughout the ratings of importance. With five of the recommendations receiving a rating of 5.0 on a scale of 1.0-5.0 and 28 of 31 recommendations rating between 4.0 and 5.0, it was evident that the participants perceived most of the recommendations as being essential in creating an effective high school.

The three recommendations that fell below the 4.0 rating included: building partnerships with institutions of higher education (Recommendation 7), developing political and financial relationships (Recommendation 8), and reorganizing the traditional departmental structure (Recommendation 21).

With a mean of 2.613 for the ratings of implementation, the mean of the implementation ratings was lower than that of importance. There was also greater variation among the ratings for current practice than for those of importance. With only two recommendations that received an average rating between the range of 4.0 – 5.0 on a 1.0-5.0 scale, it was evident that the perception of the participants was that the implementation of the recommendations was not very high. The two recommendations that received high ratings (4.0-5.0) of current practice in 2004 were: the principal as the provider of vision, direction, focus (Recommendation 1) and an external review every five years (Recommendation 9). Nine of the 29 other recommendations fell in the 1.5-2.0 range, revealing that there were multiple recommendations being implemented at a low degree in 2004.

Figure 2 provides a description of the relationship between the perception of the importance of each recommendation and the perception of the current practice of each recommendation in 2004. The 2004 data suggest that the participants rated 30 of the 31 recommendations higher in importance than that of current practice. The only recommendation that was rated lower in importance than current practice was Recommendation 9, “At least every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a public description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations by state, regional, and other accrediting groups.” (*Breaking Ranks, 2004, p. 17*).

Figure 2. Relationship between Importance and Current Practice, 2004



Note: The 31 recommendations are listed in Table 1 and in Appendix A.

To further examine the relationship between importance and current practice of each recommendation in 2004, the differences between the importance and current practice of each recommendation in 2004 were calculated as seen in Table 1. The data reflect that there were two recommendations that were perceived as greater in practice than in importance. As mentioned previously, one of the recommendations was related to external audits (Recommendation 9). The other recommendation, political and financial relationships (Recommendation 8), was perceived as being equal in importance and current practice. All

of the other recommendations had a difference of less than zero reflecting a greater degree of importance than current practice.

The relationship between the perception of importance of the recommendations and the perception of current practice was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 3 provides the correlation coefficient of the relationship. There was not a statistically significant relationship at the $p < .05$ level with the correlation coefficient being .194 and $p = .296$. Therefore, the perception of importance and the perception of current practice in 2004 are not related.

Table 3. Correlations of Importance and Current Practice in Average Rankings for all Recommendations for 2004 (N=31)

	Importance 2004	Current Practice 2004
Importance 2004	1.000	.194 (.296)*
Current Practice 2004	.194 (.296)*	1.000

Note *p-values are in parentheses.

To further examine the relationship between the perception of importance and current practice, a paired samples t-test was performed. A paired samples t-test is used when a comparison of mean scores for the same group of people on two different variables is needed. This t-test was performed to see if the difference on average between importance and current practice was statistically significant. As reflected in Table 4, using a p value of $< .05$ as the level of significance, the p value of .000 in this case, there was a statistically significant

difference in the perception of current practice (M=2.613, SD=.8053) and importance (M=4.529, SD=.4540, $t(30)=12.637$, $p=0.000$) of the recommendations in 2004.

Table 4. Paired Samples Test between Current Practice and Importance, 2004 (N=31)

Paired Samples Test	
Mean Difference (CP2004-I2004)	-1.916
t statistic	12.637
Degrees of freedom	30.000
p-value	0.000

In summary, the 2004 data indicate the following:

- The participants ranked the importance of the various recommendations very highly with most recommendations falling in the 4.0-5.0 range with little variance.
- There were only two recommendations that were perceived as having a high degree of implementation (fell in the 4.0-5.0 range).
- There were only two recommendations whose importance was ranked higher or at an equal level with its degree of implementation.
- There was not a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance and current practice in 2004.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the perception of importance and current practice in the 2004.

2007 Data

Table 5 provides the results of the *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) 2007 survey. Each recommendation was given a rating on a 1.0-5.0 scale for importance and current practice. Additionally, Table 5 includes a column that provides the difference for each recommendation between the importance and current practice.

Table 5. Breaking Ranks Survey Data, 2007

		Importance	Current Practice	Difference
#	Text	Average rating	Average rating	
1	The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning	5.0	4.2	0.8
2	Each high school will establish a site council and accord other meaningful roles in decision making to students, parents, and members of the staff in order to promote student learning and an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.	4.5	3.8	0.7
3	A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school's learning goals.	4.7	3.9	0.8
4	Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role.	4.2	3.5	0.8
5	Every school will be a learning community for the entire community. As such, the school will promote the use of Personal Learning Plans for each educator and provide the resources to ensure that the principal, teachers, and other staff members can address their own learning and professional needs as they relate to improved student learning.	4.4	3.3	1.1
6	The school community will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and will offer substantive ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.	4.7	3.5	1.2
7	High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.	4.1	3.5	0.6
8	High schools will develop political and financial relationships with individuals, organizations, and businesses to support and supplement educational programs and policies.	3.7	3.3	0.5

9	At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a public description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations by state, regional, and other accrediting groups.	4.2	3.9	0.3
10	High schools will create small units in which anonymity is banished.	4.4	3.7	0.6
11	Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.	4.7	3.3	1.4
12	Each student will have a Personal Plan for Progress that will be reviewed often to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and to allow students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning in an effort to meet high standards.	4.4	2.5	1.9
13	Every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience.	4.6	2.8	1.8
14	Teachers will convey a sense of caring to their students so that their students feel that their teachers share a stake in their learning.	5.0	3.7	1.3
15	High schools will develop flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow better use of time in order to meet the individual needs of students to ensure academic success.	4.7	3.6	1.1
16	The high school will engage students' families as partners in the students' education.	4.9	3.4	1.5
17	The high school community, which cannot be value neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society.	4.8	3.5	1.3
18	High schools, in conjunction with agencies in the community, will help coordinate the delivery of physical and mental health and social services for youth.	4.8	3.4	1.4
19	Each high school will identify a set of essential learnings--above all, in literature and language, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts--in which students must demonstrate achievement in order to graduate.	4.9	4.0	1.0
20	Each high school will present alternatives to tracking and to ability grouping.	4.6	3.4	1.2
21	The high school will reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the extent possible and emphasize depth over breadth of coverage.	4.1	3.3	0.8
22	The content of the curriculum, where practical, should connect to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future.	4.9	3.7	1.3
23	The high school will promote service programs and student activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.	4.7	3.2	1.5
24	The academic program will extend beyond the high school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building.	4.6	3.2	1.4

25	Teachers will design high-quality work and teach in ways that engage students, cause them to persist, and when the work is successfully completed, result in their satisfaction and their acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and other abilities valued by society.	4.9	3.4	1.5
26	Teachers will know and be able to use a variety of strategies and settings that identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students.	4.9	3.8	1.1
27	Each high school teacher will have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area.	5.0	4.3	0.7
28	Teachers will be adept at acting as coaches and facilitators to promote more active involvement of students in their own learning.	4.9	3.5	1.4
29	Teachers will integrate assessment into instruction so that assessment is accomplished using a variety of methods and does not merely measure students, but becomes part of the learning process.	4.7	3.4	1.4
30	Recognizing that education is a continuum, high schools will reach out to elementary- and middle-level schools as well as institutions of higher education to better serve the articulation of student learning and to ensure that each stage of the continuum understands what will be required of students at the succeeding stage.	4.6	2.6	2.0
31	Schools will develop a strategic plan to make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize and improve the learning process.	4.6	2.9	1.7

Table 6 provides a description of the survey data collected in 2007. With a mean of 4.619 of all 31 recommendations on a scale of 1.0-5.0, the perception of the importance of the recommendations in 2007 was exceptionally high. The mean of the importance of the recommendations was .09 higher in 2007 than in 2004. With a mean of 4.619 on a scale of 1.0-5.0 for the perception of importance and a mean of 3.468 for the perception of current practice of the recommendations in 2007, there is a considerable discrepancy between the rating of importance and current practice of the 31 recommendations. The mean of the current practice of the recommendations was .855 higher in 2007 than in 2004.

Table 6. Importance and Current Practice, 2007

	Importance 2007	Current Practice 2007
N=31		
Mean	4.619	3.468
Median	4.700	3.500
Mode	4.7 ^a	3.4 ^a
Std.Deviation	0.311	0.409
Range	1.300	1.800
Minimum	3.700	2.500
Maximum	5.000	4.300

Note. ^a=Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

The data reflect that the degree of perceived importance across the 31 recommendations was relatively high, with most of the ratings falling between four and five. There was little variation throughout the ratings of importance. With several recommendations receiving a rating of 5.0 on a scale of 1.0-5.0 and most recommendations rating between 4.0 and 5.0, it was evident that the participants perceived most of the recommendations as being important in creating an effective high school.

The only recommendation that fell below 4.0 on importance was related to high schools developing political and financial relationships to support the educational programs and policies (Recommendation 8).

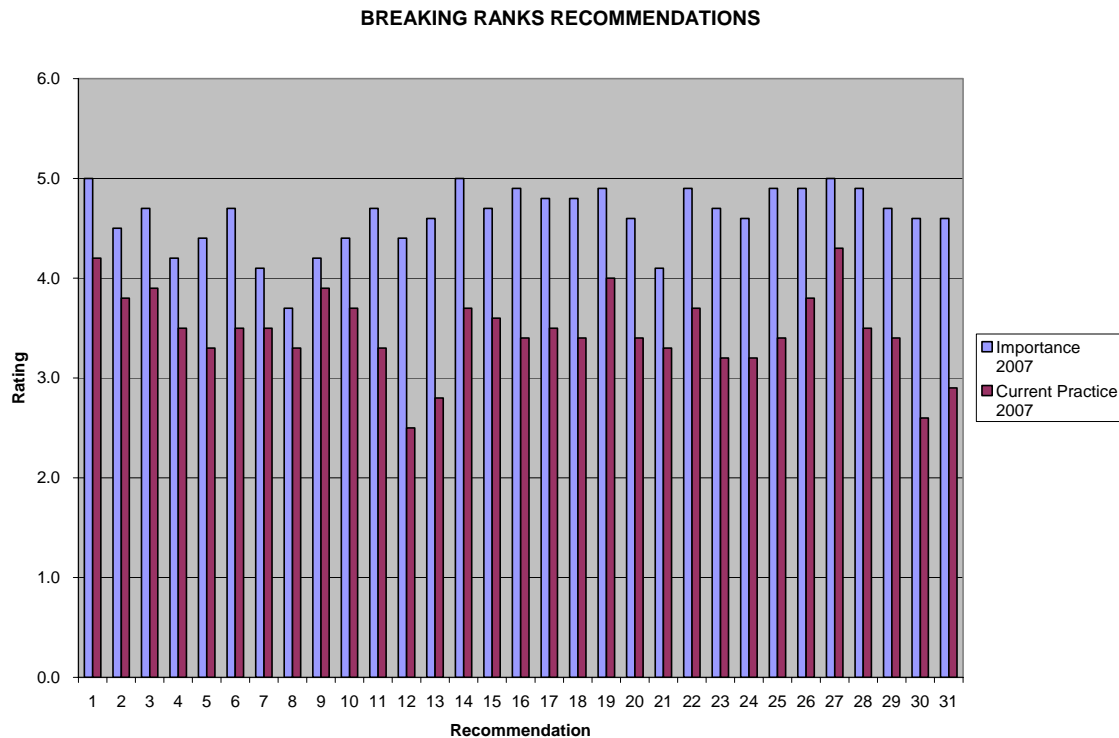
For the current practice ratings, with a mean of 3.468, the mean of the implementation ratings was lower than that of importance. There was also greater variation in the ratings for current practice than that of importance. With only three recommendations receiving an average rating of 4.0-5.0, it was evident that the perception of the participants

was that the implementation of the recommendations is not very high. The three recommendations that received the high ratings (4.0-5.0) included: the principal as the provider of vision direction, focus (Recommendation 1); the identification of a set of essential learnings (Recommendation 19); and each teacher having a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area (Recommendation 27).

There were no recommendations that were ranked less than 2.5 on a 5.0 scale in the perception of the degree of implementation. The four recommendations that participants perceived to be implemented less intensely, with rankings from 2.5-2.9, included the inclusion of: a Personal Plan for Progress for each student (Recommendation 12); a Personal Adult Advocate for each student (Recommendation 13); building a continuum with elementary and middle schools, as well as higher education (Recommendation 30); a strategic technology plan (Recommendation 31).

Figure 3 provides a description of the relationship between the perception of the importance of each recommendation and the perception of the current practice of each recommendation in 2007. The 2007 data suggest that the participants rated all 31 recommendations higher in importance than that in current practice.

Figure 3. Relationship between Importance and Current Practice, 2007



Note: The 31 recommendations are listed in Table 5 and in Appendix A.

To further examine the relationship between the perception of importance and current practice of each recommendation in 2007, the differences between the importance and current practice of each recommendation in 2007 were calculated as seen in Table 5. All of the recommendations had a difference of less than zero indicating that all of the means of importance were higher than those of current practice. The recommendations that had the largest discrepancy between perceived importance and perceived current practice included the implementation of: a Personal Plan for Progress for each student (Recommendation 12); a Personal Adult Advocate for each student (Recommendation 13); and building a continuum with elementary and middle schools, as well as higher education (Recommendation 30).

The relationship between the perception of importance of the recommendations and the perception of current practice was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 7 provides the correlation coefficient of the relationship. There was not a statistically significant relationship at the $p < .05$ level with the correlation coefficient being .314 and $p = .086$. Therefore, the perception of importance and the perception of current practice in 2007 are not related.

Table 7. Correlations of Importance and Current Practice in Average Rankings for all Recommendations for 2007 (N=31)

	Importance 2007	Current Practice 2007
Importance 2007	1.000	.314 (.086)*
Current Practice 2007	.314 (.086)	1.000

Note *p-values are in parentheses.

To further examine the relationship between the perception of importance and current practice, a paired samples t-test was performed to see if the difference on average between importance and current practice was statistically significant. As reflected in Table 8, using a p value of $< .05$ as the level of significance and a p value of 0.000 in this case, there was a statistically significant difference in the perception of current practice ($M=3.468$, $SD=.4094$) and importance ($M=4.619$, $SD=.3114$, $t(30)=14.92$, $p=0.000$) of the recommendations in 2007.

Table 8. Paired Samples Test between Importance and Current Practice, 2007 (N=31)

Paired Samples Test	
Mean Difference (CP2007-I2007)	-1.516
t statistic	14.920
Degrees of freedom	30.000
p-value	0.000

In summary, the 2007 data indicate the following:

- The participants ranked the importance of the various recommendations very highly with most recommendations falling in the 4.0-5.0 range with little variance.
- There were only three recommendations that were perceived as having a high degree of implementation (falling in the 4.0-5.0 range).
- There were no recommendations that were perceived as having a higher degree of implementation than importance.
- There was not a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance and current practice in 2007.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the perception of importance and current practice in 2007.

In order to address Research Question 1 (If a recommendation is perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), was it related to a more intense implementation of the recommendation?), the data indicate the following for both 2004 and 2007 survey data:

- In both 2004 and 2007, the participants ranked the importance of the recommendations in the very high range.
- There was little variation in the degree of importance in both 2004 and 2007.
- There was more variation in the ranking of the degree of practice of the recommendations in both 2004 and 2007.
- There was not a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance and current practice in 2004.
- There was not a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance and current practice in 2007.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the perception of importance and current practice in 2004.
- There was a statistically significant difference between the importance and current practice in 2007.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 – If a recommendation is perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), did it result in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan?

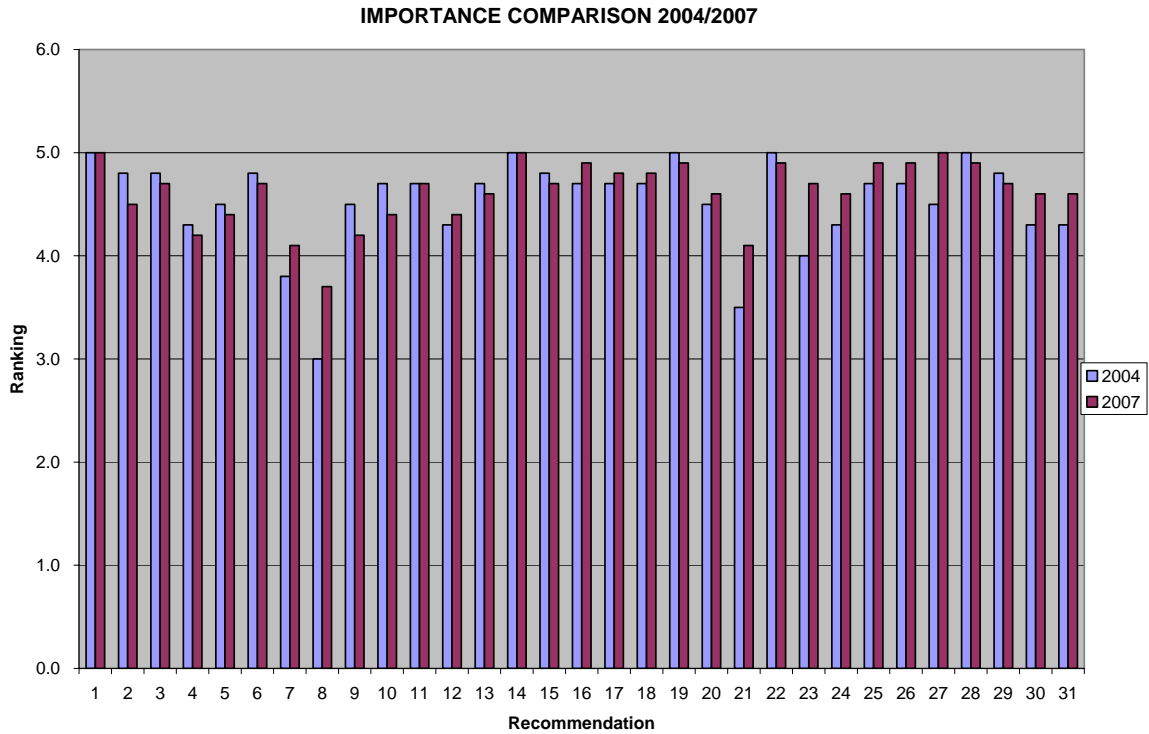
Research Question 2 focused on the relationship between the perception of the importance of the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations and the perception of successful longitudinal implementation of the recommendations after three years of the reform initiative. In order to examine this question, data were used from the results of the *Breaking*

Ranks II survey, given to the Seabro High School Reform Committee in both 2004 and in 2007.

Comparison of 2004 and 2007 Importance Survey Data

In order to describe how the perception of importance of the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations was related to the perceived successful longitudinal implementation of the recommendations, it is important to look at how the perceptions of importance changed throughout the three year reform period. Figure 4 reflects how the importance of each recommendation was perceived in 2004 and then again in 2007. With a mean of importance ratings in 2004 of 4.529 and a mean in 2007 of 4.619, one can see that the participants viewed the importance of the recommendations similarly in 2004 and 2007. About half of the recommendations increased slightly in importance over the three year period. The recommendations that increased in importance by at least .5 (on the 1.0-5.0 rating scale) include: developing political and financial relationships (Recommendation 8), reorganizing the department structure (Recommendation 21), promoting service programs and student activities (Recommendation 23), and having each high school teacher have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area (Recommendation 27). There were no recommendations that decreased in importance by at least .5 (on the 1.0-5.0 rating scale) after three years.

Figure 4. Relationship between Importance, 2004 and 2007



Note: The 31 recommendations are listed in Table 1 and in Appendix A.

The relationship between the perception of importance of the recommendations in 2004 and the perception of importance of the recommendations in 2007 was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 9 provides the correlation coefficient of the relationship. There was a statistically significant relationship at the $p < .05$ level with the correlation coefficient being .809 and $p = .000$. Therefore, the perception of importance in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007 are strongly related.

Table 9. Correlations of Importance in 2004 and 2007 in Average Rankings for all Recommendations (N=31)

	Importance 2004	Importance 2007
Importance 2004	1.000	.809 (.000)*
Importance 2007	.809 (.000)*	1.000

Note *p-values are in parentheses.

To further examine the relationship between the perception of importance in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007, a paired samples t-test was performed. A paired samples t-test is used when a comparison of mean scores for the same group of people on two different variables is needed. This t-test was performed to see if the difference on average between importance in 2004 and importance in 2007 was statistically significant. As reflected in Table 10, using a p value of <.05 as the level of significance, the p value of .075 in this case, there was not a statistically significant difference in the perception of importance in 2004 (M=4.529, SD=.4540) and in the perception of importance in 2007 (M=4.619, SD=.3114, t(30)=-1.846, p=.075 of the 31 recommendations.

Table 10. Paired Samples Test between Importance in 2004 and Importance in 2007 (N=31)

Paired Samples Test	
Mean Difference (I2004-I2007)	-0.090
t statistic	-1.846
Degrees of freedom	30.000
p-value	0.075

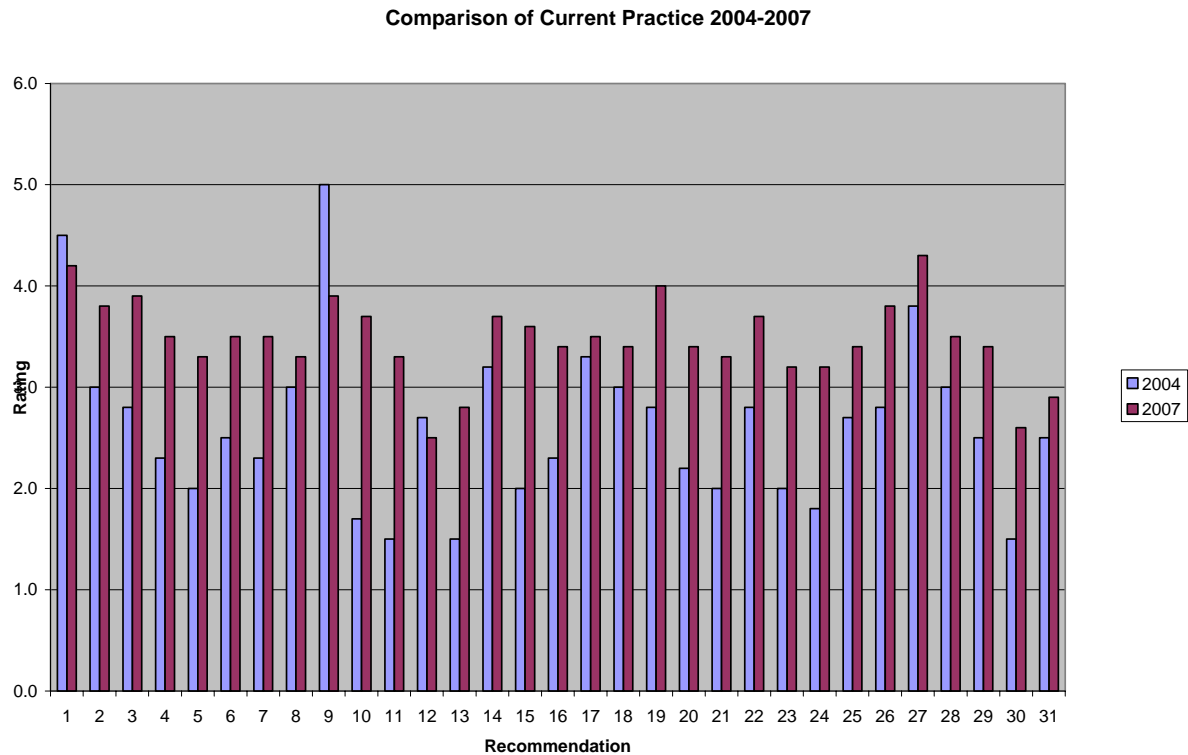
Importance and Longitudinal Implementation

Although the current practice data will be examined more thoroughly in the section that addresses Research Question 3, to further examine the perceived longitudinal implementation of the recommendations, it was necessary to look at the survey data for the change in current practice over the three years in order to provide further explanation to Research Question 2.

In order to quantify the successful longitudinal implementation of the reform effort, the difference between the current practice in 2004 and 2007 was calculated. This difference would reveal if there was an increase or decrease in the implementation of the recommendation after three years. Then, the relationship between the perceived importance of a recommendation and the perceived successful longitudinal implementation (the difference between current practice in 2004 and 2007) was examined to determine if there was a relationship.

Figure 5 reflects how the current practice of each recommendation was perceived in 2004 and then again in 2007. With a mean of current practice ratings in 2004 of 2.613 and a mean in 2007 of 3.468, one can see that the participants viewed current practice higher in 2007.

Figure 5. Relationship between Current Practice, 2004 and 2007

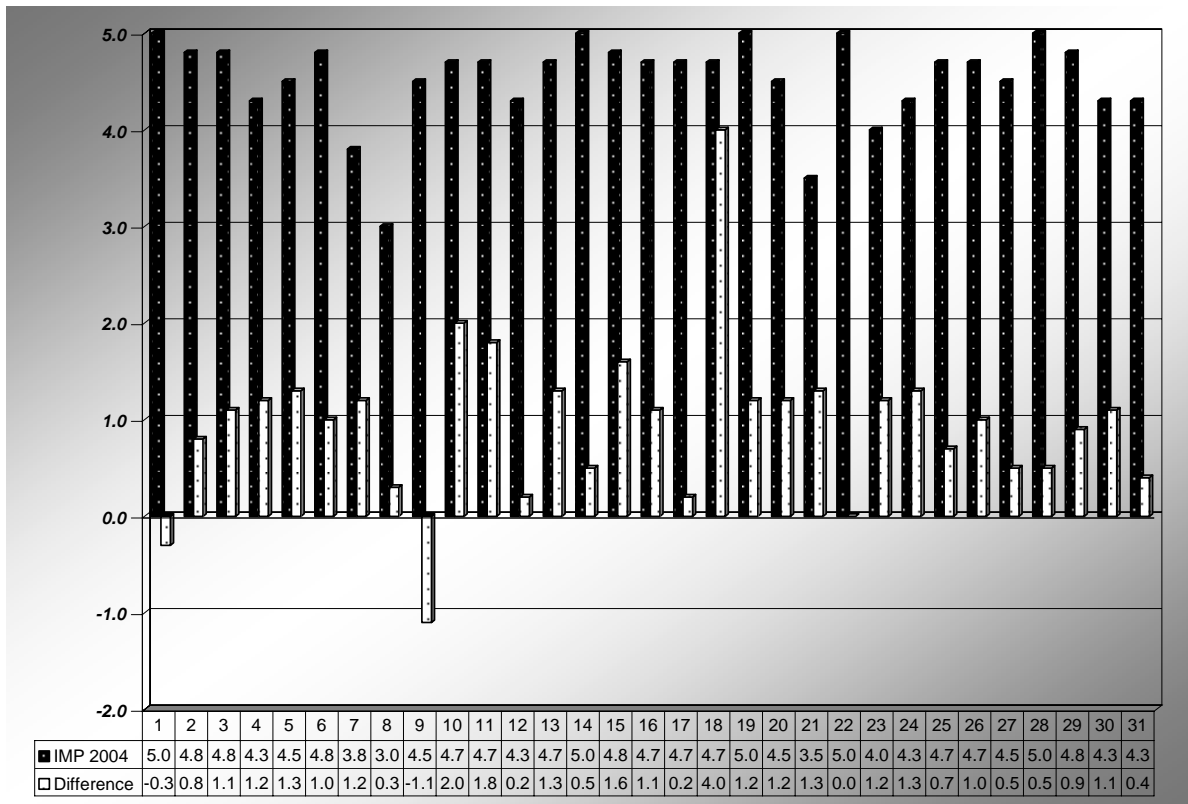


Note: The 31 recommendations are listed in Table 1 and in Appendix A.

According to survey data, 28 of the 31 recommendations increased in practice over the three years. The growth ranged from .2 to 2.0 on a 1.0-5.0 scale. The three recommendations that did not grow in implementation over the three years included: the principal providing leadership by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning (Recommendation 1); an external panel will convene every five years to offer a public description of the school (Recommendation 9); and each student having a Personal Plan for Progress (Recommendation 12). Thus, most of the recommendations increased through the reform effort.

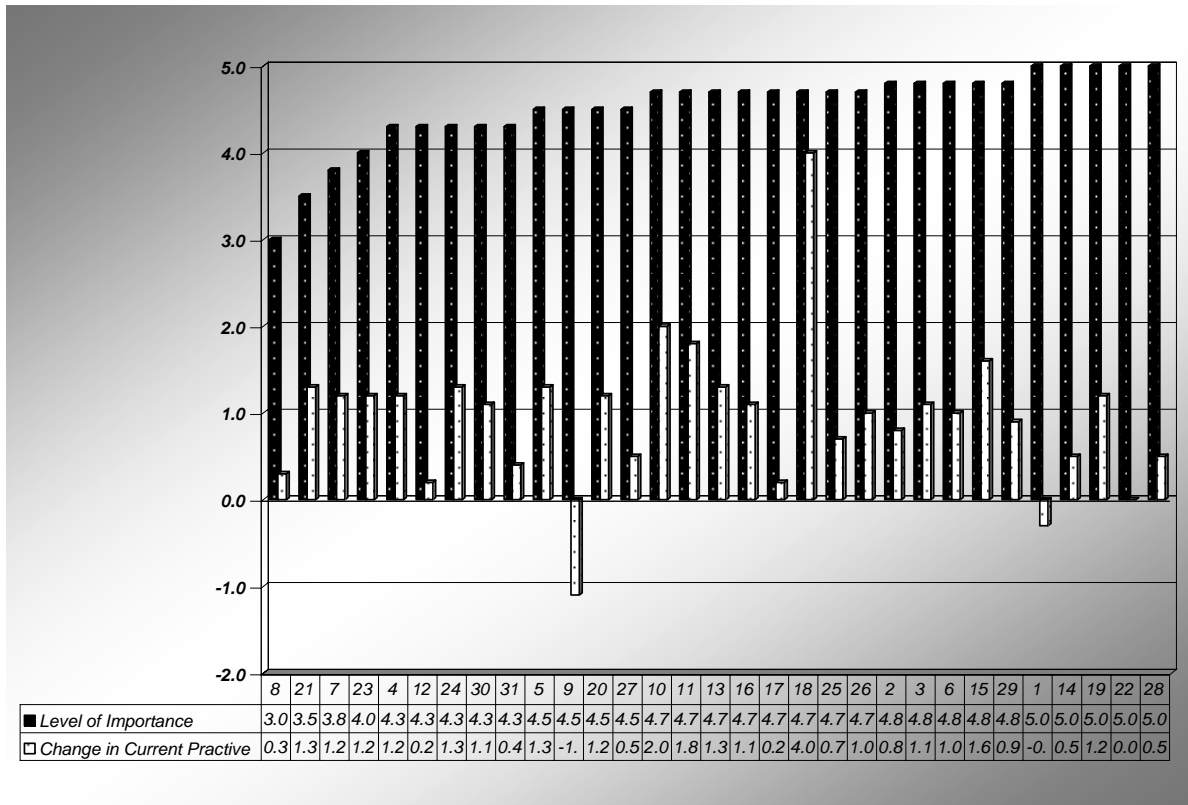
In order to more specifically address the research question as to whether or not the importance of a recommendation was related to the successful longitudinal implementation, the researcher examined the relationship between the perception of importance and the perceived longitudinal implementation as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007. Figure 6 reflects the relationship between the perceived importance of the recommendation and the perceived longitudinal implementation (difference of current practice between 2004 and 2007).

Figure 6. Importance (2004) and Longitudinal Implementation (Difference in Current Practice between 2004 and 2007)



As indicated in Figure 6, there was not a relationship between the degree of perceived importance and the perceived longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in the perception of current practice from 2004 to 2007). With a high degree of importance (with all but three recommendations at or above a 4.0 on a 1.0-5.0 scale) and varying degrees of implementation in perceptions over a three year period time, it was evident that the importance of the recommendation did not affect the degree of implementation. As reflected in Figure 6, there were small gains in the practice of recommendations perceived as being very important and larger gains in the practice of recommendations that had a lesser degree of importance. Figure 7 further reflects the high degree of importance with very little variation in 2004.

Figure 7. Ranked Importance (2004) and Change in Current Practice (2004-2007)



In order to further address the research question as to whether the importance of a recommendation was related to the successful longitudinal implementation, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. Table 11 provides the correlation coefficient of the relationship. There was not a statistically significant relationship at the $p < .05$ level with the correlation coefficient being $-.002$ and $p = .991$. Therefore, the perception of the importance of the recommendations was not related to the difference in the current practice between the years of the reform (2004 and 2007).

Table 11. Correlations of Importance in 2004 and Difference in Current Practice 2004-2007 (N=31)

	Importance 2004	Difference in Current Practice between 2004 and 2007
Importance 2004	1.000	-.002 (.991)
Difference in Current Practice between 2004 and 2007	-.002 (.991)	1.000

Note *p-values are in parentheses

In summary, to address Research Question 2 (If a recommendation is perceived as being more important than others by participants, did it result in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan?), the data indicate the following from both the 2004 and 2007 survey data:

- Over the three year period of time, the mean of the perception of the importance of the recommendations increased .09 (on a 1.0-5. scale). Thus, there was little change in the perception of importance over the three years.
- There was a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance of the recommendations in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007.
- There was not a statistically significant difference between the perception of importance in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007.
- With a mean difference of .855, as a whole, the participants ranked the degree of current practice higher in 2007 than in 2004.
- Twenty eight of the 31 recommendations increased in practice from 2004 to 2007.
- There was not a relationship between the degree of importance and the longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007).
- There was not a statistically significant relationship between the perception of importance (as measured in 2004) of the recommendations and the successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 – If a recommendation is perceived as having a higher degree of practice than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), did it result in

a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan?

Research Question 3 focused on the relationship between the perception of practice of the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations and the successful longitudinal implementation of the recommendations after three years of the reform initiative. In order to examine this question, data were used from the results of the *Breaking Ranks II* survey that was given to the High School Reform Committee in both 2004 and in 2007.

Comparison of 2004 and 2007 Implementation Survey Data

In order to describe how the perception of practice of the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations was related to the successful longitudinal implementation of the recommendations, it was important to look at how the perceptions of current practice changed throughout the three year reform period. With a mean of current practice ratings in 2004 of 2.613 and a mean in 2007 of 3.468, one can see that the participants viewed the practice of the recommendations higher in 2007 than in 2004. Therefore, there was clear growth in the practice of the recommendations over the three year period.

As Figure 5 reflects, 28 of the 31 recommendations grew in practice over the three year period. The range of increase was .2 to 2.0 on a 1.0-5.0 scale. The recommendations that increased the most (by at least 1.6 on a 1.0-5.0 scale) over the three year period included: the creation of small units (Recommendation 10), teacher case loads of 90 students (Recommendation 11), and the development of flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow for meeting the individual needs of students (Recommendation 15). All three of the recommendations that grew the most in practice are related to personalization

and the school environment. As mentioned previously, there were three recommendations that did not grow in practice over the three year period.

The relationship between the perception of current practice of the recommendations in 2004 and the perception of current practice of the recommendations in 2007 was then investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 12 provides the correlation coefficient of the relationship. There was a statistically significant relationship at the $p < .05$ level with the correlation coefficient being .616 and $p = .000$. Therefore, the perception of current practice in 2004 and the perception of current practice in 2007 are moderately related.

Table 12. Correlations of Current Practice in 2004 and 2007 in Average Rankings for all Recommendations (N=31)

	Current Practice 2004	Current Practice 2007
Current Practice 2004	1.000	.616 (.000)*
Current Practice 2007	.616 (.000)*	1.000

Note *p-values are in parentheses.

To further examine the relationship between the perception of current practice in 2004 and the perception of current practice in 2007, a paired samples t-test was performed. This t-test was performed to see if the difference on average between current practice in 2004 and current practice in 2007 was statistically significant. As reflected in Table 13, using a p

value of $<.05$ as the level of significance, the p value of $.000$ in this case, there was a statistically significant difference in the perception of current practice in 2004 ($M=2.613$, $SD=.8053$) and in the perception of current practice in 2007 ($M=3.468$, $SD=.4094$, $t(30)=-7.434$, $p=.000$) of the 31 recommendations. Unlike the perception of the importance of the recommendations, the perception of current practice in 2004 was not very similar to the perception of current practice in 2007.

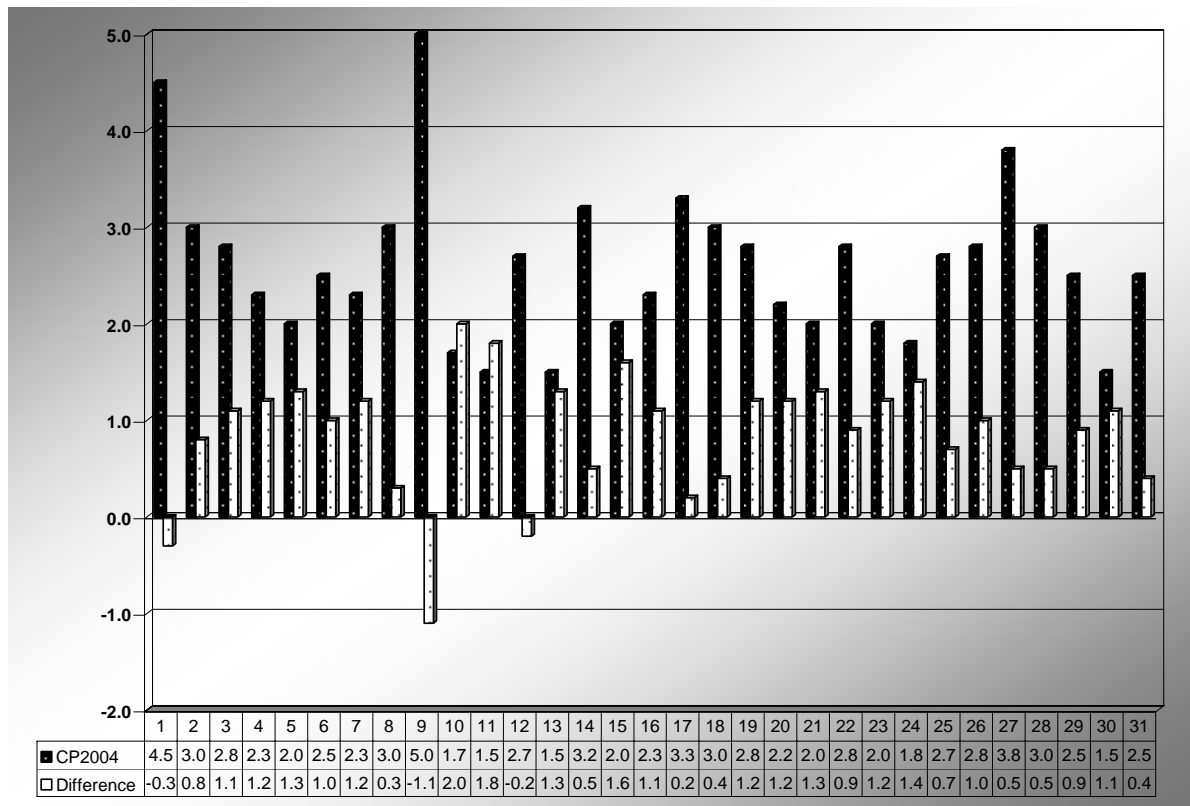
Table 13. Paired Samples Test between Current Practice in 2004 and Current Practice in 2007 (N=31)

Paired Samples Test	
Mean Difference (CP2004-CP2007)	-0.8548
t statistic	-7.434
Degrees of freedom	30.000
p-value	0.000

Level of Practice and Longitudinal Implementation

In order to address the research question as to whether or not the degree of practice of a recommendation was related to the successful longitudinal implementation of the reform effort, first the successful longitudinal implementation was quantified using the difference between the perceptions of current practice in 2004 and 2007. This difference reflects whether or not there was a perceived increase or decrease in the implementation of the recommendation after three years. As reflected in Figure 8, the recommendations that had a lower degree of implementation in 2004 did improve over the three year period of time.

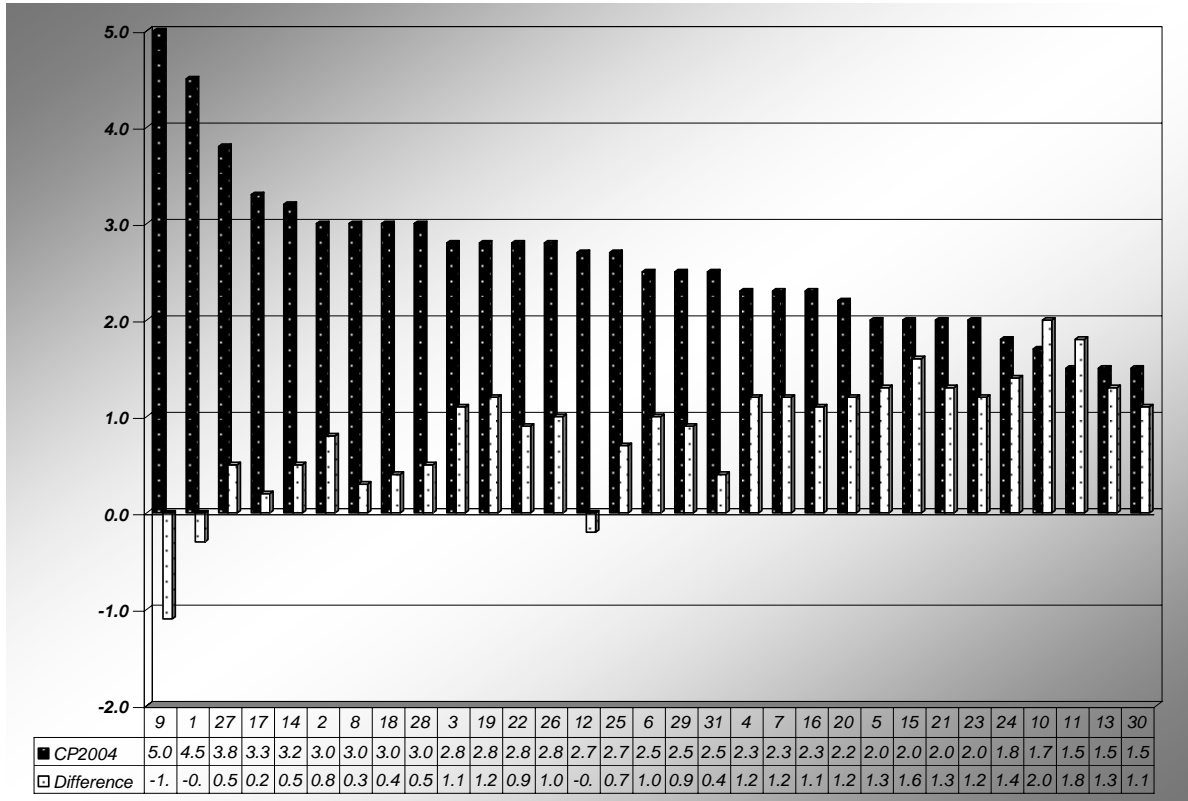
Figure 8. Current Practice (2004) and Longitudinal Implementation (Difference in Current Practice between 2004 and 2007)



As indicated in Figure 8, the recommendations that saw a lesser degree of practice in 2004 had a greater degree in longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice in 2004 and 2007). It goes without saying that if the recommendation was lower in the beginning of the reform effort, there was more room to grow. The twelve recommendations which had the lowest level of perceived practice in 2004 saw at least 1.0 growth on a 1.0-5.0 scale in practice over the three year period. The nine recommendations which had the highest degree of practice in 2004 saw less than .8 growth in current practice over the three year period on a 1.0-5.0 scale. The ten recommendations that were in the mid-

range in current practice in 2004 had sporadic increases ranging from 0 to 1.2 on a 1.0-5.0 scale in practice over the three year period. Figure 9 further reflects this finding.

Figure 9. Ranked Current Practice (2004) and Change in Current Practice (2004-2007)



Then, as presented in Table 14, the relationship between the perception of practice of a recommendation and the perceived successful longitudinal implementation was examined further by calculating a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship. There was a statistically significant relationship at the $p < .05$ level with the correlation coefficient being $-.864$ and $p = .000$. Therefore, the

perception of the current practice of the recommendations was related to the difference in the current practice between the years of the reform (2004 and 2007).

Table 14. Correlations of Implementation in 2004 and Difference in Current Practice 2004-2007 (N=31)

	Current Practice 2004	Difference in Current Practice between 2004 and 2007
Current Practice 2004	1.000	-.864* (.000)
Difference in Current Practice between 2004 and 2007	-.864* (.000)	1.000

Note *p-values are in parentheses.

In summary, to address Research Question 3 (If a recommendation is perceived as having a higher degree of practice than others by participants, did it result in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan?), the data indicate the following from both the 2004 and 2007 survey data:

- Over the three year period of time, the mean of the perception of the degree of practice of the recommendations increased .0855 (on a 1.0-5.0 scale). Thus, there was considerable change in the perception of the practice of the recommendations over the three years.

- There was a statistically significant correlation between the perception of practice of the recommendations in 2004 and the perception of current practice in 2007.
- There was a statistically significant difference in the perception of current practice in 2004 and the perception of current practice in 2007.
- With a mean difference of .855, as a whole, the participants ranked the degree of current practice higher in 2007 than in 2004.
- Twenty eight of the 31 recommendations increased in practice from 2004 to 2007.
- The recommendations that were perceived to have a lesser degree of practice in 2004 had a greater degree in perceived longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice in 2004 and 2007).
- There was a statistically significant relationship between the perception of practice (as measured in 2004) of the recommendations and the perceived successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007).

School District Descriptor Data

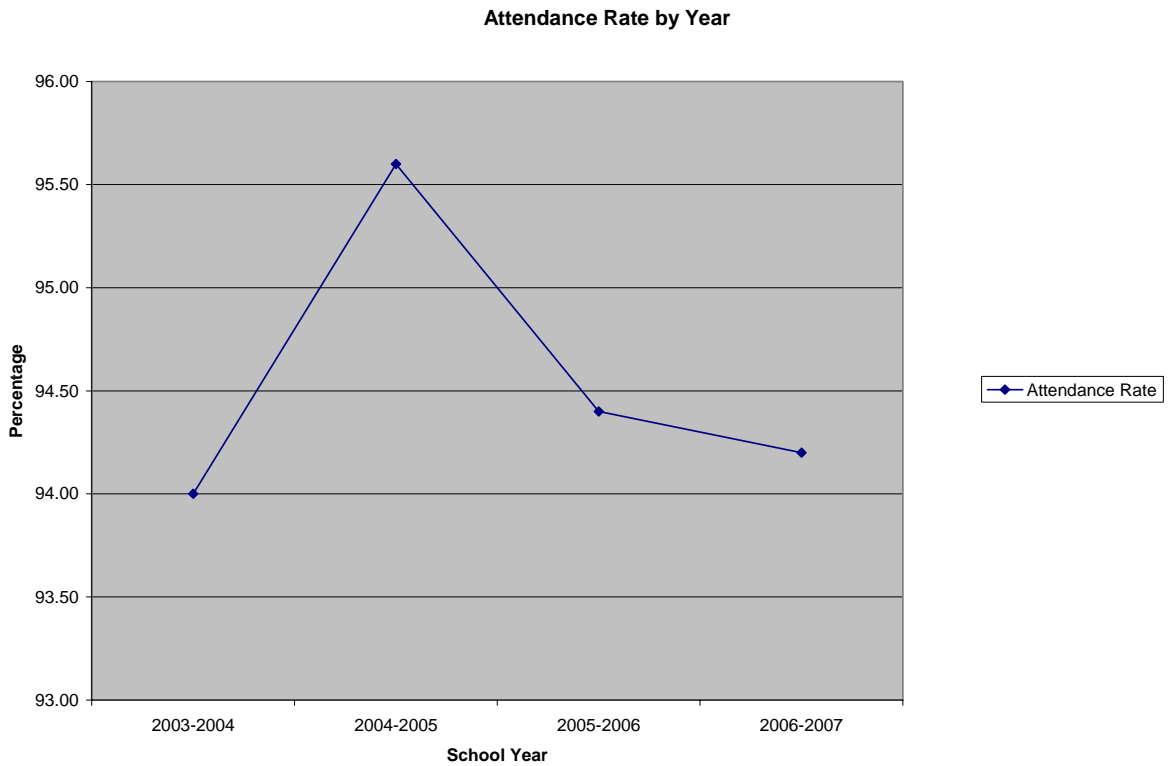
The last section of this chapter includes the examination of specific datasets from Seabro School District with descriptors that typically define effective high schools. The descriptors are described in Chapter Three. These descriptors (datasets) were studied by the High School Reform Committee and outlined in the Seabro School District Reform Plan as areas in which the district sought improvement. Thus, it is appropriate to include them in this

section. However, there are complications in linking the data further with the recommendations as outlined in Chapter Three and Five.

The data is presented by looking at the 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2006-2007 school years. Although the original conversations about high school reform began during the 2003-2004 school year, the individual high schools did not get involved until the end of the 2003-2004 school year. The survey was administered during the summer of 2004. The 2004-2005 school year consisted of planning with implementation following during the 2005-2006 school year. For the purpose of the presentation of this data, the 2003-2004 school year was included to reflect the baseline prior to the reform effort.

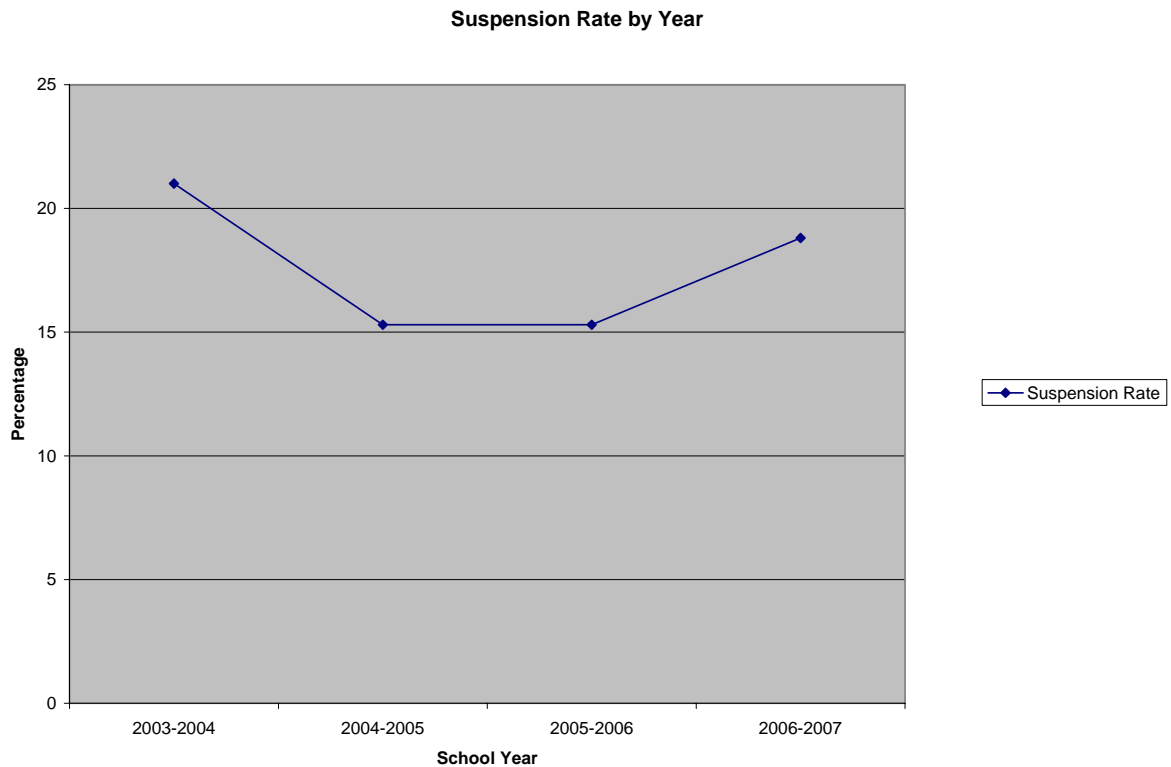
As reflected in Figure 10, during the 2003-2004 school year, the attendance rate for the six high schools in the Seaboro School District which were included in this study was 94.00 percent. The attendance rate for the same group of high schools for the 2006-2007 school year was 94.2 percent.

Figure 10. Attendance Rate for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007



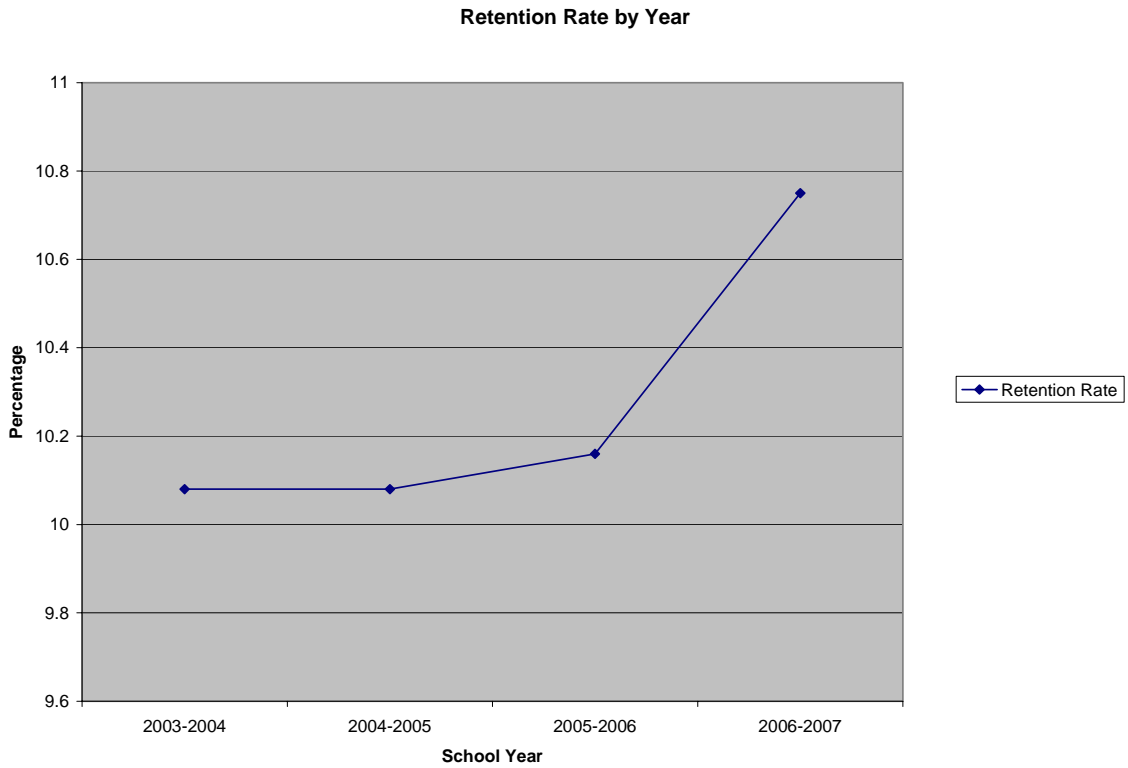
As reflected in Figure 11, during the 2003-2004 school year, the suspension rate for the six high schools in the Seaboro School District which were included in this study was 21.0 percent. This percentage reflects the percent of students who were short-term suspended. The suspension rate for the same group of high schools for the 2006-2007 school year was 18.8 percent.

Figure 11. Suspension Rate for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007



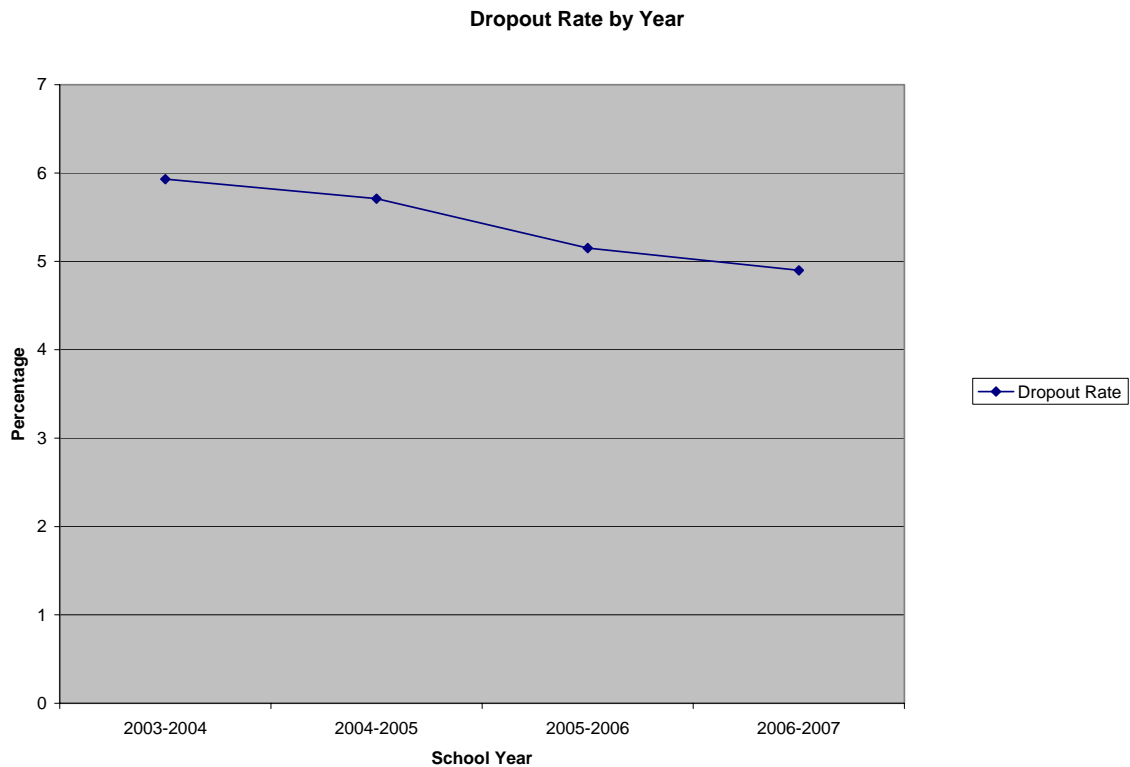
As reflected in Figure 12, during the 2003-2004 school year, the retention rate for the six high schools in the Seaboro School District which were included in this study was 10.08 percent. The retention rate consists of the percentage of students who were promoted to the next grade level at the end of the school year according to the policies in the Seaboro School District. The retention rate for the same group of high schools for the 2006-2007 school year was 10.75 percent.

Figure 12. Retention Rate for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007



As reflected in Figure 13, during the 2003-2004 school year, the dropout rate for grades 9-12 in the Seaboro School District was 5.93 percent. The dropout rate for the Seaboro high schools for the 2006-2007 school year was 4.9 percent.

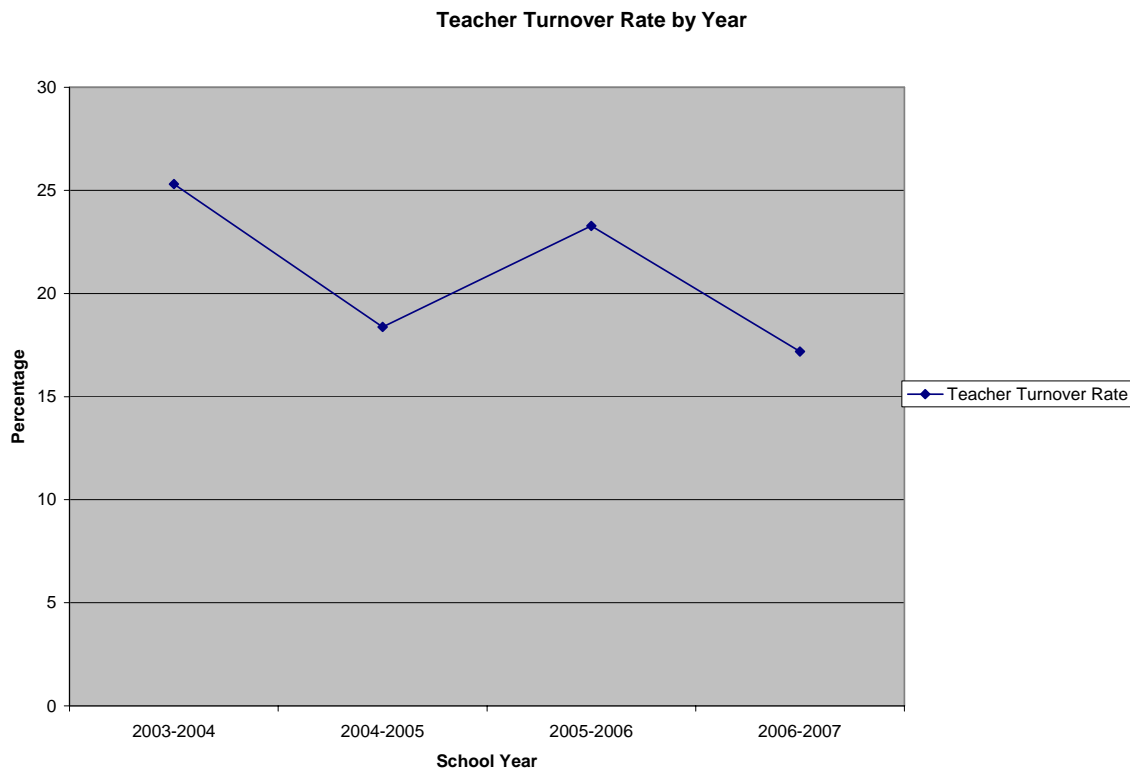
Figure 13. Dropout Rate for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007



Due to changes in the formula, the graduation rate was configured differently through the years of the reform effort. The graduation rate of seniors for the Seaboro high schools was 94.9 percent in the 2003-2004 school year and 96.8 percent for the 2005-2006 school year. Beginning in 2005-2006, the formula was changed to reflect only the percentage of graduates who graduated in four years, which was termed the cohort graduation rate. The cohort graduation rate for the school district in 2005-2006 was 68.8 percent and in 2006-2007 the rate was 66.0 percent. These trends are not reflected in a Figure due to the changes in the reporting.

As reflected in Figure 14, the teacher turnover rate for the Seaboro high schools for the 2003-2004 school year was 25.3 percent. With an eight percent decrease, the high schools had a teacher turnover rate of 17.18 percent for the 2006-2007 school year. This descriptor saw more change than the other descriptors over the reform period.

Figure 14. Teacher Turnover Rate for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007



As reflected in Figure 15, the average of the SAT total scores in the Seaboro high schools was 1001 for the 2003-2004 school year. With a decrease through the years of the

reform period, the high schools had a 983 SAT average score for the 2006-2007 school year. However, with a goal of increasing the number of students taking the SAT in Seaboro, it is difficult to draw any conclusions on changes in SAT scores due to the fact that there was also an increase in the number of students who took the SAT.

Figure 15. SAT Scores for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007

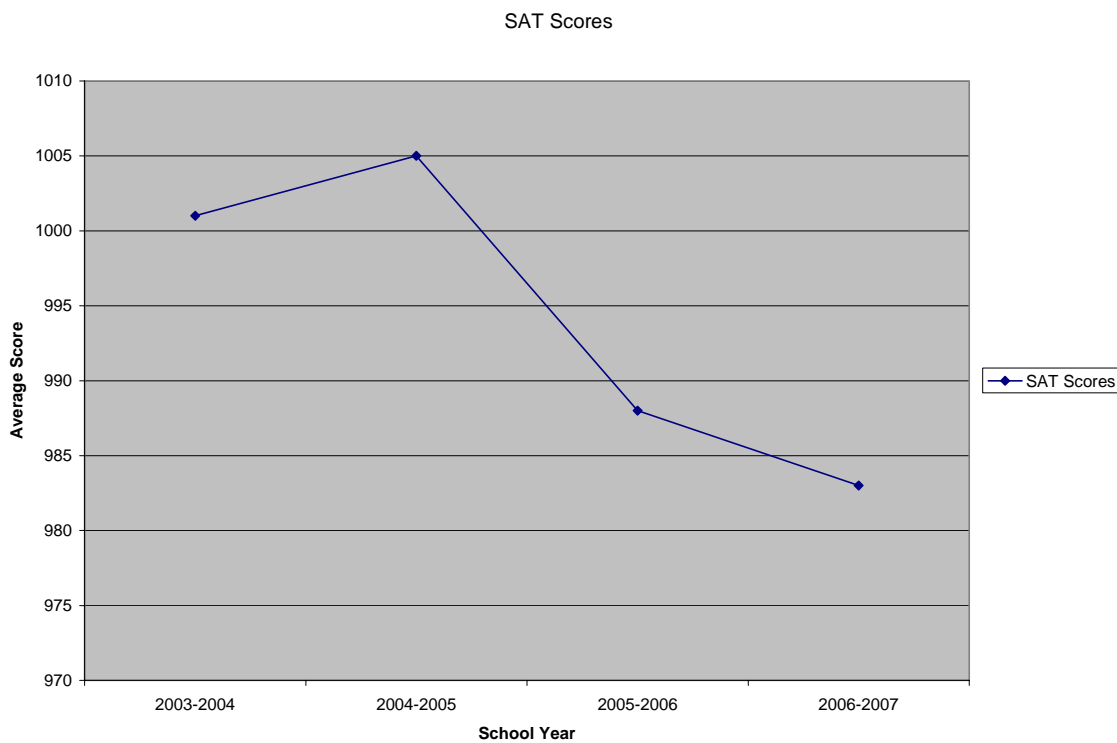
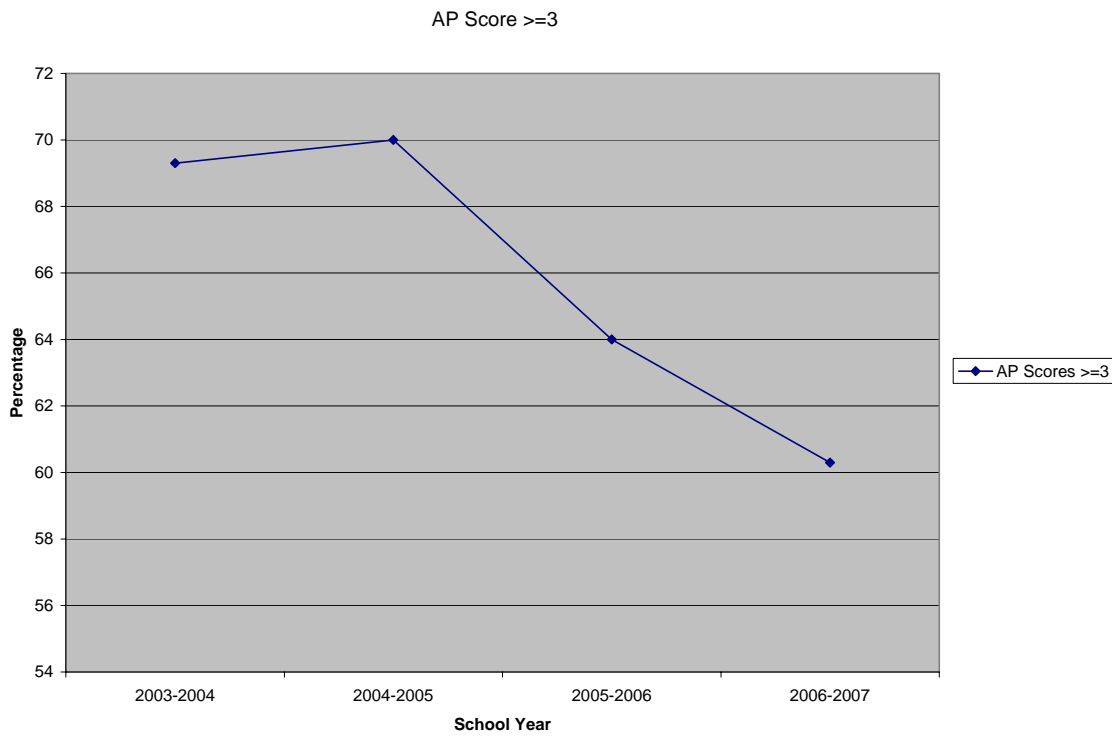


Figure 16 outlines the percentage of Advanced Placement scores that received a three or higher (the range which is often perceived as passing) within the school district. The Seaboro high schools had a 69.3 percent pass rate of Advanced Placement tests (≥ 3) for the 2003-2004 school year. For the 2006-2007 school year, the Seaboro School District had a 60.3 percent pass rate on the Advanced Placement tests. The school district also saw a

dramatic increase in the number of Advanced Placement tests taken with 2093 tests in 2003-2004 and 2553 tests taken in 2006-2007.

Figure 16. Advanced Placement Tests Scoring At or Above a 3 for the High Schools in the Seaboro School District, 2003-2007



The descriptor data provides a more holistic view of the results of the reform effort. The descriptor datasets from 2004 to 2007 provided only slight changes as a school district, therefore making it difficult to draw any conclusions. The datasets that represent improvements during this time period were the suspension rate, dropout rate and the teacher turnover rate. It is right to include the descriptor data in the study. However, with formula

and reporting changes, as well as sporadic results, it is difficult to draw conclusions from the descriptor data results.

Summary

The data from the survey given to the Seaboro School District High School Reform Committee members provided a glimpse of the intricacies of the reform effort. The descriptive quantitative data provided an overview of the perceptions of the reform effort, the suggested best practices, and the implementation of the recommendations over time.

With the 31 *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) recommendations being identified as important from the beginning, there was very little variation in the perception of importance among the recommendations. Moreover, the importance grew very little over the three year period. On the other hand, the perception of how the 31 recommendations were implemented grew over the three year period.

To address Research Question 1, there was not a statistically significant correlation between the perceptions of importance and current practice in both 2004 and 2007. However, there was a statistically significant difference between the perception of importance and current practice in both 2004 and 2007.

To address Research Question 2, there was not a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007. Moreover, there was not a statistically significant difference between the perception of importance in 2004 and importance in 2007. There was not a relationship in the degree of importance and the degree of longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007) as perceived by the stakeholders. Additionally, there

was not a statistically significant relationship between the perception of importance in 2004 of the recommendations and the overall successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in perceptions of current practice from 2004 to 2007).

To address Research Question 3, the perceptions of the practice of the recommendations increased over the three year period. There was a statistically significant correlation between the perception of practice in 2004 and practice in 2007. There was also a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of current practice in 2004 and current practice in 2007. The recommendations which were perceived as having a lower practice in 2004 had a greater rate of perceived longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007). There was also a statistically significant relationship between the perception of practice in 2004 of the recommendations and the perceived overall successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007).

Although not included directly in quantifying the relationship between the importance and current practice, data was also provided to further describe the longitudinal implementation of the overall reform effort. The rates of dropouts, suspensions, and teacher turnover improved from the 2003-2004 school year to the 2006-2007 school year. The areas of attendance, retention, SAT scores, percentage of AYP goals met, and percentage of AP scores at or above a 3, did not show improvement over the same period of time. There were limitations of the data that were identified in Chapter 1, Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 will address the meaning of the data, as well as to outline possible implications of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to examine how various stakeholders perceived the importance and the implementation of 31 recommendations for high school reform as identified in *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004). In doing so, this quantitative study employed a case study methodology that focused on six high schools in the Seaboro School District that have employed the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations as a framework for reform in the school district.

Specifically, the study was aimed at discerning if:

- 1) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) was related to a more intense implementation, and
- 2) a recommendation perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan, and
- 3) a recommendation perceived as having a higher degree of practice by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators) resulted in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan.

As the data suggest, the *Breaking Ranks II* framework proved to be an accurate tool in identifying important best practices. With very little variation between how participants viewed the importance of the recommendations in 2004 and then again in 2007, it is evident that the district leaders identified an effective framework in which to outline their reform effort. With the district using the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations as the guide for the reform effort, it proved to be an effective lens for this study in which to explore the relationship between the recommendations for high school reform and the degree of implementation.

The case study method also provided an in-depth view of one specific district that developed and implemented strategies to improve its high schools. With many different contextual issues (outlined in Chapters Three and Five), as well as various political, human resources, and policy issues (outlined in Chapter Five), the case study method allowed the opportunity to review and examine possible rival hypotheses that could create or hinder change.

The following sections in this chapter analyzed the data and included the following: summary of the findings, understanding the findings, implications of the study, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Findings

As outlined in Chapter 4, the *Breaking Ranks II* survey data provided the framework for the collection of data. Although quantitative, this study provided a descriptive explanation of the importance and implementation of the various recommended best

practices outlined in *Breaking Ranks II*. This section presents a summary of the findings from the data organized by research question.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: If a recommendation was perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), was it related to a more intense implementation of the recommendation?

This study determined that, in the Seaboro School District, if a recommendation was perceived as being more important than others by participants, it did not result in a more intense implementation of the recommendation as perceived by the same participants. With such a high degree of perceived importance across the 31 recommendations, it was difficult to establish which recommendations were “more important than others.” In both 2004 and 2007, however, there was a statistically significant difference on average between the perceptions of importance and current practice. Additionally, the level of perceived implementation of 29 of 31 recommendations did increase through the three year period. One of the noteworthy findings related to Research Question 1 was that there was such a high ranking of importance in both 2004 and 2007 that it was evident that the stakeholders believed the recommendations to be important.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: If a recommendation was perceived as being more important than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), did it result in a more

successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan?

This study determined that, in the Seaboro School District, if a recommendation was perceived as being more important than others by participants, it did not result in a more successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in perceived current practice from 2004 to 2007) after three years of implementing the district reform plan. There was a statistically significant correlation between the perception of importance in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007. There was not a statistically significant difference on average between the perception of importance in 2004 and the perception of importance in 2007. With the mean of the perception of the importance of the recommendations being very high and little variation among the importance of the recommendations, it was difficult to determine which recommendations were perceived as being more important than others. Moreover, when examining the relationship between the perceived importance and the perceived longitudinal implementation, however, it was evident that the degree of importance did not make a difference in the level of implementation over the three year period of time.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: If a recommendation was perceived as having a higher degree of practice than others by participants (teachers, counselors, and administrators), did it result in a more successful longitudinal implementation after three years of implementing the district reform plan?

This study determined that, in the Seaboro School District, if a recommendation was perceived as having a higher degree of practice than others by participants in 2004, then it

did not necessarily result in a more successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference in current practice from 2004 to 2007) after three years of implementing the district reform plan. In contrast, the recommendations that had less implementation in 2004 had a greater increase in implementation over the three year period. Moreover, the recommendations that had a higher degree of practice in 2004 yielded less longitudinal implementation (the difference between practice in 2004 and 2007). There was a statistically significant correlation between the perception of practice in 2004 and the perception of practice in 2007. There was also a statistically significant difference in the perception of current practice in 2004 and the perception of current practice in 2007. Additionally, the participants increased the ranking of current practice by a mean difference of .855 (1.0-5.0 scale) from 2004 to 2007 with the most change coming from those recommendations that had a lower level of implementation in 2004.

Key Findings

Although the findings are outlined in Chapter 4 and in the Summary of the Findings section in Chapter 5, there were several key findings of the study outlined in this section.

- With a mean for all 31 recommendations of 4.529 in 2004 and 4.619 in 2007 (on a 1.0-5.0 scale), it is evident that the participants viewed the recommendations as best practices and perceived them to be important in creating an effective high school.

Although the mean did increase over the time period, the initial perceptions were extremely high.

- There was a statistically significant correlation between the perceptions of importance in 2004 and importance in 2007. There was also a statistically significant correlation between the perception of current practice in 2004 and current practice 2007.
- There was a statistically significant difference on average between the perceptions of importance and current practice in both 2004 and 2007. There was also a statistically significant difference on average between the perceptions of current practice in 2004 and current practice in 2007.
- There was not a relationship between the perception of importance of the recommendation in 2004 and the perceived successful longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference of current practice in 2004 and 2007) after three years of implementing the district reform plan.
- The recommendations that had a higher degree of implementation in 2004 had a smaller degree of longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference of current practice in 2004 and 2007) and the recommendations that had a lower degree of implementation in 2004 had a larger degree of longitudinal implementation (as measured by the difference of current practice in 2004 and 2007) after three years of implementing the district reform plan as perceived by the survey participants.
- Other school data, such as attendance rate, suspension rate, and SAT scores, were not used to a large degree to further explain the reform effort. With formula and reporting changes, there were few datasets that were able to accurately report changes from 2004 to 2007. Furthermore, the datasets that were available from 2004 to 2007 were not closely aligned with the recommendations. The district dropout rate was the one significant dataset because it was indicated in the original goals of the Seaboro

Reform Plan and available for examination from 2004 to 2007. Significantly, during this period, the Seaboro dropout rate decreased when the state dropout rate increased.

To find meaning in the findings, the following two key points should be highlighted:

1. There was an extremely high rating given to the importance of the recommendations both in 2004 and in 2007. Moreover, the importance of a recommendation did not affect the degree of implementation of a recommendation over the three year period as perceived by survey participants.
2. The participants indicated a definite increase in the level of practice of the recommendations from 2004 to 2007 in the surveys.

These two findings are the most glaring of all findings. To understand the meaning of these two findings, one must revisit the state of high schools, the reform process, and the reform initiative as a whole in the Seaboro School District.

The first key finding, an extremely high rating of importance given to the recommendations in both 2004 and 2007, provides insight into reform as a whole. It was evident that even when schools are not effective and achieving adequate student achievement results, it does not necessarily indicate that the personnel involved do not know and understand what could make the school more effective.

In this study, it was evident that the high schools in the district were not achieving the desired results as presented in the call to reform, school data, and the survey data that revealed the perception of implementation of best practices in 2004 (prior to the reform effort). With the high level of the importance ratings, however, it was evident that the

stakeholders agreed that the best practices outlined in *Breaking Ranks II* were important; however, they were not implementing them to a high degree.

With the second key finding, there was evidence that through this reform effort, the implementation of the recommendations increased over the period of time. With an intentional focus on the recommendations, including professional development, monitoring, and continual reflection, the district was able to improve the implementation of the best practices outlined in *Breaking Ranks II*. The recommendations that were perceived to have increased the most were those that were perceived to have a lesser degree of practice in 2004. Thus, perhaps making the stakeholders more aware of recommended best practices focused their efforts. Regardless, there was a significant increase in the perception of implementation over the three year period from the 12 recommendations that were lowest in practice in 2004.

Understanding the Findings

Since this study involved a convenience sample and employed the concept of a case study to capture site specific information, it is important to understand the context of the school district since contextual variables in isolation or in combination may be unique. This uniqueness is the “hinge” of any discussion of what occurred and its importance to other situations in which high school reform may be undertaken.

During the initiation and duration of the reform efforts, there were many notable issues that were surrounding the implementation of the reform effort. This section is organized into three segments to fully describe notable features of the district during the time period from 2004 to 2007. The section also shows the awareness of the researcher of the full interaction of the variables during the period of study. The areas included in this section

include policy issues, district-wide issues, personnel issues, and other notable issues school changes.

Policy Issues

Perhaps the most compelling policy issue overshadowing the high school reform effort in Seaboro was the *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* court case. The *Leandro* case was a lawsuit in which students, parents, and school boards from low-wealth counties challenged the state concerning adequate funding for educating students in their districts. Seaboro School district was included in the filing of the *Leandro* case. Judge Howard Manning, the presiding legal figure in the *Leandro* case, formulated key rulings in 1997 and again in 2004. Judge Manning's Supreme Court ruled that it was the state's responsibility to provide every student with an "equal opportunity to receive a sound basic education" (*Leandro v. State of North Carolina*, 1997). The State Supreme Court went on to define a "sound basic education" as one in which students attained skills in reading, writing, math, geography, and history. Additionally, the Court ruled that education should include sufficient skills to engage in post-secondary education or vocational training and to compete with others in further education or employment. Judge Manning noted that a sound basic education required highly qualified teachers and administrators and that every school must have the resources required to provide students with a sound basic education (*Leandro v. State of North Carolina*, 2002).

As the case progressed, Judge Manning zeroed in on the performance of high schools in 2004 (*Leandro v. State of North Carolina*, 2004). From the *Leandro* rulings, the details of 19 low-performing high schools surfaced. Judge Manning threatened to close down the 19

high schools which had fewer than 60 percent of the students proficient in the tested curriculum. The Seaboro School District had two of the 19 high schools that Judge Manning identified as low-performing. In 2005, Judge Manning began to focus on these schools, including the two high schools in the Seaboro School District, to ensure that there were going to be changes in the performance of the schools and their operations. Additional resources, professional development, and state-level oversight were funneled into the two low-performing Seaboro high schools.

After this push in the *Leandro* case, the state department of education and the district began to place a heavy emphasis on recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers in these low-performing high schools, providing enhanced professional development opportunities, and closely monitoring the work in these schools. Additionally, it was at this time that “turn around” teams were sent to these two high schools to provide further support and direction. Turn around teams included representatives from the state department of education who were assigned to monitor and support the high schools. Additionally, the turn around teams reported the progress to the state department. The *Leandro* mandate and subsequent state department involvement were in place in the Seaboro School District at the onset of high school reform effort.

District-wide Issues

As the *Leandro* case was issued, there was much unrest and disagreement within the broader Seaboro community. The unrest manifested itself at the school board level. With a school board that struggled to maintain positive relations with one another and a community that was very mixed on its views of the progress of the district, much community attention

and administrative energy were being given to the school board during the first two years of the reform plan. The dissension with the schools and within the community often revolved around racial issues. The specific areas of the education system that were often protested and questioned were suspensions, dropout rates, curricular issues, the decisions of teachers and principals, and the superintendent's leadership. During this time period, there was a continual struggle within the school board and within the community regarding the best ways to improve the high schools.

Personnel Issues

District-level Personnel Changes

Although there were personnel changes during the time period of the study involving some key players, there were minimal changes in *who* was involved in district leadership over the time period. Most of the changes included moving different leaders into different roles which may have limited the impact of district-level personnel changes. The changes are listed below (and also in Chapter Three):

- Superintendent – The Superintendent retired after two-and-a-half years into the reform process. Although the retirement was in the midst of the reform effort, it did not occur until after the schools were well into the implementation phase.
- Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services – The Associate Superintendent, who played a key role in the reform process, became Deputy Superintendent and then later Superintendent. This ensured continued top level involvement and commitment since, from the beginning of the initiative, he had been instrumental in the planning

- and implementation of the changes. The Associate Superintendent was always included in the meeting agendas for guided reflection and discussion.
- Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction – This Assistant Superintendent led various central services staff and provided leadership for curriculum and instruction. She was later promoted to the Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services (when the Superintendent retired and the Associate Superintendent became the Superintendent). Thus, the top level of executive leadership of Seaboro was essentially maintained through the transition.
 - Executive Director of High School Reform – This key leader was a high school principal in the early discussions and was later named Executive Director during the summer of 2004. During the time period of the reform plan, this leader was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction but left the district in the fall of 2007 to assume a superintendency in a nearby school system.
 - High School Reform Facilitator – This Director was trained in Facilitative Leadership and was given the charge of organizing and planning the High School Reform meetings. Though the facilitator retired during the time period of the plan, the school district initiated a contract with the individual to continue to serve as the reform facilitator providing continuity in the reform planning meetings.

School Site Personnel Changes

During the reform period there were changes in leadership among the six identified high schools. The changes were as follows:

- School A - There were several leadership changes at School A during the 2003-2007 time period. The principal, who was one of the original members of the High School Reform Team, became an Executive Director of School Choice during the reform period. The leader was responsible for planning for new small schools and schools of choice. The principal was replaced by a Seaboro middle school principal in February of 2005. The replacement remained through much of the implementation phase. This leader, however, was replaced in the spring of 2007 by an experienced principal from outside the Seaboro School district. There were no noticeable changes in school data after the change in principals. School A remained on course and continued implementing the strategies outlined in the reform plan. Additionally, the High School Reform Committee for School A remained intact during the principal transition.
- School B – The principal at School B remained in the school through the planning and approximately 75 percent of the implementation phase that is included in this study. The leader left the school at the end of the 2005-2006 school year, however, to become an Executive Director in the central office. School B’s new principal was an experienced administrator from outside of the Seaboro School District and took the helm prior to the 2006-2007 school year. With the new principal having direct knowledge of the history of the high school and the school data, he came in understanding many of the struggles for the school and school district. School B was under strong guidance from the district and state due to low student achievement. He therefore continued with the plan of action for the school. The principal did not

attempt to make any major changes in the school that were outside of the plans that were already in place when he arrived.

- School C – The principal at School C became principal of the school in 2003. He has been in the Seaboro School District as a high school teacher and administrator for many years. He remained the school principal for the duration of the study and continues to be the principal of School C.
- School D – The principal at School D had been at the school since 2001. He has been in the Seaboro School District in all grade levels as a teacher and administrator for many years. He remained the school principal for the duration of the study and continues to be the principal of School D.
- School E – The principal at School E was hired in the summer of 2004. He had been a teacher and administrator within the Seaboro School District. He remained the school principal for the duration of the study and continues to be the principal of School E.
- School F – The principal at School F was hired in the summer of 2004. He had been a teacher and administrator within the Seaboro School District. He remained the school principal for the duration of the study and continues to be the principal of School F.

As noted in the information above, one can see that changes in leadership did occur, but, with the dominant planning stage of the High School Reform Plan being the 2004-2005 school year, four of the six principals were leading their high schools for the duration of the three-year period. One of the principals was there until the beginning of the 2006-2007

school year, thus, staying for several years of planning and implementation. School A is the only school that had two leadership changes during the time period.

Although there were leadership changes in both the school and the district during the time period, the initiative was able to maintain a high rate of fidelity for several reasons. First of all, the initiative was a district-level reform effort. Thus, the stability of the individuals included in the district leadership was important. Although several of the individuals had new job titles, they remained on the team and served as leaders of the effort. Additionally, the facilitator and organizer of the effort remained the same throughout the entire period. Perhaps most important, the school committees and principals viewed the effort as important, as indicated in the survey data, and therefore, stayed the course through policy and personnel changes.

The High School Reform Committee

The Seaboro School District High School Reform Committee was composed of a school committee from each of the six high schools. The school committees included the principal, an assistant principal, a counselor, and several teachers. After the reform effort began, the committees added a parent to the committee. The Seaboro School District High School Reform Committee meetings often included collaboration between job-alike groups as well as school groups.

In the previous sections, one can follow the changes in district-level and school-level leaders. The changes in the Seaboro High School Reform Committee are more difficult to follow. Throughout the reform period, there were a number of changes in assistant

principals, counselors, teachers, and parents. When a change was made, however, the replacement was always representative of the same group as the member who left.

There were 78 participants in the survey administration in 2004. There were 54 participants who completed the survey in 2007. Forty five of the participants completed the survey in both 2004 and 2007. Also, four of the six principals were present in both cases.

The statistics computed for this study suggest that the 2004 survey results were closely related to the 2007 survey results in a variety of ways which are outlined in Chapter 4. The relationships include a series of statistically significant relationships between the 2004 and 2007 data. The statistics suggest that the results could not have randomly happened and were statistically related.

There are a few key reasons for the minimal impact of the committee turnover:

- Representative changes were made gradually over the reform period.
- When a representative left the committee, a representative from the same school and with the same job title was the replacement.
- The district continued to provide the leadership required to keep the effort moving in a similar direction.
- The same facilitator provided organization and guidance to the Reform Plan meetings. Additionally, the meetings maintained a similar agenda type, meeting norms, and overarching reform initiative goals and strategies.

Other Notable Occurrences

In addition to the personnel changes and policy issues impacting the district during the reform period under study, there were some other notable decisions and changes which occurred.

One of the earliest decisions that emanated from the High School Reform Committee was a decision by the Reform Committee to move towards a block schedule at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year at the five traditional high schools. Although this decision evolved from conversations during the High School Reform Committee meetings, some stakeholders felt that this decision had already been made from the top down, causing a small degree of controversy and trust in the initiative. This change was one of the larger reform plan changes included over the three-year period. For the purpose of this study, this change was not instrumental in determining any of the results, but, the change was one of the biggest changes through the three-year period.

Prior to the High School Reform process, a decision had been made to open a new Early College on the campus of one of the local universities. The school would provide a small school setting for high school students that would allow them to graduate from high school with a high school diploma plus gain as much as two years of college credit. This small school would pull students from the six high schools that are included in the study. The impact of this decision on this study was that this school directly addressed some of the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations.

Additionally, the school pulled students from the six high schools included in this study. With this student turnover, this study could not include school and district data, such as attendance rate, dropout rate, and SAT scores.

Also, during the time of the study, there was a decision made by school district officials to begin a new Middle College for high school students on the campus of the local community college. The decision evolved from conversations during the High School Reform Committee meetings about small schools. The impact of this decision on this study was that this school directly addressed some of the *Breaking Ranks II* recommendations. With this student turnover, this study could not include school and district data, such as attendance rate, dropout rate, and SAT scores.

Similarly, three additional small academies opened in the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year. The small academies were aimed at addressing many of the recommendations outlined in *Breaking Ranks II*. Although the data from these schools are not included in this study, several members of the High School Reform Committee were included in the start of these small schools. Additionally, students were pulled out of all of the high schools to attend these three small schools, thus making it increasingly difficult to analyze school data during the period of the reform.

In summary, this case study allowed for a more thorough examination of the school district during the three year period of time. With the examination of contextual issues, such as policy and personnel changes, the researcher found a much more defined lens in which to examine the reform effort. Although complex, the contextual issues did not seem to have a great impact. Although some of the issues are unique in some respects, the issues did not appear to reshape, recreate, or even to negate the reform effort. Evidence of the minimal impact from the contextual issues includes: the continuance of reform meetings in 2008, the continuance of the initial goals set forth in the reform effort, the continuance of the

discussion of the reform effort, and the continuance of school board updates of the reform effort. The creation of five small schools within the district has the most potential to redefine the reform effort. With the students involved in these five small schools being pulled out of the six schools included in the study, it was difficult to dissect the data to determine the impact of the small schools on the six high schools in the study as well as the impact on the school district as a whole. This change addressed multiple recommendations from *Breaking Ranks II*. With most of the small schools beginning in 2007, the results of this change are not available at the time of this study.

Implications of the Study

Although a case study with nuances specific to the Seabro School District, this study does provide a base upon which some potentially helpful observations can be formulated. The results may be helpful to other administrators in other school systems in understanding how various stakeholders may perceive the importance of identified best practices. Moreover, the results of this study may be helpful in understanding the relationship between how their stakeholders view the importance of the recommendations and the overall implementation of reform strategies. One can also study the varying degrees of recommendation implementation to identify specific recommendations on which to possibly focus or to avoid.

While the Seabro School District High School Reform Initiative was complex, it provides a clear model of a school district reform effort to improve high schools. With many district leaders trying to improve high schools, this initiative provides direction in several ways. This study reveals the importance of recommended best practices. Additionally, this

study provides leaders with an example of one school district in which the implementation of specific reform recommendations increased over a three year period. For high school principals and school district leaders, Seaboro's reform effort has important implications. There are four implications for other school districts that are trying to reform their high schools, similar to the Seaboro School District. The four implications are listed below and the explained in the next four sections.

1. *Belief ≠ Action*
2. *Benchmarks are Essential*
3. *Framework + Commitment = Success*
4. *Buy-in and Motivation are Essential*

Belief ≠ Action

One implication of this study is that the belief of importance does not always translate into action. With a strong belief in the importance of the recommendations outlined in *Breaking Ranks II*, one may speculate that the beliefs would yield action and implementation of those recommendations. This study showed, however, that the degree of importance did not necessarily yield results.

Additionally, the high degree of importance was realized prior to the start of the reform effort. The district leaders did not have to “sell the solution” as required by many reform agents. In this case, the stakeholders recognized the value of the best practices prior to the start of the reform effort. There was a relationship between those recommendations that were perceived to have a greater degree of implementation and those recommendations that may have been easier to implement. Although there was clear growth in the level of

implementation through the three year period, it was evident that the degree of importance did not yield a greater degree of implementation. Thus, concluding that knowing best practices does not necessarily mean that they will be practiced.

Benchmarks are Essential

For districts trying to implement a reform effort focused on high schools similar to Seaboro, it is essential to outline benchmarks to determine if the reform is creating the desired results. In this case, the district established long-term goals and specific strategies to achieve the goals, but, there were no specific measurements to determine progress. The statement, “If you do not know where you are going, then you will not know when you get there” is applicable to reform efforts such as this one.

Furthermore, it is important to determine which practices will lead to the desired outcome. In this case, the district had a lengthy plan compiled of specific strategies. It would be beneficial to identify the desired results and assessment measures for each of the specific strategies. With these specific benchmarks, a district would provide individual schools with a more straightforward plan of action and a plan that can be continually monitored and assessed.

Framework + Commitment = Success

In this study, the district had a thorough framework of best practices to guide the implementation of various programs, schedules, and policy changes. The framework was organized and concise consisting of 31 different recommendations. Additionally, the

stakeholders agreed that the recommendations within the framework were important in achieving the reform plan goals.

Although there were sharp increases in the degree of current practice over the three year period time, the degree of importance of the recommendations remained significantly higher than the degree of practice in 2007. Thus, one can conclude that, although there was a specific framework with important recommendations, the commitment or resources was not there to implement the 31 recommendations to a high degree, to successfully reform the high schools using this framework.

The framework of best practices is only as good as is the commitment to see it implemented. With confidence in the framework of well-researched best practices and minimal increases in current practice, it is essential to gain the commitment from the stakeholders to achieve the desired results.

Buy-in and Motivation are Essential

Similar to the need for commitment, to effectively reform schools, the need to gain buy-in and generate motivation of the stakeholders is essential. With the belief that the recommendations were important, one may suggest that the school district did not “sell the problem” or “sell the need for change” as well as needed to gain full support for the implementation. Moreover, the motivation to change practices may not have been created in order for stakeholders to see the need to implement the best practices.

Furthermore, the importance of buy-in from *all* stakeholders and not just the committee representatives is essential. It appears in this case that the committee members were motivated as seen in their commitment to be involved. Additionally, the committee

members agreed that the recommendations were important to effectively reform the high schools, but there is no evidence that suggests that all stakeholders had similar beliefs or were motivated to achieve reform. One may suggest, in this case, that the motivation of stakeholders throughout the district was extrinsic and directed by district leaders limiting the degree of implementation. In large organizations, such as the six high schools included in this study, it is essential to get most of the stakeholders motivated and agreeable to the change effort.

Recommendations for School Leaders

For school districts pursuing a reform initiative similar to the one in Seaboro, several recommendations can be formulated as a result of the Seaboro reform initiative.

The first recommendation is that the district leaders outline clear, specific goals and strategies for the reform effort. Comprehensive reform is difficult. In this case, 31 different recommendations are posed by *Breaking Ranks II* as essential to high school reform. It would be beneficial to outline the desired goals and implementation strategies for each recommendation. Outlining the goals and strategies provides a clear plan of action and simplifies monitoring throughout the reform effort.

The second recommendation is to generate buy-in and motivation among all stakeholders. Although stakeholders may clearly see that there is a problem and may clearly see the importance of best practices, it is not enough to create the change. Buy-in and motivation are essential in creating change. In this study, it cannot be concluded that there was not buy-in and motivation. The plan, however, does not include the means to achieve buy-in and motivation or to measure the buy-in and motivation among *all* stakeholders.

The third recommendation is to establish clear benchmarks and strategies for measuring progress through the reform effort. This study presented a variety of complications because there were not established benchmarks. Though the descriptor data were helpful, there were too many areas that changed over the three years due to formula changes and reporting differences to link them specifically to a consistent change process agenda. A school district should establish up front the means with which to assess the progress of the reform effort. Though a survey may be helpful in looking at the perceptions of the stakeholders, surveys present a level of subjectivity that may jeopardize the integrity of the data. Thus, creating clearly measurable benchmarks to monitor would allow the district to know if they are achieving the desired results.

The fourth recommendation for district leaders trying to initiate a reform effort similar to Seaboro would be to select or to create a framework, similar to *Breaking Ranks II*, that would focus and organize the reform plan and strategies. It is essential for the stakeholders to continue revisiting the framework and identifying successes and also needs. Furthermore, it is important for the district to identify the framework in the beginning and to determine the use of the framework. Such action will allow the framework to be front and center to the stakeholders. An intentional focus on the framework allows stakeholders to self-monitor their progress as well as to redirect themselves when needed.

The fifth recommendation that comes as a result of this study is to build on what stakeholders view as important. For example, from the beginning, the stakeholders in this study viewed the 31 recommendations as very important. It could be beneficial to capitalize on the items that stakeholders viewed as very important in order to create additional

motivation and generate buy-in for action. In this case, Seaboro did not structure its implementation plan based on the pre-existing opinions and values that the stakeholders held.

Implications for the Field of Education

As a result of this case study, there are implications for the field of education as a whole. Although the nuances and complexities of one school district may prevent other districts from replicating the same reform effort under the same set of circumstances and conditions, there are implications for the field of education. First of all, as educational leaders continue efforts to reform high schools it is imperative for leaders to determine the specific goals of high schools and what students should have mastered upon their exit from high school. With many different approaches, goals, and opinions of high school, there is a conflict in opinions on what high schools should look like and achieve. Additionally, once the goals of high school have been outlined, it is important to determine if the structures and systems to achieve the goals are in place. As new research surfaces concerning effective high schools, educators should examine the structures and systems needed to achieve the desired results.

Another implication for the field of education continues to be the need for educational leaders to understand the reform process and to be able to effectively lead change. Furthermore, there is a place for all educators, including teachers, counselors, and staff members, to understand the change process and to understand how to design and generate change. Too often, the leaders know and understand the reform process while the many stakeholders involved do not understand the change process.

In this case, one must ask the question, “What would have happened in Seaboro if the reform initiative were a grassroots effort led by teacher leaders?” From this study, one can see the value of the recommendations as revealed in the survey data, but can also see the gap in the level of implementation of the recommendations. This gap between the level of importance and the level of implementation may prompt speculation that there was not enough motivation, buy-in, or commitment from *all* of the stakeholders to generate the desired outcomes. It may not be enough to employ a reform initiative through a representative group of participants, including teachers, counselors, and parents, as well as the educational leaders in a district. There may be a need to include more individuals, or even all individuals, in the planning process and the implementation process of the reform initiative.

Limitations of the Study

To assure the objectivity and candidness of this study, as well as to provide the reader a better understanding of what may be gained from the study, the limitations of this study are described in this section.

1. *Characteristics of the school district and schools:* The case study was limited to six high schools in one school district. The school district is one diverse urban community. One of the six high schools is a magnet school. Two of the six high schools were deemed “low performing” by the state department due to lagging test scores. Additionally, as outlined in Chapter Three and Chapter Five, some contextual issues may hinder one’s ability to replicate the Seaboro reform initiative.

2. *Absence of student achievement data:* This study did not perform a thorough examination of student achievement scores. With changes made in test methods and proficiency levels at the state and federal levels, the researcher determined not to include state standardized test scores as the primary method of examining the reform plan. To examine the overall impact of the reform effort, the researcher reviewed student achievement data such as: SAT scores, Advanced Placement scores, Performance Composites, and the percentage of AYP goals met. Changes in data reporting through the reform years prevented the use of the student achievement data that was available.
3. *High School Reform Plan:* There was a district-wide plan for reform in the high schools in the school district. Additionally, each of the high schools had a school-wide plan that included a diverse range of measures and interventions, causing a degree of variability among high schools. Within the plan, there were not measurable benchmarks or a monitoring plan to determine if and when the reform plan strategies had been implemented to a maximum degree. These deficiencies made it difficult to determine if the reform effort was successful.
4. *Stakeholder perceptions:* All aspects of this study are dependent on teacher, counselor, and administrator perceptions as revealed in a self assessment that was administered in 2004 and then again in 2007. The survey that was given to members of the High School Reform Committee relied on the perceptions of what is important and perceptions of the degree to which the reform initiative had been implemented. Although the High School Reform Committee was representative of all stakeholders, the survey data, however, were limited to those on the High School Reform

- Committee. The perceptions of all stakeholders was not measured or included as a part of this study.
5. *Researcher relationship to Seaboro School District:* The researcher has worked in the school district over the past seven years in a middle school and a high school. However, the researcher did not play a role in the planning or implementation of the system's High School Reform Plan. While school district officials were supportive of the researcher's efforts, the researcher was under no pressure to report the findings in any particular manner, nor were officials particularly sensitive about the outcome.
 6. *Conceptual framework:* The case study used the *Breaking Ranks II* framework to examine this reform initiative. The conclusions drawn from the study were limited to the characteristics of effective high schools identified through *Breaking Ranks II*. *Breaking Ranks II* was selected because the school district used this as a framework for their reform.
 7. *Reform Plan inconsistencies:* The district-wide reform initiative was neither conceptually or operationally precise nor consistent, with much flexibility in what each school could do within the effort. Thus, any report of the results must consider the variability of the implementation and the lack of uniformity among schools. The case study method, however, allowed the researcher to probe the complexity of the effort over an extended time period.
 8. *Determining "successful longitudinal implementation":* Perhaps one of the greatest limitations of this study was the difficulty in establishing "successful longitudinal implementation." With an original plan to examine school data that typically define effective high schools, changes in formulas and reporting made it difficult to use

these data as the primary means of defining successful longitudinal implementation. Thus, the primary means of determining the successful longitudinal implementation for the purpose of this study was done by calculating the difference between the perceptions of current practice in 2004 and current practice in 2007, as described by the High School Reform Committee members. The committee members described their perceptions on a self-assessment survey that included ranking the current level implementation of the 31 recommendations on a 1.0-5.0 scale. The successful longitudinal implementation was essentially the perceived growth (or lack of growth) of the recommendations as perceived by the High School Reform Committee. During the planning phase of the reform initiative, the Seabro School District selected for examination additional data that typically describe effective high schools. The areas of the data included were: attendance, suspension, retention, teacher turnover, dropout, graduation, cohort graduation, SAT scores, Performance Composites, percentage of AYP goals met, and Advanced Placement test data. The specific datasets that allowed the researcher to look at trends over the reform period were included in Chapter Four. Although the other datasets were examined, they were excluded once it was determined that they could not be used due to formula or reporting changes.

9. *The case study method:* Case study methodology was employed to allow an in-depth probe of one particular reform effort in one school district. Having only one case (a single school district with six high schools) may limit how the data will be used and how others may view them. One must consider the characteristics of the school district and the context of the operations of the district to fully understand the results

and how they can link the findings to other school districts. Some of the complexities and nuances are included in Chapter Three and Chapter Five so that the reader may have a better understanding of the school district included in this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

In one sense, this study is another piece of the larger body of school reform research. This research provides a first step in exploring the specific nature of high school reform, using the *Breaking Ranks II* framework. In looking ahead to future research, there are additional areas in high school reform, as well as school reform in general, that may be studied in order to continue improving schools.

It could be beneficial to study other school systems that have used the *Breaking Ranks II* framework for high school reform. Additionally, it could be beneficial to study other school systems which have used other frameworks for high school reform. Comparative studies could provide educational leaders with information about possible reform frameworks in an effort to aid them in the selection of a reform model.

It could be advantageous to continue the study of Seaboro School District's high school reform effort. As the High School Reform Committee continues to meet in 2008, there is a need to determine if the reform effort is sustainable and if so, for how long. Moreover, it could be beneficial to study the many nuances that pervade the Seaboro School District and to examine how they may or may not have impacted the results. A case study allows the researcher to investigate the complexities, and, in this case, there are many complexities that in and of themselves can be studied to determine the impact on reform.

It could also be valuable to further examine the actual reform process in Seaboro. Although the process was examined, the reform process was not the focus of the study. It could be valuable to explore reform decisions such as: the committee selection process, the development of the reform plan, the decision-making process, the leadership strategies, and the reform meetings. In many ways, Seaboro followed a textbook model of school reform. It could be useful to determine if the process affected the implementation of the recommendations or if the process impacted the results in any way. Furthermore, it could be advantageous to determine what barriers there were in implementing the recommendations that the stakeholders perceived as being very important. There are many possible causes to the implementation gap. A study could provide the district further guidance on how to improve the implementation.

Lastly, the Seaboro School District is in the early years of the small schools initiative which evolved from the High School Reform initiative. It could be beneficial to examine whether the small schools are helping the district to achieve the goals. Furthermore, it could be helpful to determine the impact of the small schools on the traditional high schools.

As a part of the initial process of planning future research, the researcher intends to share the data from this study, as well as the implications and recommendations, with the Seaboro School District leaders. Additionally, the researcher will present the information to the High School Reform Committee. The intention of this effort is to allow the study to further guide and direct decisions made by the Seaboro School District to improve its high schools. Moreover, the researcher intends to present the recommendations to state level high school reform leaders in an effort to provide guidance in the high school reform process.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: The *Breaking Ranks II* Recommendations

Appendix B: The *Breaking Ranks II* Model

Appendix C: Seaboro School District High School Reform Plan

Appendix D: *Breaking Ranks II* Survey

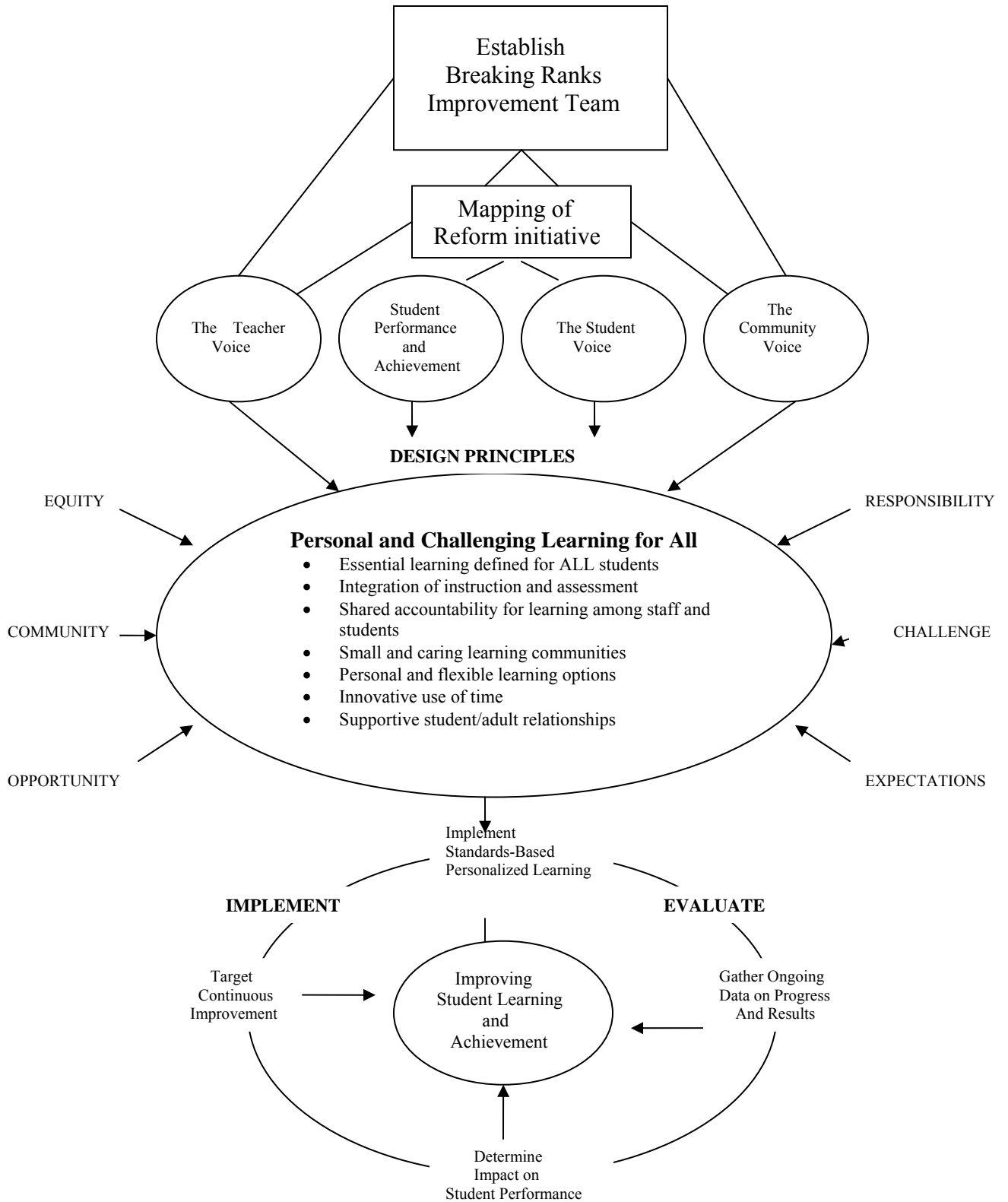
Appendix A: The *Breaking Ranks II* Recommendations

- 1 The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning
- 2 Each high school will establish a site council and accord other meaningful roles in decision making to students, parents, and members of the staff in order to promote student learning and an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
- 3 A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school's learning goals.
- 4 Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role.
- 5 Every school will be a learning community for the entire community. As such, the school will promote the use of Personal Learning Plans for each educator and provide the resources to ensure that the principal, teachers, and other staff members can address their own learning and professional needs as they relate to improved student learning.
- 6 The school community will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and will offer substantive ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.
- 7 High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.
- 8 High schools will develop political and financial relationships with individuals, organizations, and businesses to support and supplement educational programs and policies.
- 9 At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a public description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations by state, regional, and other accrediting groups.
- 10 High schools will create small units in which anonymity is banished.
- 11 Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.
- 12 Each student will have a Personal Plan for Progress that will be reviewed often to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and to allow students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning in an effort to meet high standards.
- 13 Every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience.
- 14 Teachers will convey a sense of caring to their students so that their students feel that their teachers share a stake in their learning.
- 15 High schools will develop flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow better use of time in order to meet the individual needs of students to ensure academic success.
- 16 The high school will engage students' families as partners in the students' education.
- 17 The high school community, which cannot be value neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society.
- 18 High schools, in conjunction with agencies in the community, will help coordinate the delivery of physical and mental health and social services for youth.

- 19 Each high school will identify a set of essential learnings--above all, in literature and language, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts--in which students must demonstrate achievement in order to graduate.
- 20 Each high school will present alternatives to tracking and to ability grouping.
- 21 The high school will reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the extent possible and emphasize depth over breadth of coverage.
- 22 The content of the curriculum, where practical, should connect to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future.
- 23 The high school will promote service programs and student activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.
- 24 The academic program will extend beyond the high school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building.
- 25 Teachers will design high-quality work and teach in ways that engage students, cause them to persist, and when the work is successfully completed, result in their satisfaction and their acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and other abilities valued by society.
- 26 Teachers will know and be able to use a variety of strategies and settings that identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students.
- 27 Each high school teacher will have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area.
- 28 Teachers will be adept at acting as coaches and facilitators to promote more active involvement of students in their own learning.
- 29 Teachers will integrate assessment into instruction so that assessment is accomplished using a variety of methods and does not merely measure students, but becomes part of the learning process.
- 30 Recognizing that education is a continuum, high schools will reach out to elementary- and middle-level schools as well as institutions of higher education to better serve the articulation of student learning and to ensure that each stage of the continuum understands what will be required of students at the succeeding stage.
- 31 Schools will develop a strategic plan to make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize and improve the learning process.

From *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004.

Appendix B: The *Breaking Ranks II* Model



From Lachat, Mary Ann. *Data-Driven High School Reform: The Breaking Ranks Model*. Providence, RI: Brown University, 2001, p. 34.

Seaboro School District
High School Reform Plan

May 2005

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The Context and History of High School Reform in Seaboro

Conditions Prompting Reform

During the winter of the 2003-04 school year, Superintendent XXXX, members of the Seaboro School District senior staff, and high school principals met on several occasions to discuss the status of high school performance. Although there had been some improvements in state ABCs test scores over the past few years, achievement at the high school had been relatively flat on the required End-of-Course tests. Suspension and dropout numbers were unacceptably high, and too few students were graduating in four years.

Together, administrators and principals decided that it was time for a bold, public initiative. They decided to convene a committee of seven representatives from each high school: the principal, an assistant principal, a counselor, and four teachers. (Later in the process, each school also added a parent representative.) They would meet twice a month for a year to study data, to identify best practices, and to reach agreement on a plan for Seaboro's high schools.

Seaboro School District's high school reform initiative has unfolded during a time of unprecedented focus on high schools at both the state and national levels. Both educators and policy makers have called for redesigning—even rethinking—the high school, traditionally an institution seen as impervious to change. Suddenly everyone seemed focused on how best to create high schools that are characterized by high expectations, greater achievement, and continuous improvement. Every meeting and report on high school reform began to repeat the “3-R” slogan “Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships,” sometimes adding a fourth R—“Results!”

There are numerous examples of state and national interest in improving the effectiveness of high schools:

1. Over the past few years, the North Carolina legislature has increased graduation requirements and expectations (increasing mathematics requirement to four units, issuing standards for honors courses, required completion of a senior project, and higher standards for North Carolina Scholars designation).
2. Federal No Child Left Behind legislation has begun holding high schools accountable for graduating students in four years.
3. Both state and federal government and private foundations such as the Ford Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have begun promoting redesigning high schools into small, focused learning communities and blending high school and college work during the junior and senior year.
4. In early 2004, five local corporations provided major funding for the Regional Partnership for Excellence to focus on high school reform in the five surrounding counties.
5. Also in 2004, the Carnegie Foundation and the National Association of Secondary School Principals published *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High*

School Reform, providing updated research and recommendations for reforming high schools.

The Purpose of the High School Reform Initiative

Prior to the first meeting of the High School Reform Committee in April 2004, Seaboro School District senior staff developed a charge for the group:

“After analyzing data and investigating research-based practices, the committee will create a district plan for high school reform. Each school committee will also develop an action plan with specific goals.”

This statement of the initiative’s purpose signaled that the work of the committee would happen at two levels simultaneously: at both the district level (what we would all agree to do as a district) and at the individual school level (how each school would address its own particular needs within the context of the district’s overall plan).

Seaboro School District’ Vision for High School Students

The Vision Statement of Seaboro School District reads: “Seaboro School District will ensure that students achieve at highest potential regardless of race, gender or social-economic status. Each student will make continuous progress and will be at or above grade level.” At the high school level, the implications of this statement are that all students will graduate from high school ready for the next level of their education or ready to work at a skilled job.

As the work of the High School Reform Committee progressed, it became clear that the best way to express this vision in measurable terms was to align the initiative with the goals already set by the Regional Partnership for High School Excellence, which included the 100% graduation target of federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

The Process of the High School Reform Committee’s Work

The committee scheduled meetings for twice a month (one whole-day and one half-day meeting) over an entire year. To accomplish the purpose in this series of meetings, administrators employed the following strategies:

- *Use of a neutral facilitator.* Dr. XXXX, Executive Director for Grants Administration and one of five Facilitative Leadership master trainers in North Carolina, agreed to facilitate each meeting. This allowed central administrators (Superintendent, associate and assistant superintendents, and executive directors) to participate in discussions as equal members of the task force.
- *Agenda designed to produce outcomes.* Each agenda listed the desired outcomes for the meeting. Whenever possible, agenda items called for active participation of all participants and asked school teams or ad hoc groups to produce products (for example, lists of agreed-upon priorities), which were then incorporated in the minutes.

- *Ground rules.* At the first meeting, the committee agreed to be governed by a set of ground rules, including using consensus as the preferred method of decision making. In addition to the usual ground rules of speaking one at a time and honoring time limits, the committee agreed to a few that truly spoke to their commitment to reforming high schools: “Keep the needs of students in the forefront;” “No looking backward to the past, except to learn from it;” and “No whining!”
- *Minutes.* At each meeting, a secretary from central services took notes on a laptop computer. After each meeting, minutes were sent out by email for review, approved at the subsequent meeting, and posted on the district’s web site.
- *Continuous improvement of the process.* Each meeting ended with an evaluation of the meeting using the Plus/Delta tool (“What worked? What could make it better next time?”) Over time, the committee requested the addition of particular components to the meetings. By the end of the first year’s work, each agenda contained “Reports from the Field” (an opportunity for each school team to share what they were engaged in at their school, “Issues Forum” (an opportunity for committee members to bring forth concerns directly to central administration), and increasing amounts of individual school team planning time.

Progress (April 2004 – April 2005)

The High School Reform Initiative was designed to follow three general phases:

- Data Collection and Analysis—understanding exactly where we were as a district in terms of student achievement, suspensions, dropouts, attendance, participation in honors and advanced placement classes, and college readiness.
- Determining Best Practices—learning from national, research-based models of high school reform as well as from other districts within North Carolina.
- Designing Strategies for Local High School Reform—agreeing on strategies to implement in the 2005-06 school year and beyond.

Data Collection and Analysis

Early on, administrators decided to present each school’s data to the entire high school reform committee. All data would be shared publicly, confronted directly, and analyzed without assigning blame. The intention was to understand exactly where each school stood in terms of student performance data.

During the committee meetings of April 8, April 20, May 11, and June 17, 2004, Dr. XXXX, Seaboro School District Director of Assessment and Accountability, presented the committee with data and provided questions for each school team to answer about their school’s data. At the end of each of the data analysis sessions, committee members were asked to identify additional data they needed. If such data was available, Dr. XXXX presented it at the following meeting. By the end of this phase of the initiative, school teams had analyzed the following data:

- Attendance

- End-of-Course Test Results
- ABCs Status over last four years
- SAT results
- Suspensions and Dropouts
- No Child Left Behind Outcomes
- Promotion and Retention Data
- Level of Preparedness of Rising Ninth Graders (8th grade EOG results)
- NC Report Card (including teacher preparation and turnover data in addition to student test results)
- University of North Carolina Freshman Performance Report

Determining Best Practices

At the first meeting, each committee member received a copy of *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (see above). Each high school team agreed to take one section of the book and present it at the three subsequent meetings. Each team prepared a summary of that section and designed an activity so that each participant would actively engage in discussion of the issues. These activities included audio-visual presentations, role-playing, and a panel of students who talked about their successes and struggles in high school.

Having knowledge of this important national report, at the committee meeting on July 8, 2004, participants considered each of the 31 recommendations of *Breaking Ranks II*, and ranked them on a scale of 1 to 5 on each of two questions: “How important is this recommendation?” and “What level do you believe this recommendation is practiced in your school?” Participants met in four “job-alike” groups: principals and assistant principals, counselors, and two groups of teachers. Each group then reached consensus on the levels of importance and practice for each recommendation. Results were displayed in a chart for all to see. After this activity the group could see that they agreed that all of the recommendations were important but that there was a discrepancy in the level of implementation of various recommendations. At the meeting on July 22, participants looked again at the recommendations, considering those which had the greatest discrepancy between the group’s sense of importance and its current implementation. For example, participants gave recommendation 11 (“Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.”) an average score of 4.7 in importance, but 1.5 in implementation, thereby creating one of the larger “gaps” of 3.2. Similarly, recommendation 15 (“High schools will develop flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow better use of time in order to meet the individual needs of students to ensure academic success.”) received a 4.8 on importance but a 2.0 on implementation, with a “gap” of 2.8. Discussion of these two recommendations served as a backdrop to a presentation about options for the high school schedule and contributed to the group’s support of the 4x4 block schedule.

Also at the July 22 meeting, the committee assessed whether the “high gap” recommendations should be addressed at the central level or at the individual school level

and whether the item could be implemented in the 2004-05 school year or should wait until a subsequent year.

In addition to the work with *Breaking Ranks II*, the committee heard presentations from a variety of speakers during the course of their year's work. The following chart below summarizes these sources of reform strategies.

Date	Speaker/Organization	Topic
April 20, 2004	John Dornan, Exec. Dir. Public School Forum	The Need for High School Reform: The Big Picture
July 22, 2004	Steve Hauge Wake County Schools	Options for the High School Schedule
July 22, 2004	Van Langston, Exec. Dir. High Five Regional Partnership for High School Excellence	A Regional View of High School Reform
August 19, 2004	Steve Hauge	Policy Implications for the Block Schedule
September 16, 2004	Dr. Lynn Canady University of Virginia	High School Grading Practices Block Schedule as a Catalyst for Change
October 7, 2004	Dr. Alan Teasley Seaboro School District	An Overview of Robert Marzano's <i>What Works in Schools</i>
October 21, 2004	Brian Whitehead The Flippen Group	<i>Capturing Kids' Hearts</i> Framework for School Personalization
October 21, 2004	Whole Committee Seminar	Robert Marzano's <i>Classroom Instruction that Works</i>
November 4, 2004	Larry Brown The College Board	Preparing for the New SAT SAT Prep Software
November 18, 2004	Dr. Fenwick English & Dr. Betty Steffy UNC-Chapel Hill	Deep Curriculum Alignment
February 1, 2005 (Joint meeting with Middle School Reform Committee)	Dr. Phil Schlechty Center for Leadership and School Reform	Secondary School Reform Across the Nation
March 17, 2005	Dr. Loretta Polhill & Robert Mackin National Council on Education and the Economy	<i>America's Choice</i> High School Reform Model

Designing Strategies for Local High School Reform

Although school teams took some time at each meeting to discuss implications of data and presentations for their particular school's situation, work on the individual school plans began in earnest in January 2005. During the meetings in the spring semester of 2005, the committee reached agreement on five focus areas for high school reform in Seaboro School District and on the key district-wide strategies for the 2005-06 school year. Each

school team then decided on the strategies they would employ at their school to align with the goals and strategies.

Measurable Goals of the High School Reform Initiative

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by the federal No Child Left Behind Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

In addition to these goals, schools could set additional goals in their individual school plans.

Focus Areas for District-Wide High School Reform

In the winter of 2005, the High School Reform Committee agreed on five broad areas to focus the work of reform:

1. Increase the **academic rigor** of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards
2. Implement strategies so that students see the **relevance of school** and develop **productive relationships with peers and adults**.
3. Align the **structure, calendar, schedule, and governance** of the high school to provide a more personalized education.
4. Involve **parents, community agencies, and businesses** in high school reform.
5. Recruit and retain **highly qualified high school teachers**; provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

District-Wide Strategies for High School Reform

For each of the focus areas above, the High School Reform Committee reached consensus on specific district-wide strategies. In some cases, these were activities that would be directed by central office administrators; in other cases, these were activities that each school would take. For each of the five areas, school teams also designed specific strategies that would support the implementation of the district strategies.

The following section contains the district-wide strategies; each school's specific strategies are contained in their individual school plans, which follow the district plan.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seaboro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

- A. By May 2005, the district will create documents that fully align all Seaboro School District high school courses with the NC Standard Course of Study: course overviews, unit plans, sample lesson plans, and links to textbook and other resources. Unit and lesson plans will reflect “best practice” instructional strategies, and engaging curriculum. The district will provide this information to all high school teachers online via Riverdeep software.
- B. By May 2006, the district will complete a set of lesson plans for all EOC and VOCATS courses and make them available through Riverdeep.
- C. By December 2005, the district will align all Seaboro School District honors courses with newly developed state standards.
- D. The district will increase the number of credits required for graduation and revise Board of Education policies as necessary to remove barriers to students’ successful progress toward graduation.
- E. The district and each school will focus existing resources to increase student participation in advanced coursework (such as PSAT administration to all sophomores and juniors, use of AP Potential software and SAT Prep software, and participation in AP/IB teacher training).
- F. Each high school will develop courses specifically for students who need additional support (such as AVID, “double dose” courses in English and mathematics, and learning strategies classes for ECP students).
- G. The district will provide schools with more comprehensive and user-friendly reports of student performance data to use in the evaluation and planning of instruction.
- H. The district will fully implement the early college high school on the campus of a local university and the middle college high school on the campus of the local community college. The district will explore additional opportunities for blending high school and college work for advanced students.
- I. Pending budget approval, the district will provide late bus transportation for students to increase participation in after school tutoring and other school-related activities.

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities

District Focus: Seaboro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

- A. By June 2006, each high school will develop a plan to ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult in the building.
- B. By June 2006, the district will articulate a K-12 plan to improve students' transition from elementary to middle schools and middle schools to high schools.
- C. The district will provide support and will focus resources for schools to establish smaller learning communities (such as freshman academy, career academies, interdisciplinary teacher teams, and schools-within-schools). [Note: also listed under Organization, Structure and School Governance below.]
- D. The district will support high schools in developing comprehensive academic monitoring systems and safety nets for students who are struggling. By June 2006, each school will develop a plan for early identification of students not making satisfactory progress and a system for comprehensive parent notification.
- E. In the 2005-06 school year, the district will establish a task force to make recommendations to promote engagement in the senior year, using such strategies as senior projects, service learning, mentorships, and so forth.
- F. Each high school will create opportunities for expanded student participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seaboro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

- A. In August 2005, the district will implement the 4x4 block schedule in all non-magnet high schools.
- B. The district will identify and will focus resources for alternative course delivery models such as online courses, dual enrollment in college courses, independent study, and expanded operating hours.
- C. The district and each high school will provide support and will focus resources for schools to establish smaller learning communities (such as freshman academy, career academies, interdisciplinary teacher teams, and schools-within-schools). [Note: also listed under Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities above.]

- D. The district will continue to explore opportunities for creating small, focused high schools such as the early college high school, the middle college high school, and a career/vocational center.
- E. In 2005-06, the district will continue quarterly meetings of the High School Reform Committee to provide for ongoing monitoring of progress and further development of reform strategies. The district administration will continue to expect committee members to serve as a communication link to each school's staff, site-based decision-making committee, and parent groups.

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

- A. The district will continue to support Connect-ED and a High School Reform web site as tools for parent communication and public awareness. The district will also use Cable Channel 4 to promote public awareness of high school issues.
- B. The district will continue to support such programs as the High School Options Fair, the Showcase of Schools, and AP Nights.
- C. The district will continue to collaborate with higher education partners to ensure that high school students are prepared to be successful when they enter college and to develop opportunities for dual enrollment in high school and college.
- D. Seaboro School District will continue to collaborate with the business and public school partners that comprise the Regional Partnership for High School Excellence Initiative on projects of mutual interest:
- E. The district will make an annual report to the Board of Education on the progress of high school reform in the district.
- F. Each high school will implement strategies designed to involve parents as partners in high school students' education.
- G. Each high school will promote internships, mentorships, and service learning opportunities for students.

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seaboro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

- A. Human Resource Services will work with high school principals to recruit and hire teachers who meet NCLB’s “highly qualified” standards.
- B. The district will provide new teachers with more comprehensive support, including a trained mentor and orientation to the Riverdeep curriculum materials.
- C. The district will work with any school experiencing high teacher turnover to develop a plan to improve the retention of quality teachers at the school.
- D. The district will provide targeted staff development for teachers and administrators on curriculum aligned with the Standard Course of Study and on instructional strategies that promote high student achievement. The district will support alternative ways of providing professional development, such as online courses, lesson study groups, and faculty seminars.
- E. In the 2005-06 school year, the district will provide each high school teacher with a wireless laptop computer to provide access to the Riverdeep curriculum materials and other Internet resources.
- F. The district will provide principals and assistant principals with “curriculum walk-through” training to improve administrators’ monitoring of curriculum and instruction.
- G. Each school will include in its school improvement plan strategies for professional development related to high school reform.

Accomplishments to Date of the High School Reform Initiative

This document is a plan for the future; however, it is important to note that the committee’s work over the past year has already served as a catalyst for change in Seaboro’s high schools and a focus for central office support activities. The following list provides a sample of activities prompted by the High School Reform Initiative.

- Created an awareness of how to use data more effectively to improve instruction in high schools.
- Revised board policy increasing graduation requirements.
- Conducted a comprehensive review of the high school curriculum.
- Focused high school staff development on effective instructional strategies for the block schedule and on aligning the written, taught and tested curriculum.
- Provided staff development addressing various instructional strategies, including Marzano’s instructional strategies, Socratic seminar, cooperating learning, and teaching strategies for extended learning time.
- Provided high school schedule development training with national experts.
- Created alignment guides for all EOC, AP, and CTE courses consistent with the block schedule.
- Designed courses specifically tailored for EC students.

- Designed “ramp up” or “double dose” courses for ninth grade students with serious deficiencies in English and mathematics.
- Developed strategies for increasing participation in AP and honors courses.
- Initiated a College Success Partnership with local colleges and universities.
- Convened the first-ever Assembly of Advanced Placement Teachers featuring a presentation on Access and Equity by Pat Martin, Vice President of the College Board.
- Provided the stimulus for developing an instructional Intranet with comprehensive teaching resources for all high school courses.
- Conducted training with ECP and regular education teachers on effective instructional strategies in an inclusion model.
- Provided each high school with software for SAT Prep, test-item development, and interventions strategies for reading and mathematics.
- Developed a culture of collaboration among the high school principals and members of the reform committee.

The Future of High School Reform in Seaboro School District

The High School Reform Committee realizes that its work has reached an important milestone, and that their work has really just begun. The work of the committee has resulted in a sense of urgency about the need to improve our high schools. Additionally, the committee realizes that high school reform is not an event, but rather a long term process that will require ongoing commitment, data analysis, planning, assessment, and policy revision. For this reason, the committee will continue its work into future years, continually finding ways to improve the success of our high school students.

Individual High School Plans Follow

School A: High School Strategies for 2005-06

Goals

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for high school reform:

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

In addition, School A has adopted the following goal:

1. Attendance rate will exceed 95% in 2005-06.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seaboro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

School A Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Extend heterogeneous grouping to additional core classes.
- B. Integrate the Word Skills vocabulary development program across the curriculum.
- C. Establish expectations and standards for writing across the curriculum.
- D. Provide arts teachers with additional support in applying Reading Apprenticeship strategies.
- E. Develop student awareness of SAT test strategies and procedures for applying test information to post secondary education.
- F. Convene a study team to design ways for incorporating test-item analysis into daily lesson planning.
- G. Develop uniform grading policies across curriculum and course levels.

- H. All high school students will attend at least one college information session each year to ensure an understanding of the benefits of a college education.

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities

District Focus: Seaboro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

School A Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Develop an advisor-advisee plan to assure that each student has at least one adult he or she can turn to for mentoring, advice, and caring.
- B. In order to make student art work more visible, increase public exhibition space in the school and in other venues in the community.
- C. Explore options for increasing access to independent study courses and online AP courses.

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seaboro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

School A Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Develop a faculty council that meets regularly to determine the needs and issues of the school.
- B. Review and modify the schedule to maximize student time in core curricular classes especially for those below grade level.
- C. Align overnight field trips to minimize loss of instructional time.
- D. Departments will coordinate their calendars to minimize loss of instructional time as well as loss of opportunities to participate in activities.
- E. Maintain appropriate class sizes and course loads so that teachers can articulate curriculum and expectations.

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

School A Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Increase parent participation using strategies such as: having meetings in community centers; using a buddy-system to support new parents; and Connect-ED and e-mail messages
- B. Host “parent nights” on such topics as financial aid for college, AP courses/tests, PSAT, SAT, and career pathways.
- C. Increase number of telephones available for teachers.

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seaboro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

School A Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Provide teachers with technology training.
- B. Develop a support network that introduces new teachers to the School A philosophy and mission.
- C. Establish committees and use department chairs to develop leadership opportunities for teachers.
- D. Use teacher study groups as the main vehicle for examining instructional issues.
- E. Train the staff on how to create reliable assessments and analyze the data to improve instruction.
- F. Provide common planning time for subject area teachers to develop strategies and reflect on teaching and learning.

School B: Strategies for 2005-06

Goals

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for high school reform:

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

In addition, School B has adopted the following goal:

1. Attendance rate will exceed 95% in 2005-06.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seaboro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

School B's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

A. Academically Rigorous Curriculum

1. Teacher Component

- i) One department meeting per month will be utilized to compare pacing and planning among like-subject teachers. The department chair and/or coach will verify completion and submit documentation to administration.
- ii) Lesson plans (main ideas, activities, etc.) will be submitted two weeks in advance to administration through e-mail
- iii) Lesson plans will include an appropriate learning goal in addition to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study objectives.
- iv) Lesson plans will incorporate key instructional strategies provided through *professional* development activities. See *Section 5: Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development* for further elaboration. Activities include, but are not limited to, activities relating to *WICR, Lesson Planning on Block, and Student Motivation and Preparedness*.

- v) AP Potential Software will be used to place students in challenging AP, IB, and Honors classes.
- 2. Student Component
 - i) Encourage more students to register for Honors, Advanced Placement, and/or IB courses throughout their high school course of study.
 - ii) Students will engage in appropriate writing activities in all subject areas.
 - iii) Students will be encouraged to take the PSAT, SAT, and/or ACT and participate in relevant preparation in class and in after school tutorials.
- 3. Administrative
 - i) Increased administrative presence in the classrooms on a regular basis.
 - ii) Focus more time on academics and support of teachers, rather than discipline.
- B. Student Support for Success
 - 1. Tutorial Sessions
 - i) Limit school meetings to allow teachers more time to work with students after.
 - ii) Saturday EOC Tutoring Sessions – students can come on Saturdays to get academic help from their core teachers. Seven Saturday Academies will be implemented to help students with attendance issues.
 - iii) All teachers are encouraged to offer one hour after-school tutorial sessions at least one a week.
 - 2. NovaNet – Key strategy for over-aged 9th graders and other repeating students.
 - i) The lab space will be increased by moving the lab to the Literacy Center
 - ii) Students will have their own entrance/exit and bathroom facilities to make it a school within a school.

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities
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District Focus: Seabro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

School B's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Book Clubs/Discussion Groups/Honor Societies (Starting 2005-2006)
 - 1. Teachers and departments will be encouraged to sponsor more extra curricular activities for students including, clubs, honor societies, and discussion groups.
- B. Extracurricular Fair
 - 1. Clubs, organizations, and sports will set-up tables during lunch periods to encourage more students to get involved in school activities.
- C. Advisor-Advisee - We will develop the curriculum during the 2005-2006 school year.
 - i) A schedule for the 2006-2007 school year will also be developed.
 - ii) Each monthly session will take 15-20 minutes.
- D. School B Freshmen Cohort
 - 1. Purpose: To provide ninth grade students with an effective support structure to ensure their success as they transition into the high school environment. To create a family-like atmosphere for students and faculty that encourages students to achieve high academic standards.
 - 2. Framework:

- Summer Institutes for Success – Sessions for incoming 9th graders (Starting Summer 2005)
 - Challenger - institute for students enrolled in 1 or more IB or Honors classes will be encouraged to participate in challenging mini-courses to help them prepare for high school.
 - College Prep - institute for students enrolled a regular course of study will be encouraged to participate in courses and seminars to help them prepare for high school.
 - Academic – institute for students considered at-risk to help them prepare for high school.
 - Students will participate in skills-based courses and seminars and possibly use Nova-net for remediation.
- Regular contact with Counselor - Each 9th grader will discuss high school plans, college and career choices and other issues with their counselors at least 2-3 times a year.
- Extracurricular Activities – In order to ensure that ninth graders have enough time to focus on achieving academic success, we are working on a plan to limit the amount time that freshmen spend on extracurricular activities.
 - Ninth graders will be strongly encouraged to participate in academic clubs and events that require a limited amount of time outside of the regular school day.
- Quarterly College Prep Seminars – Informative sessions on how to prepare for college will be planned for each 9 weeks.

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seaboro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

School B's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Faculty Meetings will once a month with a significant professional development component
- B. Department Meetings will occur a month
 - 1. Each meeting should have at least a 30 minute professional development component
- C. Most school business will be conducted through Cadre Meetings, which will occur at least once a month
 - 1. Faculty members will be placed on cadres based on their planning period

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

School B's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

A. Parent Involvement

1. School-wide Parent Meetings and Events will occur once a month
 - i) Events involving parents and academics will primarily be scheduled on this day, including PSAT Night, Curriculum Fair, and Open House
2. The Phone Master will be used to remind parents of academic events and meeting occurring at school.
3. Progress reports will be sent home every 3 weeks to keep parents informed about their student's academic performance in school.
4. Teachers will be encouraged to periodically e-mail parents about upcoming assignments, assessments, and other noteworthy information about their class.

B. Community Involvement

1. The school will work diligently to inform the community of the positive aspects of School B by highlighting the successes of our students and teachers via newsletter, internet, and the media.
2. We would like to increase the community involvement in the academic needs of our students, by developing programs and initiatives that encourage community participation.

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seaboro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

School B's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

A. Teacher Recruitment

1. Limit ILT Activities – especially activities outside the regular school day that require large time commitments.
2. Hiring New Teachers – Recruits will observe classes at School B before accepting a job at School B
3. New teachers will be given 1-2 days to observe other teachers and reflect on the experience.
4. Curriculum Coaches will assist teachers before they become overwhelmed with

B. Professional Development – Annual Staff Retreat and Monthly Staff Meetings

1. **Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading (WICR)**
 - i) Effective Grading Practices

- (1) Provide teachers with grading strategies that improve students' academic performance.
- ii) Higher-Order Thinking Teaching Methods
 - (1) Help teachers with grading strategies that improve students' academic performance.
- iii) Reading Apprenticeship
 - (1) School B teachers that have attended the workshop lead the workshop for 10-15 of the faculty one afternoon
- iv) Writing Across the Curriculum
 - (1) Consultant (Shayne Goodrum) would provide teachers with effective writing teaching methods.
- 2. Lesson Planning on Block**
 - i) Designing Block Schedule Lesson Plans
 - (1) Teachers experienced with teaching on the block share ideas with School B teachers on how to effectively plan 90-minute lessons
 - ii) Effectively Integrating Music in Your Classroom
 - (1) School B teachers will develop a workshop to integrate music into their classrooms. Then they will lead the workshop for 10-15 of the faculty after-school
 - iii) Addressing Learning Styles
 - iv) Effective Classroom Management Strategies
- 3. Student Motivation and Preparedness**
 - i) Improving Student Motivation
 - ii) Stress Management

School C: Strategies for 2005-06

Goals

The strategies of School C's individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for high school reform:

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

In addition, School C has adopted the following goals:

1. We will reduce the number of students retained in the ninth grade. This will include teaching most 9th grade students at an honors level in the Freshman Academy, and specialized curricula, scheduling, and programs for overage 9th grade students and new 9th graders whose achievement levels show them to be at risk for academic difficulties.
2. We will implement a variety of strategies, including Freshman Academy and Reading Academy, to reduce the achievement gap between majority and minority students.
3. We will achieve an EOC Composite score of 80%.
4. In order to facilitate identification of student attendance problems, a daily list will be generated and made available to teachers that includes information about every student:
 - a. absence,
 - b. tardiness,
 - c. sign-in,
 - d. sign-out,
 - e. new enrollment, and
 - f. withdrawal.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seaboro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

School C's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

We will:

- A. teach most 9th grade students at an honors level.
- B. use and create specialized curricula, scheduling, and programs for overage 9th grade students and new 9th graders whose achievement levels show them to be at risk for academic difficulties.
 - 1. Special scheduling may include but is not limited to: enrollment in two semesters of math, two semesters of English, health and P.E., and other electives.
- C. teach a Freshman Seminar course, with a curriculum including academic, interpersonal, organizational, and time management skills in Freshman Academy.
- D. create student schedules that focus on varying each semester's course load for all students, so that students will be taking some core courses and some electives each semester.
- E. develop and expand upon plans to personalize education for all students, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. the Freshman Academy,
 - 2. an expanded selection of elective courses,
 - 3. improve the current advisory system.
- F. improve opportunities for participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. transportation issues,
 - 2. create student groups that are inviting to minority students,
 - 3. improve awareness of the variety of student activities that are available and awareness of the process of creating new groups.
- G. use the Riverdeep program to create a centralized curricular database.
- H. continue to improve vertical and horizontal curricular alignment strategies.
- I. correlate all honors courses with new state standards.
- J. ensure that students have access to AP Potential and SAT Prep software.
- K. continue PSAT testing for all sophomores and juniors.
- L. allow the opportunity for students who may need the additional time and skills practice (on English and math basics, for example) to enroll in doubled classes in those areas of concern.
- M. continue to use student performance data to find strengths and weaknesses of current practices, and make adjustments as needed.
- N. encourage minority students who are capable to take appropriate honors and AP courses.

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities

District Focus: Seabro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

School C's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

We will:

- A. continue, enlarge, and improve on the Freshman Academy.
- B. have Academy teachers serve as advisors to Academy students.
- C. develop and expand upon plans to personalize education for all students, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. the Freshman Academy,
 - 2. an expanded selection of elective courses,
 - 3. improve the current advisory system.
- D. improve opportunities for participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. transportation issues,
 - 2. create student groups that are inviting to minority students,
 - 3. improve awareness of the variety of student activities that are available and awareness of the process of creating new groups.
- E. teach a Freshman Seminar course to all 9th grade students in order to assist their transition to high school. This class will have a curriculum including academic, interpersonal, organizational, and time management skills, as well as character education and post-graduation planning.
- F. create transitional support for current Academy students to 10th grade.
- G. address senior projects.
- H. continue to serve LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students in sheltered ESL (English as a Second Language) classes in all core classes, health, and computer applications.
- I. incorporate these sheltered classes as part of the Academy and wider school community.
- J. continue to create ways of recognizing students' successes in terms of:
 - 1. academics,
 - 2. character,
 - 3. athletics,
 - 4. leadership, and
 - 5. service.

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seabro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

School C's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

We will:

- A. facilitate identification of student attendance problems by generating and distributing to teachers a daily list of every student:
 - 1. absence,
 - 2. tardiness,
 - 3. sign-in,
 - 4. sign-out,
 - 5. new enrollment, and
 - 6. withdrawal.
- B. eliminate midterm testing days, which are no longer necessary on a block schedule.
- C. create a committee that includes representatives of the administrative team and teachers to discuss adaptation of the ASD (After School Detention) program to the changing needs of the school.
- D. create a committee that includes representatives of the administrative team and teachers to address how block scheduling may affect scheduling of field trips and early release for sporting events.
- E. create a committee that includes representatives of the administrative team and teachers to adapt the advisory program to fit the block schedule and to the need for increased personalization.
- F. schedule all AP classes (except Biology, Calculus, and Chemistry) on an A/B basis in order to replicate a college schedule and have all students take AP tests immediately at the end of the course.
- G. schedule AP Biology, Calculus, and Chemistry as year-long, two-block courses in order to accommodate labs and the curricular challenges particular to these courses.
- H. schedule Academy classes on an A/B basis in order to help students make the transition to high school block scheduling. It will also allow students to have frequent contact with several teachers over a full academic year, fostering familiarity among staff, students, and their families.

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

School C's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

We will:

- A. increase the number of parent/guardian conferences being held.
- B. use ConnectEd (phone system) messages to quickly communicate important information to all parents and guardians.
- C. offer parents and guardians of students in the Freshman Academy quick, frequent, and easy access to their children's teachers and counselors through conferences, parent/guardian nights, and twice-monthly progress reports.
- D. distribute progress reports or report cards to non-Academy students every three weeks.
- E. connect students to institutions of higher learning, as early as 9th grade, as part of post-graduation planning.
- F. use school publications to make parents and guardians aware that students have access to AP Potential and SAT Prep software.
- G. inform students' families about high school reform efforts through the site-based decision making committee and school publications.

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seaboro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

School C's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

We will:

- A. participate in the district-wide job fair.
- B. post job openings on the district web site.
- C. have daily meetings of teachers of each Academy team.
- D. hold retreats for Academy teachers.
- E. create teams of Academy teachers that are balanced in terms of teaching experience.
- F. aim to have all teachers complete the Reading Apprenticeship training.

School D: Strategies for 2005-06

Goals

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for high school reform:

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

In addition, School D has adopted the following goal:

1. Attendance rate will exceed 95% in 2005-06.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seabro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

School D's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. The faculty will implement the strategies gained in staff development (such as Reading Apprenticeship, Socratic seminar, collaborative learning, etc.) to raise student engagement and achievement.
- B. School D will expand AVID to include the third level and 120 students. AVID strategies (such as Socratic seminar and Cornell notes) will begin to appear throughout the school.
- C. School D will implement Freshman Success and the TE 21 reading program.
- D. School D will foster a relationship with the community college to allow our students opportunities for increased engagement.
- E. School D will continue to administer the PSAT to all sophomores and juniors and then utilize the AP Potential software to encourage increased enrollment in AP courses.

- F. School D will develop strategies for using Lexile scores as a tool in classroom instruction and assessment.
- G. School D will open our media center on Wednesdays throughout the summer to provide access to resources and support for summer assignments and enrichment opportunities.
- H. School D will continue to utilize and expand opportunities for student assistance in the Learning Center. Some strategies include creating an independent study course for peer tutoring and faculty participation in after school academic support seminar opportunities.
- I. School D will provide seminar study sessions after school and/or on Saturdays for AP test preparation through the Learning Center.
- J. School D will investigate the possibility of becoming an IB magnet school, perhaps in connection with feeder schools.
- K. School D will investigate the possibility of looping eighth and ninth grade teachers to provide a smoother transition to high school.
- L. School D will explore a school-wide writing program for increased literacy skills.

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities

District Focus: Seaboro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

School D's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. School D will expand and strengthen our School D Student Teacher Enrichment Program (NSTEP) advisory program to provide a mentor within the school for every student and encourage students to become involved in the school community.
- B. School D will utilize differentiation and learning styles to personalize instruction.
- C. School D will continue to implement and explore new strategies within Positive Behavior Support (PBS) to better develop healthy interpersonal behaviors.
- D. School D will continue to offer a Middle School Week in the spring to help ease the transition to high school.
- E. School D will expand AVID to give more students “in the middle” a sense of community.
- F. School D will continue and expand parent nights such as college planning, PSAT interpretation, etc.

- G. School D will explore possibilities for Freshman Academies and smaller learning communities throughout high school.
- H. School D will explore opportunities for over-age students.
- I. School D will explore opportunities to engage and better serve the ESL community.

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seaboro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

School D's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. School D will continue to utilize and refine NovaNet to allow for educational opportunities outside of the traditional school day.
- B. School D will continue to recruit strong membership from all stakeholders for the Site-Based Decision Making Committee.
- C. School D will implement a summer program to allow students access to resources to work on summer assignments, SAT preparation software, and academic enrichment.
- D. School D will develop and implement a course evaluation system as a vehicle for student voice and a tool for teacher reflection and course development.
- E. School D will explore other on-line instructional opportunities.

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

School D's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. School D will continue to use Connect-ED as a resource for keeping parents informed of events in the school, including translating the message for ESL families.
- B. School D will continue and expand parent nights (college planning, PSAT interpretation, etc.) to provide parents with necessary information and foster positive relationships.
- C. School D will continue community outreach with academic support in the various neighborhood communities.

- D. Each grade level team in NSTEP will design and implement a community service project.
- E. School D will implement the College Champion Program.
- F. School D will offer two showcase opportunities in the spring of 2006 to enable community members to observe and experience opportunities within the school.
- G. School D will explore the Renaissance Program, an incentive program for students.

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seabro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

School D's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. School D will ensure that staff development is on-going and consistent.
- B. School D will ensure staff development opportunities for all AP teachers.
- C. School D will pursue staff development opportunities for Lexile training and send a team to the National Reading Conference.
- D. School D will offer faculty-based staff development opportunities to new teachers about strategies for teaching on the block schedule and key pedagogical goals of the school.
- E. School D will implement Critical Friends Groups.
- F. School D will schedule planning periods so that new teachers will be paired with an experienced teacher in their content area.
- G. School D will provide a curriculum specialist to support instruction in individual classrooms, especially those of new teachers.
- H. School D will increase the number of phones easily accessible to teachers.

School E: Strategies for 2005-06

Goals

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for high school reform:

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seaboro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

School E's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Instructional Strategies - all teachers will receive training, and be expected to implement, varied instructional strategies for teaching on blocks
- B. College experience – expand number of students in dual-enrollment programs and college-level academic programs (Fast Forward and AP); by 2009 every graduate will participate in at least one of these programs
- C. Student support – expand AVID program to sophomore class; pilot Freshman Academy of 100 students; re-establish pre-Engineering learning community; establish after-school Learning Center Tutorial program
- D. Remediation – use Nova Net as alternative to repeating classes where appropriate

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities

District Focus: Seaboro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

School E's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Small learning communities - AVID, Freshman Academy, Pre-engineering (students share common teachers; increased parent contact)
- B. School E Advisory Program – build on existing avenues of informal student support (clubs, sports) and encourage greater student involvement; assign teachers (and provide time within day) to review student progress
- C. Teacher relationships - create personalization strategies notebook to encourage systematic teacher relationships with students
- D. Block schedule – expect greater teacher communication with students and parents due to smaller student load per semester
- E. Over-age students – identify early; modify academic program

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seaboro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

School E's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Block schedule – begin implementation
- B. Common planning – common planning period for AVID and Freshman Academy teachers
- C. Remediation – use Nova Net as alternative to repeating classes where appropriate
- D. Over-age students – identify early; modify academic program

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

School E's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Small learning communities - AVID, Freshman Academy, Pre-engineering (students share common teachers; increased parent contact)
- B. School-based truancy court
- C. PTSA sponsored meetings
- D. Engineering Advisory Committee – re-establish, with participation of parents and engineers from local business community

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seaboro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

School E's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Teacher teams - AVID and Freshman Academy
- B. Mentor program – provide strengthened support for teachers in first three years
- C. New teachers - provide amenable schedule and course load

School F: Strategies for 2005-06

Goals

The strategies of our individual school plan are aligned with the following district-wide goals for high school reform:

1. By 2013, 100% of students will graduate from high school (as measured by NCLB's Adequate Yearly Progress standard).
2. By 2009, 90% of graduating students will complete a college tech prep or college university prep course of study.
3. By 2009, 80% of graduating students will meet the course requirements for admission to the UNC system.

1. Academically Rigorous Curriculum and Student Support for Success

District Focus: Seaboro School District will increase the academic rigor of high school courses, and provide expanded support for students such that they are successful in meeting the higher standards.

School F's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Develop an AVID program to accelerate learning for students in the middle
- B. Use the AP potential software to identify students who show potential for taking advanced courses and encourage those students to enroll in such courses
- C. Align the honors courses with the state mandated standards
- D. Create assessments through curriculum manager software to identify potential failures every grading period
- E. Create after-school opportunities for students to receive remediation from teachers in specific content areas, including ESL support
- F. Enhance Extended Day and Nova Net programs
- G. Provide focused staff development opportunities for teachers and staff on the best practices and innovative teaching strategies
- H. Enlist and develop a JR ROTC program

2. Relevant and Personalized Learning Communities

District Focus: Seaboro School District will implement strategies so that students see the relevance of school and develop productive relationships with peers and adults.

School F's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Develop an advisor/advisee program
- B. Provide students an opportunity to meet with homeroom setting on a regular basis
- C. Establish a 9th - grade academy
- D. Transition of the off campus component Medicine Academy
- E. Develop a Twilight Program for our over-aged population

3. Organization, Structure, and School Governance

District Focus: Seaboro School District will align the structure, calendar, schedule, and governance of the high school to provide a more personalized education.

School F's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Review and revise guidance procedures
- B. Create flexible scheduling opportunities for special events
- C. Establish a faculty council
- D. Establish teacher cadres and professional learning teams
- E. Development of a Student Services Department

4. Parent and Community Involvement

District Focus: Seaboro School District will involve parents, community agencies, and businesses in high school reform.

School F's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Schedule Open House events for parents and community
- B. Recruit and encourage parents to participate in PTSA
- C. Create partnerships with local businesses and colleges
- D. Develop a career day
- E. Provide more field trip experiences for students
- F. Develop a community outreach program to get students involved in local and civic activities and events

5. Teacher Recruitment and Professional Development

District Focus: Seaboro School District will recruit and retain highly qualified high school teachers. The district will provide extensive professional development for all high school teachers and administrators.

School F's Specific Strategies for 2005-06:

- A. Create a new teacher induction program
- B. Designate a staff development coordinator to ensure staff development needs are met
- C. Educate teachers on graduation requirements, courses of study, and pathways
- D. Provide all ILTs with a quality, motivated, and enthusiastic mentor
- E. Provide opportunities for veteran teachers to gain leadership experience within the school setting
- F. Establish a teacher recruitment program from local and state university settings.

Appendix D: *Breaking Ranks II* Survey

Breaking Ranks Assessment Survey

Collaborative Leadership & Professional Learning Communities	Rate <u>Importance</u> of recommendation (1 is low, 5 is high) 1 2 3 4 5	Rate the level this recommendation is <u>practiced</u> (1 is low, 5 is high) 1 2 3 4 5
1. The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning.		
2. Each high school will establish a site council and accord other meaningful roles in decision making to students, parents, and member of the staff to promote student learning and an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.		
3. A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school’s learning goals.		
4. Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role.		
5. Every school will be a learning community for the entire community. As such, the school will promote the use of Personal Learning Plans for each educator and provide the resources to ensure that the principal, teachers, and other staff members can address their own learning and professional development needs as they relate to improved student learning.		
6. The school community will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and will offer substantive ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences.		
7. High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.		
8. High schools will develop political and financial relationships with individuals, organizations, and businesses to support and supplement educational programs and policies.		
9. At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a public description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations by state, regional, and other accrediting groups.		

Personalization and the School Environment	Rate Importance of recommendation	Rate the level this recommendation is practiced in your school
	(1 is low, 5 is high) 1 2 3 4 5	(1 is low, 5 is high) 1 2 3 4 5
10. High schools will create small units in which anonymity is banished.		
11. Each high school teacher involved in the instructional program on a full-time basis will be responsible for contact time with no more than 90 students during a given term so that the teacher can give greater attention to the needs of every student.		
12. Each student will have a Personal Plan for Progress that will be reviewed often to ensure that the high school takes individual needs into consideration and to allow students, within reasonable parameters, to design their own methods for learning in an effort to meet high standards.		
13. Every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience.		
14. Teachers will convey a sense of caring to their students so that their students feel that their teachers share a stake in their learning.		
15. High schools will develop flexible scheduling and student grouping patterns that allow better use of time in order to meet the individual needs of students to ensure academic success.		
16. The high school will engage students' families as partners in the students' education.		
17. The high school community, which cannot be value neutral, will advocate and model a set of core values essential in a democratic and civil society.		
18. High schools, in conjunction with agencies in the community, will help coordinate the delivery of physical and mental health and social services for youth.		

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Rate Importance of recommendation	Rate the level this recommendation is practiced in your school
	(1 is low, 5 is high) 1 2 3 4 5	(1 is low, 5 is high) 1 2 3 4 5
19. Each high school will identify a set of essential learnings—above all, in literature and language, writing, mathematics, social studies, science, and the arts—in which students must demonstrate achievement		

in order to graduate.		
20. Each high school will present alternatives to tracking and to ability grouping.		
21. The high school will reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the extent possible and emphasize depth over breadth of coverage.		
22. The content of the curriculum, where practical, should connect to real-life applications of knowledge and skills to help students link their education to the future.		
23. The high school will promote service programs and student activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support and extend academic learning.		
24. The academic program will extend beyond the high school campus to take advantage of learning opportunities outside the four walls of the building.		
25. Teachers will design high-quality work and teach in ways that engage students, cause them to persist, and when the work is successfully completed, result in their satisfaction and their acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and other abilities valued by society.		
26. Teachers will know and be able to use a variety of strategies and settings that identify and accommodate individual learning styles and engage students.		
27. Each high school teacher will have a broad base of academic knowledge with depth in at least one subject area.		
28. Teachers will be adept at acting as coaches and facilitators to promote more active involvement of students in their own learning.		
29. Teachers will integrate assessment into instruction so that assessment is accomplished using a variety of methods and does not merely measure students, but becomes part of the learning process.		
30. Recognizing that education is a continuum, high schools will reach out to elementary- and middle-level schools as well as institutions of higher education to better serve the articulation of student learning and to ensure that each stage of the continuum understands what will be required of students at the succeeding stage.		
31. Schools will develop a strategic plan to make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize and improve the learning process.		


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