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Changing and Choosing Together: A Case Study on Improving Professional Development and Student Achievement Through a Teacher-Initiated Early Literacy Program

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CHANGING AND CHOOSING TOGETHER:

A CASE STUDY ON IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH A TEACHER-INITIATED

EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's

dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee,

has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of

Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented

in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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I also want to thank Kaki White, the person most responsible for my becoming an educator. This influential high school teacher taught me how to love learning and to believe that I could accomplish anything I put my mind to. I thank her for being my teacher and a wonderful friend.

I am especially grateful to the entire Molinelli family and, in particular, Pete and Phyllis. All of those home cooked meals and periodic pep talks really did make a difference.

My heartfelt appreciation also goes to my parents, Ned and Kathy Connor, who have given so tirelessly of themselves so that I may have the opportunities that I enjoy today. Their steadfast confidence in me, prayers, and encouragement to pursue my dreams are permanent treasures I carry with me everyday. Many thanks also to my siblings — Pat, Dorothy, Kathleen, Colleen, Kevin, and Mac — who supported me over the years and over great distances. Their love, encouragement, and good humor have been critical in helping me complete this doctoral program.

Finally, I wish to thank my loving husband, Paul, for whom this dissertation is dedicated. Paul's kindness, love, and encouragement have sustained me throughout this challenging journey. Paul gave countless hours to discussing my study and reading numerous versions of this manuscript. His insights and feedback have been a driving force behind this work. The completion of this dissertation and doctoral journey are proud accomplishments that I joyfully share with him.

For my husband,

Paul

CHAPTER I

The Research Problem

Statement of the Problem

In the 1980's and 1990's, a growing body of research began to illustrate the value

of social constructivist theories of learning (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978), as

well as teaching methods and student assessments derived from these theories (Allington

& Cunningham, 1996; Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Neuman & Roskos, 1998; Wiggins,

1993). This research has been critical in shaping a vision of the kind of education that

American children ought to receive. However, these very same theories of development

and instruction have not been adequately nor consistently applied in the staff

development of teachers. Instead, most teachers spend a majority of their educational

staff development time as passive participants who are "spoon-fed" knowledge which

they are presumed to be lacking. This transmission style of staff development remains

dominant yet has essentially been found to be ineffective and to rarely impact classroom

instruction (Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Barth, 1990;

Garmston, 1987; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Lewis, 1997; Neuman & Roskos, 1998).

If classroom instruction is going to improve significantly in the long term, then all

educators — classroom teachers, researchers, teacher educators, and school

administrators — will need to examine collectively the professional development of

preservice and inservice teachers and to explore ways in which they might work and learn

together most effectively. Many scholars believe that doing so will necessarily require a

shift away from a transmission style of staff development to a more collaborative learner-

1

centered one (Barth, 1990; Edelfelt, 1981; Garmston, 1987; Joyce & Showers, 1980, 1982; Lewis, 1997). Research suggests that in a collaborative environment, teachers actively work together to determine the best way to meet their students' learning needs rather than having the solutions passively prescribed for them by "the experts" who are all too often unfamiliar with the particular learning needs of students *or* their teachers. This new approach to staff development involves some risk-taking, flexibility, and a belief in shared authority for instructional decision-making on the part of both teachers and school district administration. By taking a more collaborative approach to teaching and educational staff development, and by pooling the valuable resources and knowledge already possessed by teachers, student learning and classroom instruction stand a reasonable chance of improving (Barth 1990; Ingersoll, 1999; Lewis, 1997).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain teacher's perceptions of the success of an early literacy professional development program designed to achieve more meaningful student assessment, facilitate observation of effective teaching practices, promote teacher-centered staff development, and encourage greater teacher collaboration. This research study also examined the extent to which teachers believed that school- and district-administrative support for this program benefited their classroom teaching practices.

Background and Need for the Study

In the seminal 1983 document, *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform*, the National Commission on Excellence in Education members made several recommendations regarding how to improve education in America for all students. These five recommendations were based upon the belief that everyone can learn, that everyone is born with a desire to learn, that a solid high school education can be attained by virtually all students, and that fostering life-long learning will prepare people to develop continually those skills that are most essential for citizenship and new careers.

The Commission (1983) considered their five recommendations critical to improving education and preparing all students for the 21st century. One recommendation urged that high school graduation requirements be strengthened, while another urged schools and universities to adopt more rigorous and measurable standards. A third recommendation suggested that more time be devoted to learning by lengthening the school day or school year, assigning more homework, and establishing fair codes of student discipline. The fourth recommendation addressed leadership and fiscal support, suggesting that American citizens should hold educators and elected officials responsible for providing the leadership necessary to achieve reform and that they should also provide the fiscal support necessary to bring about their proposed reforms.

A fifth recommendation of the Commission (1983), which is particularly germane to this study, addressed the preparation of teachers and the need to transform teaching into a more rewarding and respected profession. The Commission suggested implementing higher educational standards for teachers; increasing teacher salaries so that they are competitive with other professions; adopting an 11 month contract for

teachers so as to ensure time for professional and curriculum development; involving master teachers in the designing of teacher-preparation programs and the supervising of new teachers; and finally, providing incentives, such as grants and loans, to attract outstanding professionals to teaching.

Now, almost two decades since the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) released these recommendations, it is clear that America has made only partial strides toward implementing their suggestions. This is evidenced in the newspaper and on television news, as citizens are inundated with information about the failure of the public school system as reflected by low standardized test scores and an underprepared teaching force. Blame for this ongoing "public school crisis" is often directed at politicians, school administrators, teachers, and parents. Unfortunately, while there is much blame to go around, current solutions are few or ineffective (Aratani & Bazeley, 1999; Bergan, 1999; Trigg, 1999).

This research study focused on one school's solution to improving staff development and increasing student achievement, a solution that attempted to challenge more traditional approaches to school reform and renewal through a local, teacher-initiated change program. In April 1998, the teachers at Beach Elementary School[1] in the Harmony Hall School District, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, created a comprehensive early literacy program. This study focused on investigating the nature and role of teacher collaboration, staff development, and administrative support within this program from the perspective of the participants.

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[1] All teachers, the school, and the school district are referred to by pseudonyms.

<u>Program Description</u>

This comprehensive early literacy program was initiated through a funded grant proposal written by three teachers at Beach Elementary School. Prior to writing the grant, these teachers requested and received input from all primary-grade teachers who were asked to assess their own professional needs and to suggest ways in which language arts instruction might be improved in their classrooms. The majority of teachers expressed the need for materials, the need to deepen their understanding of how their students were performing, and the need for time to work with their grade-level partners for lesson planning. However, teachers did not express a concern about needing to change their current teaching practices. Due to the high percentage of primary-grade students performing below grade-level in reading and writing, the grant included a staff development component. The inclusion of this staff development component was critical both to supplement the training already provided by the school district and to ensure consistent use of the most effective early-literacy teaching practices. Thus, this proposed program required a restructuring of the way the primary-grade teachers at the school both taught and learned together.

When the grant was written in April 1998, Beach School had 260 students enrolled in first through third grade. Of those students, 19% of all first graders, 12% of all second graders, and 11% of all third graders were not able to read and understand grade-level material using criterion-referenced grade-level reading assessments. Moreover, 31% of all first graders, 28% of all second graders, and 71% of all third graders were unable to construct a grade-level appropriate piece of writing using criterion-referenced grade-level writing assessments. This means that these children

were unable to read a literature selection or produce a piece of writing that was expected of a child at their particular grade level. A sample of Harmony Hall criterion-referenced reading assessments and the primary grade Harmony Hall writing rubrics used to assess criterion-referenced writing samples are included in Appendix A and B.

After administration of the 1997 norm-referenced California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition (CAT5), the average second-grade reading score was 50%, while the average third-grade reading score was 62%. Moreover, the average second-grade language score was 61%, while the average third-grade language score was 54%. Thus, the Beach second-grade students on average scored lower than 50% of all children taking the CAT5 reading test and 39% lower than all children taking the CAT5 language test. In addition, the Beach third-grade students on average scored lower than 38% of all children taking the CAT5 reading test and 46% lower than all children taking the CAT5 language test. First-grade scores were not included because students in first grade currently do not take a norm-referenced assessment. In order to increase the number of primary-grade students able to complete criterion- and norm-referenced grade-level tasks successfully, the grant proposal included many program initiatives.

The first program initiative pertained to assessment. Prior to this proposal, teachers were required to give early literacy reading assessments three times per year, once in September, April, and June. The proposal added two additional assessments, one in November and one in January, effectively reducing the amount of time between assessments. All reading assessments were administered, scored, and analyzed by classroom teachers. The proposal also called for increased writing assessments from one time per year in March to eight times per year, one per school month, excluding April

during which time the district administered the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition

(SAT 9), a national norm-referenced multiple-subject assessment. These writing

assessments were scored by grade-level teachers using their Harmony Hall grade-level

writing rubric (Appendix B). The primary goal of increasing the number of formal

reading and writing assessments was to help teachers develop an ongoing evaluation of

their students' particular literacy needs.

The second program initiative pertained to grade-level and cross grade-level

weekly planning time on Wednesday afternoons. By releasing students one hour early on

Wednesdays, teachers were able to meet for structured teacher collaboration and literacy

staff development. In order to facilitate this change, the following monthly Wednesday

schedule of activities was adopted:

First Wednesday — Grade-level meetings were held to score student writing

samples. After scoring student writing, teachers worked as a team to discuss

perceptions of student achievement and growth and then developed instructional

strategies to further student success.

Second Wednesday — Grade-level and cross grade-level time was dedicated to

problem-solve writing and reading issues as indicated by assessments and teacher

observations. At this meeting, teachers discussed their action plans for those

children working at or below grade-level expectations in reading or writing.

Third Wednesday — This Wednesday was dedicated to early literacy staff

development time. An experienced teacher consultant was hired from September

to January for a series of two-hour monthly training sessions. These trainings

covered a range of early literacy topics based on the requests and needs of the

Beach teachers as determined by surveys and informal discussions. During the

second half of the school year, staff development included the reading and

discussing of professional literature.

Fourth Wednesday — This grade-level planning time was primarily dedicated to

discussing how teachers were implementing their newly adopted reading series.

Teachers also discussed how they envisioned incorporating classroom

instructional practices addressed during the prior week's staff development

training or literature discussion.

The third program initiative pertained to the staff development philosophy of

"teachers teaching teachers" through observation and peer coaching. The observation

model adopted by this program allowed each primary-grade teacher to observe best

teaching practices in other classrooms, both within Beach and in surrounding Bay Area

schools. Moreover, this peer coaching model allowed consistent support and coaching

for classroom teachers from one of three school literacy coaches. For example, if a

teacher was having difficulty structuring her reading time, she could then get assistance

from a "teacher coach" in setting up and maintaining her reading program. While this

coaching support was available and encouraged, teachers were not required to use it.

Although this coaching support was funded by the school district and not the early

literacy program, its availability and usefulness became more evident as a result of the

Beach early literacy program.

The fourth program initiative provided for teacher-centered staff development at

the school site. The Harmony Hall School District had already provided approximately

50 hours of early literacy staff development per primary-grade Beach School teacher

during the year-and-a-half prior to the writing of the grant proposal. This included a three-day Accelerated Literacy summer institute followed by bimonthly two-hour trainings. Although teachers had attended much training, only part of it had been incorporated into classroom instruction. The Harmony Hall School District's Accelerated Literacy training program advocated many of the most current early literacy instructional techniques. However, all of the training was conducted using a transmission style of staff development. Therefore, the monthly staff development proposed in the Beach grant differed from the school district training because it allowed for site-based staff development as determined by teachers' ongoing informal needs assessments, it promoted and fostered a collaborative teacher-centered model of staff development, and it attempted to address the particular needs of Beach teachers. Most importantly, this staff development model assumed that teachers were already highly-skilled professionals with vast amounts of knowledge to share.

These four main components of this comprehensive change program were supplemented by other small change efforts as well. First, as part of their daily homework assignment, first- through third-grade children maintained a reading log in order to record their home reading. Having a school-wide log helped teachers become more consistent in their home reading expectations of students. The student, parent, and faculty response to the reading log was overwhelmingly positive. In addition, the reading log gave teachers more information about home support when conferencing with parents and analyzing student growth.

A second supplemental change effort involved securing additional reading instructional materials at each grade level to help teachers meet the individualized

learning needs of their students. These materials were selected by primary-grade classroom teachers and were to be shared by their grade-level teams.

The third supplemental change involved the creation of a Beach parent-tutor program that provided children with the opportunity to use the school library before- and after-school to read with an adult. Volunteer tutors also filled-out reading logs that were passed on to the teacher. Students who were receiving insufficient home support were referred to this before- and after-school program.

A fourth supplemental change involved the continuation of the Beach Partners in Print program after its initial experimental year (1997-1998). Partners in Print brought students and parents to school during the evening to learn about ways to support literacy development at home. These evenings included hands-on activities that students and parents could do together. Parents were then given handouts and activities that they could do at home with their children. Low-achieving students and their families were especially encouraged to attend.

In summary, then, the Beach Early Literacy Program (BELP) sought to take advantage of the talent which already existed within Beach School. Teachers worked with other teachers, at both their grade-level and other grade-levels, to solve problems particular to their school-site and their classrooms. Moreover, these very same teachers were asked to reflect on and evaluate their personal and group learning needs in order to select those staff development trainings and classroom observation locations that would best assist them in their learning process. BELP differed from other programs in which many of these teachers had participated because it primarily sought to take advantage of the vast professional knowledge that already existed at Beach.

Finally, this research study is an evaluation of the program and not an evaluation of the early literacy grant. This distinction is worth noting because although kindergarten teachers participated in certain aspects of the grant program (i.e., increased student assessment, Partners in Print, and funding for additional reading instructional materials) they did not participate in the Wednesday professional development sessions. Their participation was not possible due to their morning and afternoon kindergarten schedule. Because this study sought to ascertain teacher's perceptions about *all* components of BELP, kindergarten teacher's perceptions were not considered equally pertinent due to their limited participation in the program.

The Need for Program Evaluation

There is substantial need to study comprehensive early literacy professional development programs such as this one. Educators may further their understanding of the nature of effective professional development programs and, in doing so, might positively impact the estimated one-in-four U.S. children who fail to complete school with adequate literacy skills (Allington & Walmsley, 1995). Unfortunately, teachers are often the primary target of blame for the failure of these children, rather than the broader social and institutional problems confronting the educational system as a whole (Ingersoll, 1999). In order to meet the learning needs of all children in the school system, it is simply not enough to continue fine-tuning existing programs and practices. Instead, educators need to reformulate and reconceptualize the very processes of teaching and learning, for both students and teachers (Allington & Wallmsley, 1995).

The teachers at Beach Elementary School attempted to do just this when they created BELP. This professional development program is worth studying because it has been initiated, developed, and implemented by classroom teachers in order to make their school more instructionally effective for all children. Furthermore, BELP assumed that to become more instructionally effective, teachers would need to change the way they and their students learn and work together. BELP also assumed that as long as teaching remains a relatively uncollaborative and isolatory profession where the principle sources of knowledge informing practice come from outside the classroom, then teaching and student achievement will continue to fall short of its potential. Eliminating these stifling and often destructive norms in education is essential to creating a community of learners and instructionally effective schools. Sagor (1992) asserted that by changing and expanding the roles of the teacher — as a learner, an instructor, and a change agent — educators can profoundly and positively reshape the quality of teaching and learning in our nation's schools.

Theoretical Rationale for the Study

When addressing the potential value and benefits of teacher collaboration, it is helpful to consider the theories of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey. These 20th century theorists help provide the theoretical framework for creating a collaborative, teacher-centered learning environment as proposed in this study.

Through Piaget's writing emerged the view that peer interaction prods development by creating critical cognitive dissonance (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Piaget believed that cognitive dissonance emerges when one senses contradiction between what

he or she believes and what the world is telling him or her. If one becomes aware of such a contradiction, the experience has a disequilibrating effect on them, instigating one to question his or her beliefs and try out new ones. Cognitive dissonance, therefore, is a catalyst for change. Piaget believed that the perturbing feedback provided by peer interaction initiates a process of intellectual reconstruction in a person.

Piaget (1969) also noted that peers often force one another to "decenter" by providing an alternative perspective. When people constructively disagree with one another, they encounter both social and cognitive dissonance. This experience leads people to a number of important realizations. First, they become aware that there are points of view different from their own. Second, they learn to examine their points of view and reassess their validity. Third, they learn that they must justify their own points of view and communicate them thoroughly to others if others are going to accept them as valid. This in turn forces people to work out their understanding of the issues at hand so that they are encouraged to express their views clearly and convincingly both to themselves and to others.

Thus, according to Piaget (1969), one gains both social and cognitive benefits from peer interaction. The social benefits are improved communication skills and a sharper sense of another person's perspective. The cognitive benefits are the urge to re-examine the truth of one's own conceptions and guidance of another's feedback in this process. Piaget believed that these social and cognitive benefits were directly related, in that improved social communication instigates progressive cognitive change.

When considering the benefits of creating a teacher-centered staff development model, one may also find helpful the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978) who wrote

persuasively about the social nature of learning. Vygotsky asserted that an expert (or a more knowledgeable peer) initially guides a learner's (or novice's) activity; gradually, the two begin to share the problem-solving functions, with the novice taking the initiative and the expert peer correcting and guiding when he or she falters. Finally, the expert peer cedes control and acts as a supportive audience.

Vygotsky (1978) further argued that engaging in these joint activities advances the novice's level of actual development, as he or she crosses through the "zone of proximal development." He suggested that a novice's developmental "zone" lies between (1) his or her actual development, or what he or she can do independently; and (2) his or her potential development, or what he or she can do while participating with more capable others. Through this social interaction, optimal intellectual development may be attained because all aspects of learning are promoted through peer collaboration and cooperation.

John Dewey's (1938) philosophy of creating student-centered learning communities also undergirds the theoretical value of this study. Dewey distinguished between traditional and progressive education by saying that traditional education was the "formation from without," whereas progressive education was the "development from within" (p. 17). Dewey's distinction emphasized the need for education to build upon the individuality of each learner within the learning community. In so doing, schools would and should honor prior experiences and diverse goals of each learner when creating educational communities. Moreover, Dewey (1933) believed that the teacher should not conceive of his or her role as being the primary transmitter of knowledge, but rather as a partner in a collaborative relationship of shared inquiry with the learner.

In summary, Piaget (1969), Vygotsky (1978), and Dewey's (1933, 1938) theories of learning can be applied to ongoing teacher education and interaction. When given the time, opportunity, and permission to work together, teachers can engage in the productive "conflict" that fosters open discussion about teaching and learning, they can guide one another to experiment with new and more effective teaching strategies, and they can do all of this while building a community of learners that honors the talent and individuality of its members. Thus, the adoption of this "teachers teaching teachers" staff development model can foster the types of change in classroom instruction that are critical to helping all children become successful learners.

Lastly, this rationale seeks to provide the theoretical framework for creating a collaborative, teacher-centered learning environment as outlined in BELP. This comprehensive program sought to increase student reading and writing achievement by facilitating the observation of effective teaching methods, implementing more meaningful student assessment, promoting teacher-centered staff development, and encouraging greater teacher collaboration. The purpose of this study was to ascertain teacher's perceptions about the relative benefits of the program, as well as their perceptions about the existence and relative benefits of school- and district-administrative support for this program.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study suggested the following research questions:

1. To what extent did teachers believe that increasing the number of student reading and writing assessments benefited their classroom teaching practices?

2. To what extent did teachers believe that observing effective teaching practices in other classrooms benefited their classroom teaching practices?

3. To what extent did teachers believe that increasing teacher collaboration benefited their classroom teaching practices?

4. To what extent did teachers believe that teacher-selected, site-based staff development benefited their classroom teaching practices?

5. To what extent did teachers believe that school- and district-administrative support for this teacher-initiated change program benefited their classroom teaching practices?

Limitations of the Study

Limitations exist in this study. The content and scope of this study are limited to early literacy change efforts at one school site. The sample included 12 first- through third-grade teachers at Beach Elementary School in the Harmony Hall School District located in the San Francisco Bay Area. All teachers participating in this study were Caucasian women. Of the 12 participating teachers, 10 teachers were fully credentialed teachers in the state of California, and two of the teachers held emergency teaching credentials because they had not yet fully met state credentialing requirements.

Another limitation of this study is that it is time-bound. The early literacy change program was implemented during the 1998-99 school year, and the research study was completed during the fall of 1999. Conclusions drawn from this research may be associated only with those teachers participating in the study. Applicability to other school sites and generalizations to other groups of teachers are limited.

The questionnaire used was designed and validated by the researcher; therefore, it may not be appropriate for use in other studies with similar aims. A limitation of the data collection process was that it was voluntary in nature and limited by the restrictions inherent in survey research (Babbie, 1990). It was assumed that the respondents who completed the questionnaire were Beach Elementary School first- through third-grade teachers during the 1998-99 school year. The researcher depended upon the willingness of the respondents to report information pertaining to their learning and teaching in an accurate and honest fashion. Limitations exist with such self-report data, especially in areas that are considered sensitive and that could be thought to reflect on the quality of the teacher's decision-making, professional relations, and standards of practice. The inability to assess and account for influences on participants' interests, needs, expectations, and past experiences relative to the topic may have produced unwanted biases in their responses.

The researcher of this study was a certificated Beach second-grade teacher, she participated in the early literacy change program, and she was one of the three teachers who wrote the grant proposal and developed the program. Moreover, the teacher-researcher did not complete a survey questionnaire, nor was she interviewed to determine whether the program helped teachers. Rather, the teacher-researcher administered the

survey questionnaire and conducted the interviews of the other teachers. Lastly, the

teacher-researcher had no personal financial interest in this program, and she did not

receive compensation to complete this research study.

Significance of the Study

This study may assist teachers, principals, and district administrators in planning

or facilitating professional development training programs for teachers. Specifically, this

study may help teachers better appreciate their potential learning capacity when

collaborating with other teachers, it may help principals appreciate their role in the

change process, and it may help districts understand what facilitates and impedes

professional development efforts. Educators who may be interested in this study would

include teachers, administrators (site and district), school board members, and staff

development personnel. Most importantly, understanding this professional development

program may help ensure that more students develop the skills necessary to become

effective readers and writers.

Applications

The identification of the elements of early literacy staff development that help

teachers transfer their training effectively into their daily repertoire of teaching

techniques and strategies should contribute modestly to the field of education. However,

the immediate benefactors of this knowledge will hopefully be the students who

successfully learn how to read and write as a result of these professional development

efforts.

Definition of Terms

A definition of key terms in this study are presented below:

a. CAT5 Standardized Test: The California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition, is a norm-referenced instrument which assesses student achievement in the areas of word analysis, reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, language mechanics, written language expression, mathematical computation, and mathematical concepts and applications.

b. Criterion-referenced measurement: "The assessment of performance on a test in terms of the kind of behavior expected of a person with a given score" (Harris, 1995, p.48).

c. Early literacy reading assessments: Depending upon a student's grade level and literacy skills, his or her first- through third-grade criterion-referenced reading assessments may include the following tests: concepts of print, letter/sound recognition, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, basic word lists, oral reading samples (running records), comprehension, and dictation. These tests are valuable to teachers in determining student placement and appropriate instructional levels (Appendix A).

d. Harmony Hall grade-level writing rubric: A developmentally appropriate six-point criterion-based scale used to evaluate student writing at each

grade-level. A score of "one" represents the lowest writing level on the rubric, whereas a "six" represents the highest. A child scoring a "four" on the Harmony Hall writing assessment is considered to be performing at grade-level (Appendix B).

e. Norm-referenced measurement: "The assessment of performance in relation to that of the norming group used in the standardization of a test or in relation to locally developed norms" (Harris, 1995, p. 167).

f. SAT9 Standardized Test: The Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, is a norm-referenced instrument which assesses student achievement in the areas of word study skills, reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, written language expression, spelling, mathematical problem solving, and mathematical procedures.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Related Literature

Overview

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to ascertain teacher's perceptions regarding the success of an early literacy professional development program designed to achieve more meaningful student assessment, facilitate observation of effective teaching practices, promote teacher-centered staff development, and encourage greater teacher collaboration; and (2) to examine the extent to which teachers believed that school- and district-administrative support for this program benefited their classroom teaching practices. Based upon this research study's purpose, the main themes underlying the following literature review include: characteristics of teachers and effective schools, school change and restructuring, effective staff development, and the components of effective early literacy programs.

Characteristics of Teachers and Effective Schools

Judith Warren Little (1982) using a focused ethnography research design investigated the norms of interaction and interpretation that characterize workplace conditions of successful schools and found common norms. In addition, Little gained insight into the nature and extent of "learning on the job" and how staff development programs might serve to extend teacher knowledge, skill, and satisfaction.

From interview and observation data an inventory of characteristic interactions was created for each school which yielded a set of practices by which teachers defined

their roles and characterized their approach to "learning on the job." This inventory was used to distinguish schools from one another by interactions that are encouraged, discouraged, or met with some degree of indifference. Little (1982) determined that four classes of interaction appeared to be critical in order for schools to achieve continuous professional development. These critical factors were: (1) teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete talk about teaching practices; (2) teachers are frequently observed and provided with useful critiques of their teaching; (3) teachers plan, design, research, evaluate and prepare teaching materials together; and (4) teachers teach each other the practice of teaching.

Schools were distinguished on the basis of specific support for discussion of classroom practice, mutual observation and critique, shared efforts to design and prepare curriculum, and shared participation in the business of instructional improvement (Little, 1982). These four types of practices were termed as "critical practices of adaptability" because they clearly distinguished the more successful and adaptable schools from less successful and adaptable schools.

In this study, Little (1982) found that the most adaptable and successful schools were those with sustained shared expectations (norms), both for extensive collegial work and for instructional experimentation. Staff development appeared to have the greatest influence in schools where continuous improvement is a shared undertaking. In these schools, staff development strengthened the "critical practices" already in place at the same time that it built substantive knowledge and skill in instruction. By celebrating the norms of collegiality and experimentation, school improvement and instructional leadership were built into the organizational setting of the school.

Saphier and King (1985), as a result of their research, further supported the need for schools to build upon the cultural norms that contribute to effective schools, claiming that "If certain norms of school culture are strong, improvements in instruction will be significant, continuous, and widespread; if these norms are weak, improvements will be at best infrequent, random, and slow" (p. 67). Saphier and King found that the presence of the following 12 norms distinguished those schools where student growth and development were more likely to occur. They were (1) collegiality, (2) experimentation, (3) high expectations, (4) trust and confidence, (5) tangible support, (6) reaching out to the knowledge bases, (7) appreciation and recognition, (8) caring, celebration, and humor, (9) involvement in decision making, (10) protection of what's important, (11) traditions, and (12) honest, open communication.

Having teachers and administrators work together is essential to building these cultural norms that are positively related to school improvement. These researchers (Saphier & King, 1985) found that where these norms were strong, school improvement activities were more likely to have a lasting effect.

School Change and Restructuring

Several studies of school change have identified the organizational culture as critical to the successful improvement of teaching and learning (Fullan, 1998; Rossman, Corbett, & Firestone, 1988). Fullan and Rossman et al. found that when the organizational culture did not support and encourage reform, improvement did not occur. In contrast, improvement efforts were likely to occur in a school where positive

professional cultures had norms, values, and beliefs that reinforced a strong educational

mission. Thus, culture was critical in determining whether improvement was possible.

Deal and Peterson (1999) through their research have found that at the heart of a

school's culture are its mission and purpose — the focus of what people do. This

research defined mission and purpose as "instilling the intangible forces that motivate

teachers to teach, school leaders to lead, children to learn, and parents and community

members to have confidence in their school" (p. 24). The school's mission and purpose

help people connect with the school's reason for existence. Thus, in order to bring about

change in schools, Deal and Peterson argued that educators need to understand more

clearly the mission, purpose, values, assumptions, beliefs, and norms that people share

about a school. At the heart of that understanding, Deal and Peterson asserted, lies the

school culture.

Peterson, McCarthy, and Elmore (1996), using a case study research design,

investigated the nature of restructuring in relation to its effects on the teaching of writing.

For two years, data was gathered on the restructuring experiments in three elementary

schools, each serving ethnically diverse student populations, located in large urban school

districts in different parts of the United States. The three schools were selected based

upon their having undertaken school-wide restructuring. Two teachers at each school

were selected to be studied. All teachers studied taught writing, and each of their schools

considered changing writing instruction to be an important feature of their restructuring

efforts.

The researchers (Peterson, McCarthy, & Elmore, 1996) conducted observations

and interviews with classroom teachers. Full-day classroom observations focused upon

the tasks that teachers assigned, as well as interactions between teachers and students and among students. Samples of students writing were also collected and copied for analysis. In addition, at least one staff meeting at each school was attended, and time was spent in the faculty lounge and throughout the school to gain an understanding of the school culture. Interviews with the principal, classroom teachers, and support personnel at each school site were also conducted. Using this data, Peterson et al. developed categories of the physical workplace, collegiality, teacher roles in the school decision-making process, and opportunities for professional development. To examine classroom practices, both interview and observational data was used. This study looked for overall patterns and key events in teachers' writing practices. After this data analysis was summarized and discussed, the researchers looked for patterns with individual teachers, patterns within a school, and finally patterns across school sites.

Peterson et al. (1996) found that these three schools did successfully restructure in accordance with the school's own vision of restructuring. Moreover, the researchers found that restructuring efforts of the three schools shared four key features. First, all three schools had some type of vision or philosophy related to student learning that was initiated through structural changes (e.g., new patterns of student grouping and new ways of allocating time for subject matter). Second, teachers met together to discuss curriculum and instruction, either as a whole school or in teams. Third, teachers at all of the schools were involved in shared decision-making about personnel, resources, and curriculum and instruction. Fourth, teachers had access to new ideas about instruction either through staff development or through ongoing discussions about teaching.

Peterson et al. (1996) also found that although these features were reflected in school-level changes at the three schools, the way in which they were enacted differed from one school to another, and the responses at the classroom level also differed significantly. They found that the differences in observed practices were linked in an indirect and complex way to the opportunities afforded by each school's restructuring efforts. Based upon this inspection, the researchers developed the following conclusions:

1. Teaching and learning occur mainly as a function of teachers' beliefs, understandings, and behaviors in the context of specific problems in the classroom.

2. Changing practice is primarily a problem of learning, not a problem of organization. Teachers who see themselves as learners work continuously to develop new understandings and improve their practices.

3. School structures can provide opportunities for learning new teaching practices and new strategies for student learning, but structures by themselves do not cause the learning to occur.

4. Successful relations occur among school structure, teaching practice, and student learning in schools where, because of recruitment and socialization, teachers share a common point of view about their purpose and principles of good practice. School structure follows from good practice, not vise versa.

Most importantly, these researchers learned that changing teachers' practice was primarily a problem of learning, not a problem of organization. While school structures could provide opportunities for learning new practices, the structures by themselves did not cause the learning to occur. Once again, this highlights the importance of changing

the norms found in schools, particularly those regarding teacher's philosophies of learning and knowledge.

Spilland and Jennings (1997), using a case study research design, explored how more coherent educational policies can positively influence teachers' practice. They found that while aligning policies to support challenging learning goals appeared to be effective in encouraging surface-level changes (e.g., materials, student grouping), it appeared to be less successful in altering more difficult-to-reach dimensions of teaching (e.g., classroom discourse patterns). Spilland and Jennings argued that aligning policy was an important first step in reform, but that such alignment should be accompanied by a fundamental change in teaching practice. These researchers suggested that in addition to developing more coherent policies, reforms must also consider ways of crafting policies that take into account teacher learning. They noted that teachers, like other learners, respond to learning opportunities in different ways, bring to their learning the experiences and the knowledge that influence how and what they learn, and that their learning takes time and hard work. Spilland and Jennings demonstrated that if teacher learning and student learning were critical, then educators would do well to move away from a view of instructional policy as the sole vehicle for putting ideas into practice.

Effective Staff Development

Staff development in education has been interpreted to mean many different and sometimes contradictory things, as evidenced by the various terms used to name it. Such terms include staff development, inservice education, professional growth, continuing education, staff improvement, and other combinations of these terms. Although the

literature reviewed in this section uses these various terms, for the purposes of this research study, staff development is used.

Approaches to and, consequently, definitions for staff development vary considerably. A general definition for staff development offered by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) stated that staff development is the effort to improve teachers' capacity to function as effective professionals by having them learn new knowledge, attitudes, or skills in prescribed training sessions. A similar and more specific definition was offered by Judith Warren Little (1989). Her comprehensive study of staff development yielded a "service delivery" definition of staff development. Little described staff development as (1) a range of activity determined largely by a marketplace of packaged programs and specifically trained presenters, (2) uniformity and standardization of content, with a bias toward skill training, and (3) relatively low intensity with regard to teachers' time, teachers' involvement, and the achieved fit with specific classroom circumstances. Both Gall et al. and Little's definitions of staff development fostered the idea that staff development is done *to* teachers based on content that *other's* perceive to be important for teachers to master.

In contrast to Gall et al. and Little, the definition of staff development offered by Fullan (1991) outlined what staff development ought to be rather than what staff development often becomes. Fullan described staff development in two different but complementary ways. First, he stated that staff development is a powerful strategy for implementing specific improvements. Second, he stated that for long-term effectiveness staff development must be seen as part and parcel of the development of schools as collaborative workplaces. Staff development, then, was both a strategy for specific,

instructional change and a strategy for basic organizational change in the way teachers work and learn together. It is Fullan's definition of staff development that the teachers at Beach Elementary School believed most accurately described what their staff development could and should be. It was this collaborative approach that inextricably linked professional development and school development for the Beach Elementary School primary teachers. This meant that the professional development of these teachers depended not only upon themselves as individuals, but also upon the other teachers within the school and the school organization. Thus, staff development in the Beach early literacy program consisted of teachers collaborating, observing other teachers, re-envisioning classroom assessment, and participating in teacher-centered staff development.

One of the most comprehensive studies providing insights into effective staff development was the four-year study conducted by the Rand Corporation. Berman and McLaughlin (1979) surveyed over 1,500 educators and observed over 300 innovative projects operating in 20 states. While looking at the successes and failures of innovative projects, the researchers found that certain staff development practices seemed to be more prevalent among the more successful projects. The Rand study illuminated a number of issues central to the design and implementation of teacher staff development programs.

One critical factor among successful projects identified by the Rand study was administrative support. While the project director was critical in achieving project goals and student achievement, effective project leadership played only a short-term role in successful projects. Unless the school district and the principal actively supported the project, the staff development activities seldom continued over a longer term. Principals

who became involved with project training updated their classroom skills, were able to assist teachers, and imparted the message to teachers that the project was important and that everyone was expected to cooperate.

Another critical factor found by the researchers to affect the outcome of successful projects was staff training and training support services. The study found that well-conducted staff development offered by local trainers allowed teachers to try new techniques in the classroom and provided teachers the opportunity to ask for local assistance when needed. It also concluded that training that was concrete, ongoing, and teacher-specific seemed most effective in addressing the needs of individual teachers. Conversely, staff development activities undertaken in isolation from the teachers' day-to-day responsibilities seldom had much impact.

Berman and McLaughlin (1979) concluded that specific skill training had positive effects on student achievement; however, training alone did not greatly change teacher behavior. The data revealed that staff support activities seemed to be essential to sustain training. The data also revealed that a number of staff support activities contributed to teacher change and long-term continuation of projects. Specifically, assistance by resource personnel, the use of outside consultants, observation in other classrooms, and project meetings designed to discuss problems and to support staff development activities contributed to teacher change. However, the study noted that the quality of the staff support activities was also critical. When teachers perceived assistance as ineffective, the staff support activities were actually counterproductive.

The Rand study also showed that the effectiveness of both staff training and subsequent support activities was further enhanced by teacher participation in decision

making. When teachers were involved in the daily operation of the project, their input could greatly improve project implementation. Teacher participation in project decisions also impacted their overall sense of project ownership and the increased likelihood of project continuation. The Rand study, now 20 years old, represented an important shift in the history of teacher training, indicating a trend away from the traditional view of one-shot workshops while presenting a view of professional development as an ongoing program within an organizational context.

Research conducted by Joyce and Showers (1980) also provided insight into the characteristics of effective staff development training through their analysis of more than 200 studies conducted to assess the impact of staff development training on teachers' skills. Their research clearly indicates that the purpose of training was important to the design of the program and that mastering new teaching strategies required more intensive training than merely refining old strategies.

Through further research, Joyce and Showers (1980) developed a typology of training levels that contribute to teacher learning. The possible outcomes of training were classified into four levels of impact: (1) awareness, (2) the acquisition of concepts or organized knowledge, (3) the learning of principles and skills, and (4) the ability to apply those principles and skills in problem-solving activities. The researchers found that only after reaching the final level of impact, application and problem-solving, can educators expect staff development to impact the education of children. Awareness, knowledge, and skill alone are insufficient conditions to change classroom practices.

The Joyce and Showers (1980) analysis of staff development training revealed five training components contributing to the level of impact of a training sequence or activity. The major components reviewed in the 200 studies were:

1.   Presentation of theory or description of skill or strategy;

2.   Modeling or demonstration of skills or models of teaching;

3.   Practice in simulated practice and classroom settings;

4.   Structured and open-ended feedback regarding performance;

5.   Coaching for classroom application.

The first four of these components were previously mentioned in the Rand Study as characteristics of effective training programs. However, the fifth component, coaching for classroom application, was not. Joyce and Showers (1980, 1982; Joyce, 1988) found that coaching was critical because it allowed teachers to master a repertoire of teaching models. To test this model further, Showers (1990) and her colleagues conducted studies applying the model to staff development training. They found that 80% of coached teachers transferred their newly acquired skills to the classroom, while only 10% of the uncoached teachers successfully added these skills to their training repertoires. Clearly, the addition of this coaching component to staff development training had a significant impact on classroom practices.

In developing a staff development program that includes a coaching component, Joyce and Showers (1982) hypothesized that regular (weekly) seminars would enable teachers to practice and implement the content addressed in their training. They recommended that instructors who were interested in studying teaching and curriculum form small peer-coaching groups that would collaborate during the learning process; in

this way, any concepts and skills learned in training would more likely be transferred into curriculum and instruction, changing teacher behavior and directly affecting student learning. Also, important to the coaching strategy was that teachers introduced to the new models could coach one another, provided that the teachers continued to receive periodic follow-up training. From their research, Joyce and Showers recommended that schools organize teachers into peer coaching teams and arrange school settings so that teachers might work together to gain sufficient skill to affect student learning.

Similar to Joyce and Showers (1982) recommendations concerning peer coaching, Garmston (1987) concluded from his research that this coaching model does not refer to the traditional supervisory mode of pre-meeting, observation, and post-meeting. During peer coaching, none of these techniques should be confused with or used for the evaluation of teachers.

While the studies reviewed in this section differ in methodology, there appeared to be agreement on what constitutes effective staff development training. In general, effective staff development programs:

- were concrete and aimed at specific skills.

- were ongoing and continued throughout the school year.

- were held at the school-site.

- allowed teachers to help select the content and assist in planning.

- were individualized to meet teacher needs.

- emphasized demonstrations and opportunities for teachers to practice new skills with feedback and coaching.

- provided opportunities for teachers to observe others practicing the skill to be

    mastered.

- used local trainers.

- had administrative participation and support.

Components of Effective Early Literacy Programs

In addition to what is known about effective staff development, examining the

components of effective early literacy programs may also enhance understanding of the

specific staff development challenges facing early literacy instructors. Scholars

(Allington & Cunningham, 1996; Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Cunningham &

Allington, 1999; Neuman & Roskos, 1998) indicate that this is especially true among

those who teach children to read and write given the enormous variation in skill levels

among children in today's school system. They note that helping teachers learn how to

meet the diverse needs of children has become an exceedingly difficult task. Some early

literacy change and intervention programs have met this challenge by taking a more

collaborative approach to teacher staff development and student learning. These

programs attributed their success to their ability to accommodate the learning needs of

teachers and students, and to take advantage of the collected wisdom that instructional

collaboration brings (Neuman & Roskos, 1998). The following section reviews the

components of three successful early literacy change and intervention programs,

highlighting those factors most relevant to the Beach Elementary School context.

Success for All was a total school program created by researchers (Slavin,

Madden, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1992) at Johns Hopkins University for kindergarten

through three grade that focused upon both regular classroom instruction and supplementary support. Students in grades one through three were heterogeneously grouped in classrooms of about 25 students, except for a 90-minute daily reading period in which they were regrouped by reading level into groups of 15 to 20 students across all three grades. This allowed for whole group, direct instruction and eliminated the need for seatwork while the teacher met with reading groups. Individual tutoring sessions of 20 minutes supplemented group instruction for those students who were falling behind. Tutoring sessions emphasized the same strategies and skills as classroom reading activities.

Success for All also provided extensive professional development for instructors and follow-up support. All classroom teachers received three consecutive days of training before the program began and three two-day trainings during the first year of the program. Moreover, during the first implementation year, Success For All staff members spent at least 23 days at the school-site conducting workshops, follow-up observations, and meetings. In addition to the training provided by the Success For All staff, all schools had a full-time facilitator, an experienced teacher from the school's staff, who worked with the entire staff to assist with program implementation. The facilitator frequently visited classrooms, facilitated peer coaching among teachers, organized grade-level team meetings, and monitored assessment data to make certain that all children were making adequate progress. The school facilitator and principal attended a week-long training session before the school-site began to implement the program, and they received continuing follow-up training from the Success For All staff.

The Success For All program was highly beneficial in schools where it was implemented. Studies evaluating the effectiveness of Success For All involved more than 75 Success For All schools and 75 control schools over a seven-year period. These studies took place in inner-city, rural, and inner-suburban schools, and almost all of the schools were Title I schools that received federal funds due to the extremely low socioeconomic status of a majority of their student population. The results of these studies found that Success For All schools were more effective than the control schools. On average, Success For All students read approximately 2.5 months in grade-level equivalents ahead of control schools at the end of first grade, and 1.1 years in grade equivalents ahead of control schools at the end of fifth grade (Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996). Clearly, these results reflected how successful this program had been at increasing student achievement in schools where it had been implemented.

Another example of a comprehensive early literacy change effort is the Four-Blocks Literacy Model created by Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1991) of Wake Forrest University. In this program, the 120-130 minutes of reading/language arts time was divided into four 30- to 35-minute blocks. Writing, self-selected reading, guided reading, and working with words represented the four-blocks of the program's instruction model. Staff development and teacher collaboration were a critical component of the Four-Blocks Literacy Model. Teachers met for one week in the summer for intensive training with regular follow-up training throughout the school year.

In the school where the Four-Blocks Literacy Model was originally implemented, student achievement was evident. Prior to the implementation of the program, 40% of first grade students struggled at the preprimer level, and one in five second-grade students

were virtually nonreaders because they were unable to read anything but very simple text. After two school years with the Four-Blocks Literacy Model, 82% of first-grade students were reading on or above grade level, and 18% read at the primer or preprimer level. There were no first-grade children who could not read at the preprimer level. In second grade, 83% of the students were reading on or above grade level, and there were no nonreaders. These results in student achievement attained at the original Four-Blocks school were consistent with other schools where the program had been adopted (Allington & Cunningham, 1996).

Although the Reading Recovery program was an individualized tutoring program and was not implemented schoolwide, it is being reviewed because it is one of the most successful and common literacy intervention programs in schools today. Clay (1985) developed the Reading Recovery theory and program designed to help low-achieving primary-grade children make accelerated progress in reading and writing. This early intervention program identified and served the lowest achieving readers by providing extra individualized reading and writing instruction (Harris & Hodges, 1989). Qualifying students received an average of 67 daily lessons of approximately 30 minutes in length that were specifically targeted to their strengths, needs, and weaknesses. This program was not intended to be a long-term or permanent program for low-achieving students; instead, the goal of the program was to help low-achieving children make accelerated progress in reading and writing and to help them attain average grade-level reading competency. Students would then be released from the program as successful readers.

The commitment to both teacher and student learning distinguishes Reading Recovery from many other programs. At the teacher level, Reading Recovery staff

development training was not conducted for merely one or two days; instead, teachers committed to a full year of staff development training. Teachers began by attending a 30-hour workshop before the start of the school year. During this summer session, teachers learned how to administer and analyze the six-part Reading Recovery Diagnostic Survey Test. Throughout the school year, teachers attended weekly after-school training classes in which they learned the basic procedures of the program and the more specific components of the Reading Recovery lesson. This allowed teachers to apply and expand their new knowledge of reading as they worked with children in their classroom.

At the student level, teaching and learning was individualized and focused upon each child's strengths rather than his or her deficits. Methods of instruction included tutoring, mastery learning, and individualization. In addition, learning strategies focused upon remediation, feedback, and reinforcement.

The Reading Recovery Program was an extremely successful intervention program in American schools. Because Reading Recovery specifically targeted students who were not succeeding in the reading process and who were performing below grade-level standards for reading, low-achieving students were the beneficiaries of this program. Furthermore, an average of 86% of program participants (formerly known as low-achievers) successfully completed the program by attaining grade-level reading skill. Lastly, the Reading Recovery Program targeted young children in first and second grade. In doing so, low-achieving reading students were identified early in the education process and were taught the reading and writing skills necessary to succeed in all subjects throughout their school career (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990).

The benefits of Reading Recovery were indeed promising. It is critical to understand, however, that Reading Recovery was only an intervention program and could not be expected to overcome the problems children experienced if their classroom instruction was of poor quality (Allington & Cunningham, 1996). Thus, the need for schoolwide collaboration on effective early literacy instruction still exists.

Although these early literacy change and intervention programs were not officially implemented at Beach School, many components of them were in place at the time of this study. First, Beach student grouping strategies for reading were similar to the Success For All program. In order to provide small-group reading instruction and avoid students working at their seats for a significant amount of time, first- and second-grade Beach students had a split reading time. This allowed for 10 students to receive small-group reading instruction during the first 45 minutes of the day, and 10 other students to receive reading instruction during the last 45 minutes of the day. With only 10 students in the classroom during each of these 45-minute periods, first- and second-grade teachers were able to conduct small group reading instruction with every child, every day. Second, although Beach did not have a full-time facilitator like the Success For All program, Beach had a credentialed reading teacher who worked with children in small groups for 50% of her time and coached teachers for 50% of her time. This "teacher coach" was available to assist individuals or groups of teachers in order to fine-tune classroom language arts instruction. Third, many primary-grade teachers had implemented the Four-Blocks Literacy program into their classroom practices. Although these teachers had not received staff development training on this program, they had read many books by Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1991). Fourth, Beach School conducted a

small intervention program (CHIP) which was modeled after Clay's (1985) Reading

Recovery program. When funds were available on a semester-to-semester basis, a part-

time credentialed teacher worked individually with students using a similar format to the

Reading Recovery program. Unfortunately, it was difficult for Beach to find credentialed

teachers for this position and, when they did, the teachers did not receive the reading

specialist training that Reading Recovery teachers received.

Success For All, the Four-Block Literacy Model, and Reading Recovery represent

only one piece of the complex puzzle of improving literacy education. A critical

component of each of these programs is the targeting of low-achieving reading students

at a very young age. This factor prevents students from falling through the cracks of the

educational system. Instead, educators at schools where these programs are implemented

were committed to identifying low-achieving students in the primary grades and giving

them the skills necessary to be successful.

Summary

This review of the literature includes research on the characteristics of teachers

and effective schools, school change and restructuring, effective staff development, and

the components of effective early literacy programs. These studies reaffirm just how

complex and demanding both teaching and educational change can be.

A review of the literature on the characteristics of teachers and effective schools

revealed that common norms exist in successful and adaptable schools. Judith Warren

Little (1982) found that schools were distinguished by the presence or absence of specific

support for the discussion of classroom practice, mutual observation and critique, shared

efforts to design and prepare curriculum, and shared participation in instructional improvement. Little found that staff development appeared to have the greatest influence in schools with these characteristics because continuous improvement was a shared undertaking. In these schools, staff development served to strengthen practices already in place while simultaneously building substantive knowledge and instructional skill. Similarly, Saphier and King (1985) indicated the need for schools to nurture the cultural norms that contribute to effective schools. They identified 12 norms that distinguished schools in which student growth and development were more likely to occur. These researchers clearly demonstrated that for the characteristics of effective schools to exist, changes are required in the type and quality of learning experiences created and facilitated by all those who work in schools.

A review of the literature on school change and restructuring revealed numerous attributes of schools where restructuring was successful. Fullan (1998) and Rossman, Corbett, and Firestone (1988) identified the organizational culture as critical to school change. When the culture did not support and encourage reform, improvement did not occur. Deal and Peterson (1999) found that at the heart of a school's culture are its mission and purpose which help connect people with the school's reason for existence. Peterson, McCrathy, and Elmore (1996) found that teachers in successful schools had a shared vision or philosophy about student learning, they collaborated about curriculum and instruction, they were involved in shared decision-making, and they had access to new ideas about instruction. Spilland and Jennings (1997) stressed the need for policy makers to take into account that teachers are learners. They emphasized the need to remember that teacher-learners, just like student-learners, respond to learning

opportunities in different ways, that they bring unique knowledge and experience to this learning process, and that their learning takes time and hard work.

A review of the literature on effective staff development indicated substantial agreement about the characteristics of effective training. While conducting the Rand Study, Berman and McLaughlin (1979) found that staff development training which involves teachers in the planning of programs that are conducted locally and linked to an ongoing school program are likely to have a more lasting effect. The findings also indicated that the more successful staff development programs are those that are actively supported by the principal and district administration and that provide support activities to assist teachers in implementing new strategies. Joyce and Showers (1980, 1982) further proposed that staff development training that incorporates theory presentation, skill demonstration, simulated practice, performance feedback, and regular coaching to classroom application is more likely to assist teachers in changing classroom behaviors.

A review of the literature on three effective early literacy programs revealed that there is considerable consensus about the characteristics of these programs. These programs emphasized that the first criteria for an effective early literacy program are classrooms with effective early literacy instruction. Within these classrooms, children worked one-on-one and in small-groups with their teacher, and they work at their individual ability level. The second criteria for an effective early literacy program pertains to support outside of the classroom. An outside intervention program, such as Reading Recovery, provided students with intense, one-on-one, personalized, assessment-based instruction with additional time and practice on selected skills, concepts, and strategies. Furthermore, this intervention occurs at the earliest point possible. The third

criteria for an effective early literacy program concerns the presence of a comprehensive

staff development program in reading and writing instruction. Before any program can

be implemented in a school, teachers must first agree on the program and commit to it.

They must also be willing to attend staff development trainings, work with a literacy

coach, and change their classroom teaching practices.

In summary, then, the review of the literature has significantly informed this

dissertation research project. By studying this teacher-initiated, early literacy

professional development program, it is hoped that teachers may better appreciate their

potential learning capacity when collaborating with other teachers and that administrators

may better understand what facilitates professional development efforts. Ultimately, and

most significantly, contributing to the knowledge base in these ways may help ensure that

educators successfully address the learning instructional needs of all children.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Restatement of the Purpose

The focus of this study was to ascertain teacher's beliefs about the success of an early literacy professional development program designed to achieve more meaningful student assessment, facilitate observation of effective teaching practices, promote teacher-centered staff development, and encourage greater teacher collaboration. This research study also examined the extent to which teachers believed that school- and district-administrative support for this program benefited their classroom teaching practices.

Research Design and Method

This research study was conducted in two stages. Stage One utilized a quantitative methodology, while Stage Two employed a qualitative methodology. The descriptive research design of a time-bound mailed survey was used in Stage One because of its value in determining the feelings, opinions, or attitudes of groups of individuals (Orlich, 1978). The advantages of using in-depth, individual face-to-face interviews in Stage Two included the involvement of the researcher in the real-life situation being studied, and it enhanced the opportunity to gather complex, sensitive or confrontative data that may have been difficult to reach using a structured questionnaire (Bauman & Adair, 1992).

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Stage One of this study consisted of a cover letter (Appendix C) and survey questionnaire (Appendix D) being mailed to first-, second-, and third-grade teachers (n=12) who participated in the Beach Early Literacy Program (BELP). The *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* (Appendix D) was designed by the researcher specifically for the purposes of this study. The questionnaire sought to assess teacher's perceptions of the professional development program and to assess teacher beliefs about school- and district-administrative support for the program. The questionnaire utilized Likert-scale response items, open-ended questions, and closed-ended questions. The Stage One objectives of this study were to collect specific, quantifiable data, to maintain neutrality, and to establish a researcher role with the participants.

Stage Two included qualitative, in-depth individual interviews conducted by the researcher with the BELP participants who returned the *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire*. Follow-up interview questions were determined in part by analysis of questionnaire data, with the intent of gaining additional depth and detail about the benefits of BELP and teacher beliefs about administrative support for the program. The researcher also conducted an interview with the school reading specialist who helped develop and fully participated in the program. In addition, the school principal, district assistant superintendent, and district superintendent were interviewed to gain a clearer understanding of the benefits of the program and how the program fit into the broader vision and mission of the school and the district. A list of interview questions is included in Appendix E. Although these interview questions were to be asked, the interviews themselves remained flexible, open-ended, and dialogic in nature so that respondents felt free to tell their own stories. This semi-structured format (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) also

allowed for the researcher to ask for clarification or to probe specific responses during the interview. Each interview was tape-recorded with permission of the participants. Again, the purpose of Stage Two was to gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits of the early literacy program, to assess how teacher beliefs about administrative support may have benefited teaching practices, and to assess administrative beliefs about how this type of program fit into the vision and mission of the school and district.

All data collected in this study were anonymous. A written confidentiality statement appeared on both the cover letter and the questionnaire mailed to BELP participants. Prior to interviewing all participants, the researcher also orally reiterated her pledge of confidentiality. All program participants were promised that questionnaires would be stored in the researcher's home; that no Harmony Hall School District employee other than the researcher would have access to questionnaires, interview tapes, or transcripts; and that all study materials would be destroyed upon the completion of the research study. Furthermore, participants were also assured that only aggregate survey data would be used, and that pseudonyms would be used when referring to program participants' quotes, the school, and the school district.

Population and Sample

In order to identify the components of BELP that teachers found most valuable and to assess teachers beliefs about administrative support, 12 out of the 13 first-, second-, and third-grade teachers who participated in BELP were sampled. One second-grade teacher was not sampled because she is the researcher who conducted this study. Teachers completed a survey questionnaire at the end of the program and were

interviewed by the researcher after the questionnaire data had been initially analyzed. In addition to interviewing classroom teachers, interviews were conducted with the school reading specialist, school principal, district assistant superintendent, and district superintendent. Since all program participants were invited to participate in this study, no sampling was required.

Human Subjects Approval

Approval from the Institutional Review Board for the protection of Human Subjects at the University of San Francisco was obtained prior to this study. A copy of the official approval is available for review in Appendix F.

Instrumentation

A detailed search failed to locate a survey instrument that assessed the specific topics important to this study. Therefore, a questionnaire instrument, the *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* (Appendix D), consisting of 64 items, was constructed by the researcher to assess the specific components and support factors of BELP. The questionnaire contained 50 scaled-response items, eight open-ended questions, and six closed-ended items, and it took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Section A of the questionnaire contained 10 items addressing student assessment. Section B of the questionnaire consisted of six items pertaining to teacher observations of effective teaching practices. Section C of the questionnaire contained of 19 items relating to teacher collaboration. Section D of the questionnaire consisted of 11 items concerning staff development activities. Section E of the questionnaire consisted of seven items

pertaining to teacher support. Section F of the questionnaire contained four items related to the level of the individual teacher's participation in the BELP. The last part of the questionnaire, Section G, consisted of seven demographic questions.

Interview Questionnaire I (Appendix E) contained questions developed by the researcher to be used during individual, face-to-face interviews with teachers who participated in the Beach Early Literacy Program. Interview Questionnaire II (Appendix E) was used during individual, face-to-face interviews with the school reading specialist, principal, and two district administrators.

Validity

A panel of eight experts were used to establish face, content, and construct validity for the *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* (Appendix D). The panel included men and women representing several evaluative perspectives considered valuable by the researcher: two kindergarten teachers, a school administrator, a district office-level administrator, a professor of education, a learning disabilities specialist, and two educational consultants. A complete list of the validation panel members' expertise may be found in Appendix G.

The members of the validation panel received a copy of the draft questionnaire and the evaluation form (Appendix H). Face, content, and construct validity were affirmed by the panel. Miscellaneous recommendations and comments of the panel members were incorporated into the final draft of the *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* (Appendix D).

Reliability

A reliability panel was developed with 16 elementary educators to test the reliability of the survey questionnaire items. Participants in the validity panel were not included in the reliability survey and were excluded from all other participation in the study, as were those teachers assisting in the reliability survey.

The *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* (Appendix D) was administered to a pilot group, and a test of single administration was used to establish an index of internal consistency. The coefficients of reliability were established using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha which is a test regularly used to demonstrate the reliability of a survey instrument (Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987). Internal consistency of the subscales and the total questionnaire are shown in Table 1. On average, alpha coefficients were moderately high, indicating an acceptable reliability level (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993).

Table 1

Results of the Cronbach Alpha Test

	Subscales	Alpha Coefficient
A.	Student Assessment	.53
B.	Observing Effective Teaching Practices	.83
C.	Teacher Collaboration	.86
D.	Staff Development	.87
E.	Teacher Support	.68
F.	General Participation	.87
	Total Questionnaire	.89

Following the reliability study, three small adjustments were made to the survey

instrument. First, a clear statement of confidentiality was added to the instrument.

Initially this confidentiality statement was only on the cover letter which accompanied

the questionnaire. Second, the questions in Section B, Observing Effective Teaching

Practices, were collapsed so that teachers were asked how many observations they made

and how they rated the overall value of the observation experience. The initial survey

asked teachers to fill in the name of the schools where they observed and to rate each

observation experience. This change was made to the instrument because many teachers

made observations at only one school. The third adjustment made to the instrument was

the addition of a question offering teachers a summary of the survey results. This

question was added in response to participant inquiries and because of the researcher's

desire to disclose a preliminary summary of the survey results for interested participants.

Data Collection

The data collection procedures for the *Beach Early Literacy Program*

Questionnaire (Appendix D) originated with a master list of all full-time Beach first-,

second-, and third-grade teachers during the 1998-99 school year. The list included

name, position, home address, and telephone number. The second-grade teacher who

conducted this research study was omitted from the list. A sequence number was

assigned to each person on the list and was placed on page one of the survey

questionnaire. Each mailed questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter (Appendix

C) that explained the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of all responses, and the

importance of returning the completed questionnaire. The mailing of the survey

questionnaire and the completion of in-depth individual interviews were conducted in the following five phases.

<u>Phase 1</u>

In September 1999, the 12 teachers who participated in the Beach Early Literacy Program were mailed a cover letter (Appendix C) from the researcher explaining the purpose of the research study, a copy of the *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* (Appendix D), and a postage-paid return envelope. Each questionnaire was coded to permit identification of individuals who failed to return the survey instrument.

<u>Phase 2</u>

Within three weeks after the initial mailing, all nonrespondents were mailed a duplicate copy of the survey, a postage-paid return envelope, and cover letter stressing the importance of returning all questionnaires. In addition, all respondents were mailed a letter thanking them for their survey responses and reminding them that the researcher would be telephoning them to set-up an interview time.

<u>Phase 3</u>

Two weeks after the second mailing, those participants who responded during phase 2 were mailed a letter thanking them for their survey responses and reminding them that the researcher would be telephoning them to set-up an interview time.

<u>Phase 4</u>

A cut-off date of four weeks after the initial mailing was established, after which time no more surveys were collected.

Phase 5

An adequate percentage of return for this survey was set at 50% or higher

(Babbie, 1990). Actually, all 12 participants (100%) returned completed surveys and

were included in this study. Questionnaires were then compiled and statistically

analyzed. Respondents were interviewed to further verify questionnaire responses using

open-ended questions from the Interview Questionnaire I (Appendix E). Interviews were

also conducted with the reading specialist, principal, assistant superintendent, and

superintendent utilizing open-ended questions from the Interview Questionnaire II

(Appendix E). All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Interviews of BELP

teacher participants were edited so that individuals' identities would remain anonymous.

In addition, all teacher, reading specialist and administrative interviews were edited for

any information identifying persons or organizations. Finally, edited interview

transcripts were then bound to serve as a reference source for this study.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered by the *Beach Early Literacy Program*

Questionnaire (Appendix D) was analyzed by computer using SPSS (Statistical Programs

for the Social Sciences) computer package. Initially, standard statistical measurements of

analysis, means and correlations were to be used to analyze each research question.

However, a lack of response-item distribution, combined with a small sample size, made

these statistical methods of data analysis potentially unreliable and misleading (Morre &

McCabe, 1993). Consequently, survey results pertaining to each research question are

depicted only in frequency and percentage distribution tables. The qualitative data

gathered was coded and analyzed by the researcher. Each research question and its respective data sources are set out below.

Research Question 1 – To what extent did teachers believe that increasing the number of student reading and writing assessments benefited their classroom teaching practices? Items 1 – 9 from the survey questionnaire were analyzed. The descriptive statistical measurements used were frequencies and percentages. Open-ended survey questionnaire item 10 and teacher interview data were also coded and analyzed.

Research Question 2 – To what extent did teachers believe that observing effective teaching practices in other classrooms benefited their classroom teaching practices? Items 11 – 15 from the survey questionnaire were analyzed. The descriptive statistical measurements used were frequencies and percentages. Open-ended survey questionnaire item 16 and teacher interview data were also coded and analyzed.

Research Question 3 – To what extent did teachers believe that increasing teacher collaboration benefited their classroom teaching practices? Items 17 – 34 from the survey questionnaire were analyzed. The descriptive statistical measurements used were frequencies and percentages. Open-ended survey questionnaire item 35 and teacher interview data were also coded and analyzed.

Research Question 4 – To what extent did teachers believe that teacher-selected, site-based staff development benefited their classroom teaching practices? Items 36 – 45 from the survey questionnaire were analyzed. The descriptive statistical measurements used were frequencies and percentages. Open-ended survey questionnaire item 46 and teacher interview data were also coded and analyzed.

<u>Research Question 5 – To what extent did teachers believe that school- and district-administrative support for this teacher-initiated change program benefited their classroom teaching practices?</u> Items 47 – 52 from the survey questionnaire were analyzed. The descriptive statistical measurements used were frequencies and percentages. Open-ended survey questionnaire item 53 and teacher interview data were also coded and analyzed.

The next chapter will present the data findings and an analysis of each research question. Analysis of the study is divided into three sections. The first section reports the demographic characteristics of the survey population, the second section relates the data to each research question posed in this study, and the third section summarizes the major findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV

Findings of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to ascertain teacher's perceptions of the success of

the Beach Early Literacy Program (BELP). This professional development program was

designed to achieve more meaningful student assessment, facilitate observation of

effective teaching practices, promote teacher-centered staff development, and encourage

greater teacher collaboration. This analysis also examined the extent to which teachers

believed that school- and district-administrative support for this program benefited their

teaching practices.

Survey and interview research results appear in this chapter. The final survey

sample was comprised of first- through third-grade teachers (n=12) who participated in

the early literacy professional development program for a one-year period at Beach

Elementary School in the Harmony Hall School District.

Data obtained from teachers (n=12) who completed the *Beach Early Literacy*

Program Questionnaire (Appendix D) was analyzed in the following ways. (1)

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to calculate frequencies and percentages of

survey responses. (2) Face-to-face interviews (n=11) were conducted with teachers to

verify questionnaire responses and to gain additional detail about the benefits of the

program. (3) Face-to-face interviews (n=4) were conducted with the school reading

specialist, principal, district assistant superintendent, and district superintendent to gain a

clearer understanding of how this program fit into the broader vision and mission of the

school and district.

Within Chapters Four and Five, participating BELP teachers who were

interviewed and the reading specialist will be referred to by pseudonyms. Table 2 lists

these pseudonyms and each participant's primary grade-level responsibility during BELP.

Table 2

Participants' Pseudonyms and Grade-Level Assignments

Pseudonym	Grade-Level Assignment
Alice	First Grade
Bridget	First Grade
Colleen	First Grade
Dorothy	Second Grade
Ellen	Second Grade
Fay	Second Grade
Grace	Third Grade
Hannah	Third Grade
Irene	Third Grade
Jessica	Third Grade
Kathleen	Third Grade
Lauren	Reading Specialist

Analysis of the study is divided into three sections. The first section reports the

demographic characteristics of the survey population. The second section relates the data

to each research question posed in this study. A summary of the major findings of this

study concludes the chapter.

Demographic Statistics

Demographic characteristics of the survey sample appear in Table 3. The number

of respondents and percentage data are given for categorical questionnaire items 58-63.

Table 3

Demographics of Teachers in the Study (n=12)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	12	100.0%
Ethnicity	Caucasian	12	100.0%
Age	25 to 29	4	33.3%
	30 to 34	4	33.3%
	35 to 39	1	8.3%
	40 to 44	0	0.0%
	45 to 49	0	0.0%
	50 and over	3	25.0%
Met CA Credential	Yes	10	83.3%
Requirements	No	2	16.6%
Years Teaching	0 to 4	6	50.0%
	5 to 9	2	16.6%
	10 to 14	2	16.6%
	15 to 19	1	8.3%
	20 to 24	0	0.0%
	25 or more	1	8.3%
Primary Teaching	1st Grade	4	33.3%
Assignment	2nd Grade	3	25.0%
	3rd Grade	5	41.6%

Of the 12 teachers surveyed, all were female (100%) and all were Caucasian

(100%). Moreover, one-half of the teachers (50%, n=6) had zero to four years of

teaching experience at the start of this program. Two teachers (16.6%) had five to nine

years of experience, while two others (16.6%) had taught between 10 to 14 years. Only

one teacher (n=1) had over 25 years of experience.

All of the teachers (n=12) who participated in the 1998-99 Beach Elementary

School professional development program also participated in this research study. These

teachers were full-time Beach staff members who worked in self-contained, multiple-

subject first- through third-grade classrooms. When participating in the program, four

teachers (33.3%) taught first grade, three teachers (25%) taught second grade, and five

teachers (41.6%) taught third grade. Ten of the program's participants (83.3%) were

fully credentialed California teachers, while two teachers (16.6%) were working with an

emergency teaching credential because they had yet to fulfill the California teacher

credential requirements.

Research Questions and Results

Data collected from the questionnaire and face-to-face interviews are used to

address each of the five research questions. Results from the survey questionnaire are

summarized and analyzed. Next, open-ended survey responses and interview data are

examined. Finally, each question concludes with a summary analysis of both quantitative

and qualitative data.

Research Question 1 – To what extent did teachers believe that increasing the number of student reading and writing assessments benefited their classroom teaching practices?

To answer this question, the survey data relating to reading assessment from

Subscale A, Student Assessment, was summarized by frequency and percentage

distributions. The distributions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Analysis of the Benefits of Student Reading Assessments (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Completing the district sponsored reading assessments three times per year helped my understanding of my students' reading needs.	n = 4 33.3%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 3 25%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Adding two additional reading assessments in Nov. and Jan. sponsored by BELP further helped my understanding of my students' reading needs.	n = 9 75%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Even though BELP has ended, I will continue to assess my students' reading needs more frequently than required by the district.	n = 11 91.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

Prior to the implementation of BELP, teachers completed early literacy reading assessments three times per year as required by the school district. Eight teachers (66.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that these ongoing assessments aided their understanding of their students' reading needs. Three teachers (25%) somewhat agreed, and one teacher (8.3%) somewhat disagreed that these assessments helped them. During the year of the early literacy program, teachers were then asked to complete two additional reading assessments for a total of five assessments per year. All of the teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that these additional reading assessments benefited their understanding of their students' reading needs. Moreover, all teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would continue more frequent reading assessments after the program ended.

When discussing the benefits of more frequent reading assessments, teachers clearly found it helpful. First- and second-grade teachers found that administering a running record more frequently with their students helped them to pinpoint more accurately the level of text difficulty each child could read and understand. Alice commented that because first graders are "up and down so much and they are so mobile as far as their levels are concerned, it helped me keep my reading groups more fluid" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 2). Based upon these assessments, this teacher was able to respond to children's reading strengths and weaknesses more frequently by changing how she grouped students for reading. Dorothy, a second-grade teacher, commented about how the running records made her realize that she needed to "push harder" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 22). Through this one-on-one assessment time, she determined that her students were capable of more than she was asking them to do.

Although third-grade teachers already administered three district running records, they did not feel that administering two additional running records would be helpful to their instruction because a running record is primarily aimed at identifying how children decode a piece of grade-level text. Consequently, the third-grade teachers selected two comprehension instruments to assess this critical aspect of their students' reading performance about which they needed additional information. These particular assessments came from the third-grade reading series used at Beach School. Each assessment had two to three reading passages followed by several multiple-choice and short-answer comprehension questions. Even with the addition of these comprehension assessments, the third-grade teachers were frustrated with their inability to evaluate student reading performance more accurately. Many commented on the need for better

assessments once students become independent readers. In teacher's minds, these assessments should really focus on whether children understand what they have read and should go beyond simply recalling factual details.

In addition to increasing reading assessments within each first- through third-grade classroom, the teachers participating in BELP believed that it was important to increase and monitor the amount of children's at-home reading as a way to improve students' reading performance. Thus, as part of their required daily homework assignment, first- through third-grade children maintained a reading log in order to record their home reading. Teacher survey data relating to home reading from Subscale A, Student Assessment, was summarized by frequency and percentage distributions in Table 5.

Table 5

Analysis of the Benefits of Student Home Reading Log (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Having children maintain a home reading log was valuable.	n = 9 75%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
The reading log helped me to be more consistent in my expectations of home reading.	n = 9 75%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Even though BELP has ended, I will continue to use the home reading log as part of homework.	n = 11 91.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

All teachers (n=12, 100%) found that having the home reading log was valuable and that it helped them to be more consistent in their home reading expectations of

students. Teachers also believed that it gave them more information about home reading support when conferencing with parents and that it helped to support Beach School's goal of fostering in children a life-long love of reading. Lastly, all teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would continue using an at-home reading log for homework after the program ended.

To evaluate whether additional writing assessments benefited Beach teachers, the survey data relating to writing assessment from Subscale A, Student Assessment, was summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

<u>Analysis of the Benefits of Student Writing Assessments (n=12)</u>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Completing the district-sponsored writing assessment one time per year helped my understanding of my students' writing needs.	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 2 16.7%
Administering an almost monthly writing assessment as sponsored by BELP further helped my understanding of my students' writing needs.	n = 11 91.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Even though BELP has ended, I will continue to assess my students' writing needs more frequently than required by the district.	n = 11 91.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

Prior to the implementation of BELP, teachers administered a district writing assessment one time per year during the month of March. Five teachers (41.7%) somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed that this assessment helped their understanding of their students' writing needs. Another five teachers (41.7%) somewhat agreed that this assessment was beneficial. Only two teachers (16.7%) strongly agreed that this assessment benefited their teaching. During the year of BELP, however, teachers administered a total of eight monthly writing assessments, one per school month excluding April. All of the teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that these additional writing assessments benefited their understanding of their students' writing needs. Moreover, all teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would continue more frequent writing assessments after the program ended.

Teachers, affirmed during their interviews that the district writing assessment was not as useful a tool as it could have been because it was given only once per school year. Hannah, a third-grade teacher, commented that "in the past, when we had only one assessment in the spring, we did writing all year, but we really didn't know how to look at the writing to see where we needed to help kids" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 43). Through BELP, teachers administered monthly writing assessment to their students and then worked together in grade-level teams to score their student papers based upon an age-appropriate writing rubric (Appendix B). In the open-ended survey question on writing (item 10) and the personal interviews with teachers, every program participant commented on how these additional writing assessments benefited their teaching. The most common remark made by teachers was that the additional writing assessments helped them to see their students' progression as writers by allowing teachers to examine

continually their students' strengths and weaknesses. This in turn impacted classroom instruction because teachers then planned lessons according to the changing needs of their students. Thus, the second most common remark concerning the additional writing assessment was that it impacted what teachers did in the classroom. Teachers said that they conferenced each month with students about their assessments, and they spent time teaching students about their grade-level rubric so that the children understood what was expected of them. Some teachers further commented on how the assessments helped them to understand more clearly what they needed to continue teaching and what concepts the children had mastered.

In addition to the classroom benefits of more frequent writing assessments, the amount and quality of teacher collaboration also increased. Each month teachers worked in grade-level teams to design a writing prompt and to then analyze and score student writing. Teachers were able to get feedback from their grade-level partners about what their students' were doing well and about where their students' could improve. During this grade-level exchange, discussion often arose about what was or was not working for teachers in their classrooms, or about which writing ideas to implement at their grade levels.

In summary, all of the teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that increasing student reading and writing assessments and incorporating a student home reading log benefited their classroom teaching practice. Moreover, these teachers also agreed or strongly agreed that they would continue with these increased assessments and home reading expectations even after BELP ended. When asked about how this component of the program could have been improved, five of the 11 teachers interviewed

had no suggestions. Three of the third-grade teachers reiterated the need for better

reading assessment tools at their grade level. A second-grade teacher believed that rather

than always having students write an expository paragraph about a topic, they should also

be given the opportunity to write in another genre, such as poetry or biography. Lastly,

two first-grade teachers commented upon the need for more grade-level teacher

collaboration when analyzing student writing. These teachers believed that they needed

to spend more time examining how to help their struggling young writers, and they

needed more time exchanging teaching ideas to improve student writing.

Research Question 2 – To what extent did teachers believe that observing effective

teaching practices in other classrooms benefited their classroom teaching practices?

To answer this question, the survey data from Subscale B, Observing Effective

Teaching Practices, was summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The

distributions are presented in Table 7.

Through BELP, each primary grade teacher at Beach was allowed to observe in

other classrooms, both within the Harmony Hall School District and in surrounding San

Francisco Bay Area schools. Of the 12 teachers surveyed, one teacher did not observe in

another classroom, six teachers took time for one full observation day, and five teachers

took two observation days. The following analysis will be based on those teachers who

went out for one or more observation days during BELP (n=11).

All of the teachers (n=11, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed

that they observed literacy teaching techniques that they already used in their classroom

Table 7

Analysis of the Benefits of Observing Effective Teaching Practices (n=11)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I observed literacy teaching techniques that I already use in my classroom.	n = 2 18.2%	n = 8 72.7%	n =1 9.1%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
I observed teaching strategies taught during BELP staff development trainings.	n = 4 36.4%	n = 5 45.5%	n = 2 18.2%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
After observing I incorporated new literacy instructional techniques into my classroom.	n = 3 27.3%	n = 6 54.5%	n =1 9.1%	n = 1 9.1%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Overall, having the time to observe was valuable.	n = 5 45.5%	n = 6 54.5%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

and that they observed teachers demonstrating the literacy strategies taught during

various BELP staff development sessions. Moreover, all of the teachers (n=11, 100%)

strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that having the opportunity to observe other teachers

was valuable. Lastly, 10 of the teachers (90.9%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat

agreed that they incorporated new literacy instructional techniques into their classroom

teaching practices after observing. However, one teacher (9.1%) somewhat disagreed

that she incorporated new literacy instructional techniques after observing. In the open-

ended survey question (item 16), teachers were specifically asked what instructional

techniques they incorporated after observing. Again, 10 of the 11 teachers (90.9%)

claimed to have incorporated new instructional techniques into their classroom after

observing. Nine of the teachers wrote about incorporating new small-group literacy

activities, such as literacy centers, literature circles, shared reading, and poetry activities. One teacher wrote that she had incorporated new math ideas she had observed.

When discussing the benefits of observing effective teaching practices in other classrooms, teachers expressed a range of opinions. Seven teachers believed that their observations affirmed what they were already doing in their own classrooms. These teachers said that they witnessed small-group reading instruction and partner-based literacy centers, a common practice during language arts time at Beach School. Five of the teachers said they observed a good activity or garnered an excellent idea while in another teacher's classroom. One teacher, Bridget, noted that although it was beneficial to observe, she found the experience completely overwhelming, saying, "I grow frazzled when I walk into other people's classroom because I see what I am not doing" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 9). This teacher seemed intimidated by the many instructional and physical differences between her classroom and the classroom she observed. In the classroom where she observed, for example, the teacher had a computer mini-lab right in her room, so the children were able to publish much more of their work than the students in Beach classrooms, which typically had only two computers.

Another teacher, Alice, believed that making classroom observations outside of the Harmony Hall School District benefited her because she was able to learn from teachers who had received different literacy training that complimented her own. By contrast, Irene believed that Beach teachers should observe master teachers within the school district because these teachers share with them the same district performance expectations. Interestingly, this teacher went on to say that doing these within-district observations is better because "all of these things that have been done to us have been

done to them, too" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 51). Such language echoes the common teacher belief that training is done *to* teachers, not *with* them.

Another finding was that teachers believed that observations were more beneficial when done in grade-level teams. The four first-grade teachers conducted observations together, as did the three second-grade teachers. Although a concerted effort was made for this to occur with each observation, one third-grade teacher ended up observing without her grade-level team. Six teachers noted during their interviews that observing with other teachers positively impacted their experience. All of these teachers said that this allowed them to debrief with someone about what they had seen. Bridget said that her teaching partners saw things in the room that she did not observe and that they were able to share them with her immediately afterwards. Lastly, Hannah and Kathleen believed that they came back to Beach and incorporated more of what they had observed because they were doing so with other grade-level teachers who had witnessed the same instructional techniques.

Beach teachers made nine comments about how observing in other classrooms could have been improved. Bridget and Hannah believed that a checklist of particular "best practices" to look for would have benefited them. Two other teachers, Colleen and Jessica, felt that they should have spent their entire observation day in one classroom rather than observing multiple classrooms at one school site. A similar comment was made by Grace who would have preferred to have observed one teacher multiple times during the school year. She believed that she would have gained insight into the process of creating a classroom with effective literacy practices if she had a relationship with one teacher who she periodically observed and who reciprocated by observing her. Fay and

Kathleen believed that they would have benefited by having more release-time for observations. Lastly, Fay also felt that the observation component could have been more organized had she been given beforehand the classroom schedule of the teacher she was observing.

In summary, all of the teachers (n=11) believed that observing effective literacy instruction practices benefited their teaching strategies. Ten teachers (90.9%) stated that they incorporated instructional strategies that they observed into their own classroom, while one teacher (9.1%) somewhat disagreed that she had done this. This specific component of BELP appeared to be the most difficult to implement for participating Beach teachers. This difficulty was largely associated with the limited pool of substitutes available in their school district and the need for securing a large number of substitute teachers for each teacher out on an observation. This was complicated by the teachers' strong belief that it was more effective to make an observation together so that they would be able to discuss with each other what they had observed. Consequently, this increased the difficulty in obtaining an ample number of substitute teachers and thus limited the number of times that teachers were able to make observations. Furthermore, finding expert teachers for Beach teachers to observe was done by a word-of-mouth recommendation system. Becoming aware of expert teachers outside of the Harmony Hall School District was more difficult than teachers had originally anticipated.

<u>Research Question 3 – To what extent did teachers believe that increasing teacher</u>

<u>collaboration benefited their classroom teaching practices?</u>

This question will be addressed according to three general aspects of teacher

collaboration. First, teachers' beliefs about peer *collaboration during BELP* will be

examined. Second, teachers' beliefs about *time allocation during BELP* will be explored.

Third, teachers' beliefs about *future collaboration without BELP* will be examined. Each

of these three aspects of teacher collaboration will be addressed using teacher survey and

interview response data.

<u>Teacher Collaboration During BELP.</u> To answer this question, the survey data

relating to collaboration during BELP from Subscale C, Teacher Collaboration, was

summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented

in Table 8.

Prior to the implementation of BELP, teacher collaboration took place only by

choice among individual teachers and only on a grade-level basis. Even then, the

collaboration that occurred prior to BELP focused more upon the scheduling of field

trips, coordinating holiday activities, and selecting items for grade-level homework

packets. The collaboration component of BELP differed significantly from prior forms

of collaboration for two main reasons. First, the school schedule was changed so that

Beach students were released one hour early on Wednesday afternoons in order for

teachers to work together. Second, each Wednesday the teacher collaboration block was

structured with a specific purpose. Teachers scored and analyzed student writing samples

with their grade-level teams, participated in literacy staff development at Beach,

Table 8

Analysis of Teacher Collaboration During BELP (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
During BELP, I collaborated more frequently with teachers at my grade level.	n = 10 83.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
During BELP, I collaborated more frequently with teachers at other grade levels.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
During BELP, I evaluated student writing more frequently with other teachers.	n = 9 75%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
During BELP, I problem-solved student leaning concerns more frequently with other teachers.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
During BELP, I discussed instructional techniques more frequently with other teachers.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
During BELP, I discussed what I want learning to look like in my classroom more frequently with other teachers.	n = 6 50%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

problem-solved student learning concerns with other teachers, or worked with their

grade-level team to implement the newly-adopted district reading program. This

Wednesday work-time for teachers was built into the system, and all first- through third-

grade teachers were expected to attend meetings and participate in the program.

However, even within the structure of weekly meetings, the specific agenda for

the Wednesday time was negotiated on a monthly or even weekly basis so that teachers

could determine how they wanted their collaboration time to be spent.

When surveyed, all teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat

agreed that during BELP they collaborated more with teachers at their grade level and

with teachers at other grade levels. Moreover, all teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed,

agreed, or somewhat agreed that during BELP they evaluated student writing more

frequently with other teachers and that they discussed what they wanted learning to look

like in their classroom with other teachers. Of these 12 teachers, 11 (91.7%) strongly

agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that during BELP they problem-solved student

learning concerns more frequently with other teachers. However, one teacher (8.3%)

disagreed with this statement. Lastly, 11 teachers (91.7) strongly agreed, agreed, or

somewhat agreed, while one teacher (8.3%) somewhat disagreed that during BELP they

discussed instructional techniques more frequently with other teachers.

When speaking with teachers, they affirmed that teacher collaboration benefited

their teaching practices. Six teachers commented that they preferred the grade-level time,

while five teachers preferred working in the bigger group during cross grade-level time.

Teacher comments regarding collaboration during BELP fell into three main themes: (1)

teachers felt less isolated, (2) teachers believed that they benefited through an exchange

of ideas, and (3) teachers believed that collaboration was positively built into their work

system. Each of these themes will be examined in order to explain teacher beliefs about

collaboration during BELP.

The theme of feeling less isolated during BELP was evoked by the words of many

teachers. Jessica, a third-grade teacher, stated:

> I think it [BELP] developed a feeling that we are all working together, and we have the same concerns. I didn't feel as much of the message, "Here you are out here, now sink or swim." I felt like everyone was working together and we had this common goal; it was all of us trying to solve these problems instead of just me in my little classroom on this big campus and in this district. I sort of felt unified, and that was empowering to me. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 56)

While participating in BELP, this particular teacher was in her second year of teaching.

After making these statements, she was asked about feeling isolated during her first year

of teaching. Jessica went on to say:

> I didn't feel isolated as in not having friends, but I felt it was 'Here are the keys to your classroom, and there you go.' I was thinking, 'Okay, what do I do first?' It was totally overwhelming, and the group of children and their dynamics that I had was just awful. I wondered if I made the right decision in becoming a teacher. That is pretty big because I really like what I do now. But that first year was rough, and I didn't feel like I had much support at the school site. However, if I went and initiated it and asked anyone on the staff for help, they were more than happy to help me. I felt that if they are as busy as I am, then I'm not going to bug them with my problems. Whereas when we met on Wednesday, that was our time, everyone's time, and we were there for a common purpose. I didn't feel as intrusive to ask again about what you do in math or how to run centers.
>
> The other problem was that during my first year, I didn't know what questions to ask. I just knew that I needed help. As an experienced teacher what do you say to that? Should they start with taking role? It is really hard. Looking back on it now. I would love to have a mentor teacher on campus if they were being paid to be my mentor teacher. (Molinelli, 2000, pp. 56-57)

Evidently, Jessica felt both overwhelmed and isolated during her first year at Beach. By

contrast, Fay, a second-grade teacher who joined the Beach staff during the year of

BELP, stated the following during her interview:

> I thought the program was great, and it helped me a lot, especially as a new teacher — a lot!
>
> Basically, when I went to school to learn how to become a new teacher, they don't really give you that much information on how to teach reading and writing. You don't get practical information about that. You basically get thrown into a classroom, and you're supposed to know how to teach reading. I was fortunate enough to have had a long-term sub job to know what was going on in the classroom, but without knowing anything and not having any training, I would have been floundering a lot, I think. Being able to talk to my colleagues [during BELP] and ask them if this is normal or what should I do with this child who is

having problem was hugely beneficial. If I didn't have people to talk to, then I don't know what I would be doing in here. It was important to get the training and the new ideas because you do get stagnant, even as a new teacher who has tons of motivation you get stagnant. You get stagnant doing the same stuff if you don't have people to talk to and if you don't have the opportunity to listen to someone remotivate you once in a while and give you that extra charge about how to make your classroom a fun learning environment. You simply don't know whether it is working with the kids. So I think the program was great. (Molinelli, 2000, pp. 35-36)

Obviously, teachers new to the profession are faced with seemingly endless demands, including the daunting task of attempting to create a classroom environment where all children can be successful learners. Jessica's comments about feeling isolated and overwhelmed are startling. Even though Fay also commented upon feeling overwhelmed, it is clear that she did not feel the isolation that Jessica felt the previous school year before BELP. Both of these new teachers considered their participation in BELP to be an essential avenue for gaining support from other staff members.

The benefits of teacher collaboration during BELP were echoed by Dorothy who was in her 11th year of teaching but who was also new to second grade. This teacher said:

Because it was a new grade level for me, I was swimming blind. I had no idea of where I was going. Without the guidance of the other second-grade teachers, as well as the third grade teachers to let me know long-term where I was headed, I don't think my kids would have gotten as far. I really got a sense of how much to push them, how to help them, and how to instruct them. There is no way my students would have been as successful in second grade without it. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 22)

Colleen, another experienced teacher, stated that the collaboration "makes me feel stronger because I have all this other input that is coming in. Collaboration either affirms what I am doing or helps me if there is an area that I feel weaker, so I like it a lot better than feeling isolated" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 16). Later in her interview, when discussing her three years at Beach before BELP, this teacher said:

> Maybe it [collaboration] was going on elsewhere, and I was an isolationist just trying to figure out what the heck was going on at the time. But I certainly need the collaboration. Maybe the program just bridged the gap between being afraid of going to other people and say, 'I'm at a loss of what to do.' Whereas, now it is set-up that way. Before you might have felt that you weren't an effective teacher if you had to go to someone else and talk to them for help. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 17)

The teacher collaboration component of this program was created to help combat these feelings of isolation that both new and experienced teachers at Beach spoke about in their interviews. Both Dorothy and Colleen believed that they were stronger and more capable as a result of the time they had working with and learning from other teachers. Perhaps, as Colleen commented, the program essentially acted as a bridge among teachers and between classrooms.

The second theme to emerge when discussing collaboration during BELP with teachers was that it allowed for an exchange of ideas. Teachers found it valuable having grade-level and cross grade-level time for planning and discussing ideas about learning and instruction. Colleen discussed having communicated with parents that she regularly collaborated with the other teachers at her grade level. She said, "That [collaboration] was a good thing for parents to know, and I even told my parents, 'All of us are working together collaboratively to help your child.' I want them to see us as four teachers working together, not one teacher who may have strengths and weaknesses" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 16). Colleen obviously felt supported by her grade-level team. Moreover, she believed that she benefited from the practical information shared by her colleagues about how to meet the needs of her students, and she also believed that it was important to communicate the existence of this collegial support to her students' parents. This, she believed, demonstrated for the parents that the broader Beach community of teachers were committed to helping their children succeed.

Dorothy, a second-grade teacher, found the exchange of ideas beneficial because it helped her better meet the range of needs in her classroom. Although this teacher taught second grade, some struggling students in her class needed support with first-grade concepts, while advanced students needed their instruction extended with the introduction of third-grade concepts. During her interview, this teacher stated, "These kids are pigeon-holed into a grade; and it is pigeon-holing me, too, saying this is your grade level and stay within. It is nice to hear the other ideas to extend or bring down activities" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 23). Through the exchange of ideas within the teacher collaboration component of BELP, this particular teacher found that she was better able to diversify and individualize her curriculum to meet the specific needs of each student in her class. Through this collaborative exchange, Dorothy was essentially able to benefit from the expert knowledge of those who taught at the grades both below and above her own.

The third theme to emerge when discussing teacher collaboration during BELP was that time to collaborate was built into the system. Because students were released from school one-hour early on Wednesday, teachers were able to collaborate during the normal work hours of their instructional day, not after they had been teaching all day. Thus, collaboration was built into the system and, consequently, it was not viewed or approached as one more thing to do. Grace, a third-grade teacher, said:

> It benefited me a lot because we're just so busy, and this gave us time we could count on to talk one-on-one with other teachers. If something had to be discussed, I knew that I had fifteen to twenty minutes on a weekly basis to do that. I thought it was really beneficial because it was part of our schedule. It wasn't an added on thing. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 38)

Kathleen, another third-grade teacher, noted the difficulty of coordinating teachers' schedules at her grade level and believed the collaboration time during BELP was

critically important for them. She said, "That [collaboration] was the most important part

because we could talk weekly instead of trying to squeeze in a few minutes here or

there.... Trying to get five teachers together was hard enough" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 63).

Building time into the regular school schedule allowed for the collaboration to

take place, and it may have even enhanced teacher ownership of the program. When

asked whether it would have helped having BELP her first year or whether it would have

been just one more thing for her to do, Jessica, a second-year Beach teacher, responded

by saying:

> It would have been one more thing on my plate, but it would have been a place to
> go where you can sort out the other things that are heaping and piling over your
> plate. I wouldn't feel as bad to approach someone because it's not on their time.
> It was our time. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 57)

The collective "our" uttered by Jessica was echoed numerous times by Beach teachers,

and reflected their ownership of this collaboration time.

In summary, teachers agreed that they collaborated more frequently with other

teachers during BELP. Moreover, every program participant (n=12, 100%) believed that

they benefited from this teacher collaboration component of the program. Teachers

seemed to find this component of the program especially valuable because time to work

together was built into their schedule; because they were able to learn from each other in

a supportive environment where their ideas, concerns, and struggles were honored; and

because the professional isolation, so prevalent in their school prior to this program, had

begun to dissolve. In these fundamental ways, Beach first- through third-grade teachers

were genuinely learning from each other and taking ownership of their own professional

development.

Time Allocation for Collaboration During BELP. In addition to evaluating the

benefits of teacher collaboration, teachers were also asked in their survey to evaluate how

their time for collaboration was allocated during BELP. Survey questions relating to the

allocation of time for teacher collaboration within Subscale C were summarized by

frequency and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented in Table 9.

All teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that time

allocated during BELP for collaboration with teachers at their grade level and other grade

levels was valuable. Moreover, all teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or

somewhat agreed that time allocated during BELP for discussing instructional techniques

with other teachers and for discussing what they wanted learning to look like in their

classroom with other teachers was valuable. Of these 12 teachers, 11 (91.7%) strongly

agreed or agreed that time allocated during BELP for evaluating student writing more

frequently with other teachers and for problem-solving student learning concerns with

other teachers was valuable. However, one teacher (8.3%) disagreed that the time

allocated for evaluating student writing or problem solving student learning concerns was

valuable.

During their individual interviews, two first-grade teachers each commented upon

obstacles within their grade level that took away from their collaboration time together.

This 1998-99 first-grade team consisted of four teachers who had worked together for the

two school years prior to the implementation of BELP. One of the four teachers became

pregnant early in the school year and left on medical disability in mid-April. Alice, one

of the teachers who discussed obstacles to collaboration at her grade level, commented

Table 9

Analysis of Time Allocated for Teacher Collaboration During BELP (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Time allocated during BELP for collaboration with teachers at my grade level was valuable.	n = 9 75%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Time allocated during BELP for collaboration with teachers at other grade levels was valuable.	n = 6 50%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Time allocated during BELP for evaluating student writing with other teachers was valuable.	n = 9 75%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
Time allocated during BELP for problem-solving student leaning concerns with other teachers was valuable.	n = 6 50%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
Time allocated during BELP for discussing instructional techniques with other teachers was valuable.	n = 4 33.3%	n = 6 50%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Time allocated during BELP for discussing with other teachers what I wanted learning to look like in my classroom was valuable.	n = 4 33.3%	n = 7 58.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

that "we had people in different places" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 3) and that since one of the

teachers left on maternity leave she believed that the team never collaborated as much as

she would have liked, saying, "it just kind of never happened" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 3).

Despite her interview responses, Alice surprisingly marked only strongly agree, agree, or

somewhat agree on survey items 17 to 34 pertaining to the benefits of teacher

collaboration.

Bridget, the second teacher to discuss obstacles to collaboration time at this grade

level stated:

> I found that there wasn't a lot of collaboration or ideas at my grade level to help the low, low kids. It was more a competition rather than a help and assistance. 'What can we do to help Johnny with capital letters or periods?' I would ask my grade level what they thought, or if they had any ideas, but no one really had concrete suggestions. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 10)

Unlike the other first-grade teacher, Bridget disagreed in her survey that during BELP she

problem-solved learning concerns more frequently with other teachers (item 20) and that

time allocated for this process was valuable (item 26). In addition, Bridget disagreed that

time allocated for evaluating student writing with other teachers was valuable (item 25)

and somewhat disagreed that she discussed instructional techniques more with other

teachers (item 21). Bridget's interview response about grade-level competition was not

an issue raised by other teachers, but it certainly appeared to have been an impediment to

collaboration among the first-grade team. Each month teachers turned their writing

scores into the principal, and it is possible that this may have created the idea that these

scores could have been used to evaluate teacher performance or the belief that the teacher

with the highest class average at each grade level was doing the best job. Although these

scores were not used as a teacher evaluation tool, some teachers may have believed that

the principal could have used them in this way.

A common issue regarding the allocation of time raised by teachers in their

interviews pertained to those grade levels that did not participate in the program. For

example, Bridget, a first-grade teacher, noted that she would have benefited by

collaborating with Beach kindergarten teachers. She believed this would have helped her

understand more clearly what kindergartners can do at the beginning and end of the year,

allowing her to adjust her expectations for their performance based upon this knowledge.

In addition to this first-grade teacher, four out of the five third-grade teachers commented

that they would have benefited by spending collaboration time with fourth-grade

teachers. They believed such collaboration would have given them a better sense of what

they were working toward while it would have allowed for feedback about the

preparation of former third-grade students.

Second grade was unique among the grade levels participating in BELP in that

teachers in the grade level below and above it also participated in the program. The

benefits of this were reiterated by all three of the second-grade teachers who noted that

time allocated for cross grade-level collaboration was extremely valuable. As Ellen

phrased it:

> It [collaboration] was excellent. Especially being in second grade because we had
> first grade, and we could see where they [teachers] were frustrated in where they
> [students] needed to go. We talked to third grade teachers and learned what they
> were frustrated by the skills the kids didn't have; we were in the middle part of
> the sandwich. We got the best of both worlds, and it was wonderful to see that
> because I could really understand the *before* and *after,* and how we can work
> together to help the kids. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 28)

According to Ellen, second-grade teachers "got the best of both worlds" (Molinelli, 2000,

p. 28) during collaboration time because they "were in the middle" (Molinelli, 2000, p.

28). Second-grade teachers seemed to value this opportunity to learn from both first- and

third-grade teachers.

Another common issue relating to time allocation for teacher collaboration

centered around lesson planning. During the one-hour collaboration time on Wednesday

afternoons, teachers did not actually bring their lesson plan books and fill-in what lessons

they were going to teach the following week. Instead, this time was used primarily to

discuss student learning and the best ways to meet the instructional needs of students. In

the open-ended survey question (item 35), teachers were specifically asked whether

lesson planning during BELP time would have made the teacher collaboration time more

valuable. When responding to this question, 3 of the 12 teachers preferred discussing

student work and basing curriculum goals around that discussion, whereas 9 of the 12

teachers explicitly stated that filling-in their lesson plan book during this time would have

made time allocated for collaboration more valuable. Alice wrote, "Because we would

be given the opportunity not only to discuss what we would like to accomplish, but also

the opportunity to make it happen. Writing it down in a lesson plan ensures that it will

take place." Colleen wrote, "Ultimately it comes down to what happens in our

classrooms and if we collaborate on lesson plans it not only lessens the load but it

increases the potential for creative ideas." By contrast, the three teachers who did not

believe lesson planning during BELP would have made collaboration time more valuable

commented on the benefits of general overall planning and curriculum goals. These

teachers thought this time allocated for discussing learning issues was better done as a

group, while actual lesson planning should be done by individual teachers. During her

interview, Hannah commented:

> It's always easy to have the time to sit and fill in your lesson plan book, but I
> think what we really need more is to talk about students and how we're going to
> improve their learning. I'm not sure the best use of time is filling in the book with
> isolated little lessons. I think to have an hour every week to philosophize and just
> talk about the big ideas of instruction is important. We need to look at where
> we're going, what students know, and how you help those who aren't getting it.
> You know, I really feel that the way we had it structured is the best, and I think
> everybody was really happy. (Molinelli, 2000, pp. 45-46)

The allocation of collaboration time during Wednesday afternoons during BELP was continually negotiated during the year of the program. When the program was initially conceived, no time was allocated for teachers to open up their lesson plan books and fill in the little squares. This decision to exclude lesson planning was primarily a reaction to the lack of teacher collaboration in the past at Beach. When teachers did collaborate prior to BELP, such collaboration focused more upon accomplishing a task such as selecting homework, or planning an activity such as a holiday art project or party. Prior to BELP, teachers were simply not meeting to discuss more fundamental teaching and learning issues or concerns. The structure of time allocated for teacher collaboration during BELP was done so that it would foster more dialogue, promote more reflective practice, and that it would not be used for the one-way exchange of lesson ideas. Although this was the primary rationale behind collaboration time, as the BELP school-year progressed, grade-level teams dedicated approximately 15 minutes toward the end of each meeting to meet and lesson plan.

In summary, teachers generally agreed that the time allocated for teacher collaboration during BELP was beneficial. The quality of collaboration time may have been adversely impacted at one grade level due to the particular competitive norms held by some teachers at that grade level, and it may have been further exacerbated by health issues of one member of the grade-level team who left Beach after the third quarter. Moreover, securing the participation of the entire Beach staff, not just the first- through third-grade teachers, might have allowed for a greater degree of collaboration among all grade levels. Lastly, allocating additional time for lesson planning while discussing

effective instructional techniques may have made collaboration time even more beneficial for teachers.

Continuing Collaboration Without BELP. The final subset of survey questions regarding teacher collaboration asked to what extent teachers intended to continue their collaboration without the structure of BELP. Survey questions relating to future collaboration without BELP from Subscale C were summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented in Table 10.

Since BELP had only been implemented during the 1998-99 school year, teachers had just begun the 1999-2000 school year without BELP when they completed their survey and discussed BELP later that fall during personal interviews. Even without the structure of BELP, these teachers continued to assess student performance more frequently, and they still worked with the modified Wednesday schedule that allowed for grade-level collaboration and that provided the opportunity to observe in other classrooms. However, two aspects of BELP no longer remained: teacher-selected staff development and cross grade-level collaboration.

When surveyed, all teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that without BELP they would continue to collaborate with teachers at their grade level and that they would continue to evaluate student writing with other teachers. Moreover, all teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that after BELP they intended to continue problem-solving their various student learning concerns and discussing instructional techniques with one another. Of these 12 teachers,

Table 10

Analysis of Teacher Collaboration in the Future Without BELP (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In the future, without BELP, I intend to collaborate with teachers at my grade level.	n = 7 58.3%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
In the future, without BELP, I intend to collaborate with teachers at other grade levels.	n = 3 25%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
In the future, without BELP, I intend to evaluate student writing with other teachers.	n = 11 91.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
In the future, without BELP, I intend to problem-solve student leaning concerns with other teachers.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
In the future, without BELP, I intend to discuss instructional techniques with other teachers.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 3 25%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
In the future, without BELP, I intend to discuss what I want learning to look like in my classroom with other teachers.	n = 4 33.3%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

11 (91.7%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that without the structure of

BELP they would continue to collaborate with teachers at other grade levels and that they

would discuss with one another what they wanted learning to look like in their classroom.

However, one teacher (8.3%) disagreed and another teacher (8.3%) somewhat disagreed

that after BELP they would collaborate with teachers at other grade levels.

When discussing the quality of teacher collaboration both during and after BELP, Irene, a third-grade teacher, commented during her interview about the difference:

> I found the time helpful, and I like the idea of having time to meet together on Wednesday. It is less isolating that way. Although this year I find that we're not doing it. I guess it's because people are sick or whatever, but you're still pretty much on your own. We coordinate what homework we run, but there isn't a tremendous amount of collaboration. I think there is more than there would be, but we still need more. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 52)

Evidently, less than two months into a new school year, Irene believed that grade-level teacher collaboration had already declined significantly. At this grade level, it appeared that teachers were discussing what homework they wanted to copy, but it was unclear whether they were even continuing to meet on a weekly basis or that they were discussing fundamental issues of teaching and learning.

When a second-grade teacher was asked how the teacher collaboration component of the program could have been improved, Dorothy stated:

> I have no idea how to make it better. Everything was so valuable. The only way to make it better would be for more. More weeks and continuing the program this year. Having that first- through third-grade time again, even if it is only once a month or something, would also be important so people get a sense of what we're doing. This would allow us to better use our outside resources to help kids. As a school we could make better decisions and there isn't time at staff meetings to do it. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 23)

Dorothy found collaboration time so valuable that the only improvement she could suggest was that it simply continue. Even though she was working weekly with her grade-level team during the new school year, Dorothy believed that the cross grade-level collaboration time from the previous year was still critical since it allowed for better schoolwide instructional decision-making.

During BELP, teacher collaboration time always focused upon classroom instruction and student learning. Teachers shared and discussed what they needed in

order for their students to be educationally successful. These discussions often involved

allocating school resources for student interventions, changing or adapting classroom

instructional techniques, and outreaching into Beach homes in order to increase student

reading opportunities. This dialogue occurred because teachers were given time together

to reflect upon and problem-solve one another's teaching and learning concerns. As

Dorothy said, "there isn't time at staff meetings to do it" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 23).

Consequently, when BELP ended, so did much of this cross grade-level dialogue.

Lastly, when talking about the teacher collaboration component of BELP, Jessica,

a third-grade teacher, said, "I think that it was most helpful, beneficial, and useful"

(Molinelli, 2000, p. 57). This belief is clearly shared by the 12 (100%) BELP

participants who either strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that after BELP they

would continue to collaborate with teachers at their grade level, and it is a belief mirrored

in the survey responses of the 11 (91.7%) participants who either strongly agreed, agreed,

or somewhat agreed that after BELP they would continue to collaborate with teachers at

other grade levels as well.

Research Question 4 – To what extent did teachers believe that teacher-selected, site-

based staff development benefited their classroom teaching practices?

To answer this question, the data from Subscale D, Staff Development, was

summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented

in Table 11.

Table 11

Analysis of Staff Development (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Having BELP staff development trainings at my school site was valuable.	n = 6 50%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Having training at my school site made me feel more comfortable implementing training into my classroom.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 7 58.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Having training at my school site made me feel more comfortable working with a peer to implement training.	n = 6 50%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
I have implemented techniques from BELP trainings into my classroom.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 6 50%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
I found it valuable to help choose training topics during BELP.	n = 9 75%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 33.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Because I was able to help choose the BELP staff development training topics, my professional learning needs were better met.	n = 9 75%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
I found it valuable to read *Classrooms That Work*.	n = 5 41.7%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
I found it valuable to discuss *Classrooms That Work*.	n = 7 58.3%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

Table 11 – Continued

Analysis of Staff Development (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have implemented instructional techniques from *Classrooms That Work* into my classroom.	n = 2 16.7%	n = 8 66.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
Overall, having staff development as a component of BELP was valuable.	n = 7 58.3%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

All of the teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that having the BELP staff development training at their school site was valuable. Moreover, all of the teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that because BELP trainings were at their school site, teachers (1) were more comfortable implementing training techniques, (2) were more comfortable working with a peer to implement training techniques, and (3) actually implemented BELP training techniques into their classroom practices. In addition to the benefit of having training at their school site, teachers overwhelmingly believed that they benefited from having a voice in their training topics. Nine teachers (75%) strongly agreed and three teachers (25%) agreed that it was valuable being able to choose their training topics and that having this choice helped them to meet their professional learning needs. When surveyed about the value of reading and discussing the professional book, *Classrooms That Work*, all teachers (n=12, 100%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that they benefited from this reading and group discussion. Of the 12 teachers, 11 (91.7%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that they had implemented instructional techniques from *Classrooms*

That Work into their teaching practices. One teacher (8.3%) somewhat disagreed that she

had been able to incorporate instructional techniques from the book into her classroom.

Finally, seven teachers (58.3%) strongly agreed and the remaining five teachers (41.7%)

agreed that, overall, having staff development as a component of BELP benefited their

teaching practices.

All 11 teachers (100%) interviewed said they believed that the staff development

component of BELP benefited them. Moreover, 10 teachers (91.7%) noted in their

interviews that they liked having a choice in their training topics. This choice seemed to

ensure for teachers that their training was relevant and that it addressed their professional

learning needs. Ellen, a second-grade teacher, said:

> It [staff development] was nice the way it was set-up. We were asked what we
> wanted to know and we got to pick it. If you had asked me six months earlier or
> later, then I would have given you a different topic. It was nice to tell where I
> would get the most benefit. It was great because I didn't have to look for a
> conference. It was all here in our backyard. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 29)

During her interview, Jessica commented, "It was more meaningful because it was on the

need that *we* saw rather than what the district thought we needed" (Molinelli, 2000,

p. 58). Similarly, Irene noted, "I liked having a choice in the topic. If you have

something done to you rather than having a choice it is not necessarily as effective"

(Molinelli, 2000, p. 52). Clearly, these teachers believed that when they chose their own

training topics, those training opportunities better addressed their professional learning

needs and would more likely improve classroom instruction. Because they were given a

choice, teachers not only found their training more relevant, but also believed they were

more open to the instructional ideas presented. Thus, teachers believed they transferred

their training back to their classroom and experimented more with what they learned at their training.

In the open-ended survey question (item 45), teachers were specifically asked whether it made a difference having training at Beach rather than at another school site or in the district Instructional Media Center. All teachers (n=12, 100%) responded that it did make a difference. First, teachers simply found it more convenient to attend training at their school site. They did not feel that they had to rush from their classroom to another location and then find parking and the training room. Second, teachers were able to learn and discuss during their training those strategies that applied directly to Beach students. Third, teachers found the training less intimidating because it was done in a small-group setting with teachers they knew and trusted. Teachers believed that this allowed them to take risks, share ideas, and ask questions. A fourth benefit described by eight teachers during their interviews was that teachers were more willing to experiment with teaching ideas gleaned from these training because they had support at their school site. Either teachers were working with grade-level partners to implement a technique they had learned, or they were trying a technique after another Beach teacher found it successful. Because teachers shared, supported, and coached one another, they appeared more willing to try new instructional practices in their classroom. As Ellen put it, "If we're all here at Beach, you have instant resources" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 29).

During their interviews, only a handful of teachers addressed their reading and discussion of *Classrooms That Work*. Alice and Bridget commented upon how beneficial it was to read a few chapters of the book and then to discuss them as a group. These first-grade teachers found that this format of independent reading followed by group

discussion motivated them to read and share their ideas and responses with teachers at other grade levels. However, Grace and Kathleen, two third-grade teachers, did not find the book as helpful. They both believed they benefited from having read the book, but each thought less group time should have been spent discussing it. In fact, Kathleen thought the extra discussion time should have been used for grade-level collaboration.

In summary, all teachers (n=12, 100%) agreed or strongly agreed that the staff development component of BELP benefited their teaching practices. This training was unique to Beach teachers because they were asked to select their training topics, thus ensuring that it was both relevant and useful. Moreover, by having training at the school site, teachers were able to learn in a supportive, caring environment where they felt comfortable asking questions and taking risks. After training had taken place, teachers could continue to learn together by offering one another support and assistance when implementing newly-learned techniques. Clearly, then, by asking teachers to select their training topics and by providing this training at Beach, teachers assumed more ownership of their learning which, in turn, seemed to allow for greater instructional experimentation and implementation. Thus, teachers believed that training transferred into the classroom and that children benefited from the most effective instructional practices.

Research Question 5 – To what extent did teachers believe that school- and district-administrative support for this teacher-initiated change program benefited their classroom teaching practices?

To answer this question, the data relating to school administrative support from Subscale E, Teacher Support, was summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Analysis of the School Administrative Support For BELP (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My school administration supports the instructional practices advocated by BELP.	n = 3 25%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 3 25%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
My school administration has provided me with the support necessary to implement the instructional practices advocated by BELP.	n = 1 8.3%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
My school administration supports the teacher collaboration component advocated by BELP.	n = 4 33.3%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%

Of the 12 teachers surveyed, 11 (91.7%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed, while one teacher (8.3%) somewhat disagreed that the school administration supported the instructional practices advocated by BELP. Moreover, 10 teachers (83.3%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed, while two teachers (16.6%) somewhat disagreed or disagreed that the school administration provided the support necessary to

implement the instructional practices advocated by BELP. Finally, 11 teachers (91.7%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed, while one teacher (8.3%) somewhat disagreed that the school administration supported the teacher collaboration component advocated by BELP.

To gain a clearer understanding of how BELP fit into the overall vision and mission of Beach School, all teachers were asked during their interview to what extent they felt the program was compatible with the school vision and mission. Of the 11 teachers interviewed, seven teachers were unable to articulate what the vision or mission of Beach School and, therefore, were unable to say whether the program was compatible with it. The four teachers who felt the program fit into the overall vision and mission of the school each had a somewhat different understanding of the school vision and mission. Bridget felt it was, "That every child who walks through these doors should be respectful of others, and the teachers should try everything in their power to allow all to succeed" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 11). Dorothy believed it was, "The whole supportive, caring environment and learning in different styles" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 24). A third teacher, Irene, felt the school vision "is to have children able to communicate in many ways and to be successful in life and so on" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 53). The fourth teacher, Jessica, felt that it is "to have life-long learners" and "that students need to be on grade level and they need to be successful academically in the classroom" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 59).

When the school principal was asked about the school vision and mission and whether BELP was compatible with the overall principles of the school, she said, "The vision has always been, and it hasn't been really addressed in the last five years, but the mission is and the vision is for all kids to be successful and for everybody to work

together and collaborate — parents and teachers — toward that end" (Molinelli, 2000, p.

76). The principal went on to say, "So in terms of the vision of all children succeeding,

the program fits right in with that because it really did make a remarkable difference in

their test scores and the whole school culture in terms of how we value and use

assessment data" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 76). Whether BELP was compatible with the

guiding vision and mission of Beach seemed more or less contingent upon who was being

asked and their respective interpretation of the school's vision and mission.

Interestingly, when asked about whether they believed school administrative

support for the components of BELP continued after the program ended, teachers were

somewhat divided. Three of the 11 teachers interviewed were not asked this question

because they were no longer working at Beach School. Of the eight teachers who

remained, five of them believed the increased student assessment and grade-level teacher

collaboration were still being supported. Four also believed that classroom observation

was being somewhat supported because the school hired a substitute every Tuesday so

that teachers could observe one another, but three of the four teachers did not know how

to arrange for this substitute to work in their rooms. None of the teachers believed that

teacher-selected staff development was being continued.

The three teachers who did not feel that administrative support had continued for

the components of BELP each had different justifications for their beliefs. Colleen

believed that there was an attempt to encroach on the Wednesday afternoon collaboration

time in order to have staff meetings. She said, "I remember it being said that we'll have

to have a staff meeting every Thursday because we won't give up that Wednesday time"

(Molinelli, 2000, p. 19). Another teacher, Bridget, felt that support for the components of

the program would not continue because the program never became part of the school

culture. Bridget said,

> I think it is going to fall between the cracks. I don't feel that it is part of the
> culture. It was a moment in time, and it was meant to help. It was fantastic while
> it took place, but I don't see it happening year after year unless we have quality
> people who take the job of running it, planning week after week, and guiding us.
> (Molinelli, 2000, p. 12)

A third teacher believed the components would not continue because of a lack of

administrative support at the school site. Fay said, "I don't feel the school supports it. I

think the overall attitude from the school administration was not supportive. I think the

teachers supported the program and thought it was beneficial, but I don't think that the

administration necessarily thought so" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 34). After making this

statement, Fay was asked if there was a specific instance that made her feel this way. She

replied by saying:

> I think it was the discouragement from the school administration on continuing
> the program for the following school year, this year. The idea of rewriting the
> grant for funding and just basically discouraging teachers from getting involved
> as it was a large amount, no, waste of time. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 34)

When asked about who perceived of the program in this way, Fay said, "I think that it

was the perception of the administration only. I think that it was pretty cut-and-dry as far

as the discouragement of the program. I think the administration felt the way it did and

that is kind of what we were supposed to expect or accept rather" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 34).

The belief that they were discouraged to renew the program for the following school year

was also suggested by two of the teachers who felt the school administration continued to

support certain components of the program. When asked about school support for

continuing the program, Kathleen said, "I think it was discouraged. I really had the

feeling when it was brought up if anyone wanted to continue it for next year, they were

being told, 'Oh, you really don't want to do this because we have PQR and this and that

next year.' I really felt the top [administration] didn't want this" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 66).

When asked if she would have felt comfortable volunteering to continue the program,

Kathleen said "probably not" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 66). Alice, the other teacher, believed

that the administrative support for the program was "tacit support. She never came out

and said, 'I support the effort you're making.' It was just more support by the principal

not saying she didn't support it" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 6).

When discussing school administrative support with the principal, she expressed

her role in BELP this way:

> To step back. I needed to step back so that the change could be done by the
> teachers. And that was a difficult thing to do, but I think that if the teachers, if it
> didn't happen because of their peers and if it wasn't arranged by their peers then
> you get into that us against them mentality more and more. One more thing, of
> somebody doing it to them instead of it coming from within. So, I thought my
> role was really to kind of just step back, and to still be apprised of what was
> happening, but not to take control and not to mandate, and not to always stick my
> foot into every meeting so that it became a real peer collaborative effort instead
> of, you know, the administration versus the staff kind of a thing. Because there
> has been the history in our district so much that the district office has mandated
> all these trainings and all these extra meetings and everything. If it would have
> been coming from me, it would have been a total failure. So just to step back and
> to let the teachers grow. To give up that kind of controlling — feeling responsible
> for everything. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 75)

When the principal was asked if continuing the program or components of the program

into the next school year was encouraged or not encouraged by her, she responded this

way:

> I think it was at the beginning. Yes. Absolutely! In fact, we got School Site
> Council to pay for the same kinds of things as the grant funded last year: for two
> release days to go observe and for a day to go to a conference. We agreed at the
> beginning that grade levels would go together and that either the principal or the
> reading specialist would go along. You bet. All that's in place, and the money is
> set aside for that.

You know, last year, as I said earlier, there were three people that were kind of driving it and prodding and discussing. I think that for the teachers there needs to be just that little more sense of ownership. They've gotten a lot, but they need to say, 'Okay, we've got to really go and make this commitment to do it.' (Molinelli, 2000, p. 79)

Later in her interview, when talking about why the BELP ended, the principal offered this

explanation:

It was the inability of teachers to sustain it, for whatever reason. The funding was clearly there. It still is. So, you know, whether it's sustained — and we're, you know, three months into the school year — at this point or not, it's something that would be my hope we would sustain or those Wednesdays become, at best, just another hour to sit and plan out the little boxes in our plan book every week.

So I don't think it's a funding issue so much. I think that in some way maybe commitment this year. Because if it has a label and there's the understood commitment that we have to do this, we have to meet, and we're being funded, then there's accountability. It's an entirely different perspective than if the accountability isn't there as much. Just the funding is there and there's not enough commitment for them [teachers] to take on one more thing to arrange it or to become leaders in it. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 81)

At the end of this interview, the principal responded this way when asked if there was

anything she wanted to share or discuss about the program:

I wish that it would keep on going. I wish that people would come forward and just continue to sustain it. I think that it was really beneficial. I can really say, I think it was the best change at Beach School in easily the last ten years because it really did develop teacher leadership and teacher responsibility — their own willingness to take on the job.

You know, in the past there had been a culture where the administration pretty much told everybody how to do, when to do it, how high to jump and those kinds of things. It was constantly met with resistance and it didn't bring about the desired change. And I know that there was another school in the district where that type of structure, more authoritarian, brought about change but it wasn't from a growth perspective. It was more a punitive kind of thing. It was, 'You all do this,' and everybody did it. And I think that this [BELP] was incredibly beneficial because it brought about a deeper change, I think, because it's one that's changed the culture of the school. It's changed the way teachers think about their role, I think, in the school. And I think that it's something that we absolutely have to sustain because I think that's absolutely what made the difference in the test scores. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 84)

When the principal was asked if the teachers who participated in the program believed

she felt this way, she responded by saying:

> You know, I don't know. I don't know. It's a real fine line that you walk because
> in some way, I mean, I can talk to people personally and say, 'You've done a
> great thing! Congratulations on your great scores! and everything.' But in a way,
> I don't know. It's difficult. Part of me doesn't want to make what might be
> construed as a judgment statement to them, because it's been their evaluation and
> their growth. I don't know. It's hard. I don't want them to see me as kind of like
> blessing them. It's hard to explain. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 84)

Whether teachers perceived that adequate administrative support for BELP existed at

their school site and whether this perception impacted classroom instruction is difficult to

determine. In September of 1999, when teachers completed their survey, the majority of

them strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed that there was school site

administrative support for the components of BELP. However, when interviewed during

October, November, and December of 1999, teachers shared some of the tensions they

experienced during and after BELP. Teachers believed the lack of a school vision left

them "floating" or, as the principal put it, the vision "is not embraced...and not in the

forefront of their [teachers] thoughts – not in the forefront of their [teachers] minds"

(Molinelli, 2000, p. 77). In a school where teachers did not believe that a strong vision

and mission existed, it appeared that participating in BELP may have filled that void.

This teacher-initiated program may have united teachers through a common vision of

helping all children become successful readers and writers. Consequently, once the new

school year started and teachers no longer shared in the unifying vision and mission of

BELP, these emerging beliefs about the lack of school administrative support for the

components of BELP may have begun to surface around the time of their interviews in

mid- to late-fall of the year following BELP. Given this discrepancy, then, between how

teachers responded in their September surveys and what they said in their mid- to late-fall

interviews, it is unclear to what extent teachers perceived that adequate administrative

support existed at their school site for this program.

To evaluate whether teachers believed that district administrative support for

BELP benefited their classroom teaching practices, the data relating to district

administrative support from Subscale E, Teacher Support, was summarized by frequency

and percentage distributions. The distributions are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Analysis of the District Administrative Support For BELP (n=12)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My district administration supports the instructional practices advocated by BELP.	n = 2 16.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 6 50%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
My district administration has provided me with the support necessary to implement the instructional practices advocated by BELP.	n = 1 8.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 3 25%	n = 5 41.7%	n = 1 8.3%	n = 0 0%
My district administration supports the teacher collaboration component advocated by BELP.	n = 2 16.7%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 3 25%	n = 4 33.3%	n = 0 0%	n = 1 8.3%

Nine of the 12 teachers surveyed (75%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat

agreed, while three teachers (25%) somewhat disagreed or disagreed that the district

administration supported the instructional practices advocated by BELP. Moreover, six

teachers (50%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed, while six teachers (50%)

somewhat disagreed or disagreed that the district administration provided the support

necessary to implement the instructional practices advocated by BELP. Finally, seven

teachers (58.4%) strongly agreed, agreed, or somewhat agreed, while five teachers

(41.6%) somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that the district administration

supported the teacher collaboration component advocated by BELP.

Once again, to gain a clearer understanding of how BELP fit into the overall

vision and mission of the Harmony Hall School District, each teacher was asked during

their interview to what extent they believed the program was compatible with the district

vision and mission. Of the 11 teachers interviewed, seven teachers believed the program

was compatible with the overall vision and mission of the district. These teachers

believed that the program was consistent with the district's literacy program, the district's

efforts to create a more successful learning environment for children, and the district's

increased emphasis on increasing students' reading and writing test scores. Three

teachers did not know what the district's vision and mission were, but they did believe

that BELP was consistent with the district's Accelerated Literacy training program.

Finally, one teacher was undecided as to whether BELP was compatible with the

district's vision and mission. Grace said:

> I would say yes and no. Of course they would want people to grow up to be
> productive citizens, but it seems like sometimes we were restricted by things
> coming from the district. I felt like sometimes they would say, 'You can't do that
> because you have to do this instead.' They were more rigid with what had to be
> done because I would think they were getting more pressure from the State. Also,
> they have reasons that they do certain things. However, at the same time, I
> thought some things they told us to do that it was stupid or silly. (Molinelli, 2000,
> p. 40)

When the district assistant superintendent was asked whether BELP was consistent with

the vision and mission of the Harmony Hall School District, she said," I think that it is

very consistent and compatible" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 88). The district superintendent

when asked this question said:

> It really focused on literacy. That's certainly one big one. It involved a lot of
> local collaboration, which is one of the things that we really are working to get to.
> We'd like to see the teachers at the school site be the standard bearers for program
> quality there. In this one, there was a lot of responsibility assumed by the
> teachers at the school site for making sure that the program increments were
> implemented and implemented to everybody's satisfaction. So, it brought what
> you would call probably a common agreement about how we do literacy at the
> school. It also was assessment driven. I like that. And I think that tends to also
> pull things into a line with what the program was. If you're not getting the same
> results as the teacher next door because you're not doing the same things the
> teacher next door is doing to get those results, it tends, in a very non-manipulative
> way, to force you to take a look at making a decision that you want to put those
> program elements in place. All of those things, I think, are very consistent with
> what we'd like from the staff here. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 93)

There appeared to be a considerable level of consensus among teachers and district-level

administrators that BELP was consistent with the vision and mission of the school

district. Moreover, it appeared that the majority of interviewed teachers better

understood the district's rather than school's vision and mission, perhaps due to the

mandated district Accelerated Literacy training program that preceded BELP.

Several teachers commented about district support for BELP during the year of

the program. Dorothy brought up a problem that occurred when the district scheduled a

meeting to start during the Wednesday time allocated for school-site teacher

collaboration. She said, "They saw that as being okay because theirs [district training]

was more important or whatever. That told me they don't value it [BELP] too much"

(Molinelli, 2000, p. 25). Dorothy also commented that she had heard grumblings about

BELP from the district. She heard that:

> The Beach program was causing problems because the Beach teachers were
> complaining it involved too much time in meetings. Well, it wasn't the Beach
> part that wasn't good; we wanted the Beach part. It was the component that we

couldn't directly apply to our children that was wasting our time — the district part, not the Beach part. However, I think the district read it the other way. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 25)

When the superintendent was asked about the extent of his knowledge of BELP he said:

Not at all. I knew — I heard a lot of complaints about it actually because you guys had to meet so much, and I knew that you had gotten a grant. I didn't know exactly what it was all about, except I knew it was a literacy grant; I thought 'Well, they'll get some new materials in, they'll get some staff development, and some time to talk together, so it'll be a good thing.' (Molinelli, 2000, p. 92)

When asked to clarify his statement concerning teacher complaints, the superintendent said, "Just a lot of meetings. Just a lot of meeting. And I'm sure it was the grind" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 92). No other teacher brought up this issue about excessive meetings. However, three teachers said in their interview that they believed BELP reinforced and went beyond the district's Accelerated Literacy program. Two teachers commented that the assessment component of BELP improved upon the district's because BELP assessments were more frequent and useful, while a third teacher commented that BELP trainings were more in-depth and useful than district-level training.

Just as with continued school support, teachers had mixed feelings about continuing district administrative support for the components of BELP after the program ended. Three teachers believed that the district supported the idea of increasing student assessment and of having teachers observe each other. Two teachers believed that the district supported the idea of teachers collaborating, but that more time was needed to be given to collaboration. Lastly, several teachers believed that the district supported the ideas of teacher-selected staff development, because during the 1999-2000 school year the district subsequently changed their staff development model by providing teachers a

choice among various staff development topics, allowing Harmony Hall teachers to focus

on the training areas that best meet their own professional needs.

Just as with teacher's perceptions of school-site support for BELP, it is difficult to

determine whether teachers believed that district administrators adequately supported

BELP and whether their perceptions impacted classroom instruction. In September of

1999, when teachers completed their surveys, they were divided as to whether the district

administration supported the collaboration component of BELP. In fact, five (41.7%)

teachers somewhat disagreed or disagreed that the district had supported the collaboration

component of BELP. Yet, when interviewed during October, November, and December

of 1999, teachers were not as adamant about a perceived lack of district administrative

support during and after BELP. Consequently, it was unclear to what extent teachers

perceived that adequate district administrative support existed for this program, and

whether that perception impacted classroom teaching practices.

In the open-ended survey question (item 53), teachers were asked what additional

ways the school- and district-administration could have supported them in their effort to

get every child in their classroom to meet grade-level expectations. Nine of the 12

teachers believed administrators could have helped by providing more opportunities for

early intervention. Such interventions would include more reading tutors, trained

classroom aides, and a comprehensive parent education program. Five teachers also

believed they would have benefited from access to more classroom instructional

materials. One teacher requested a greater focus on site-based staff development and

teacher collaboration. Finally, one teacher believed that at the beginning of each school

year the school administrator should meet with each teacher individually and each grade-

level team to discuss the specific needs of the students in their classrooms. Through this annual meeting, the teachers and the principal could determine what interventions should occur. This teacher believed that this approach was best because student and grade-level needs vary so much from year-to-year.

Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of data addressing the extent to which teacher's perceived that their classroom teaching practices were enhanced through participation in the Beach Early Literacy Program. The analysis of the data resulted in several key findings:

Research Question One examined the extent to which teachers believed that increasing the number of student reading and writing assessments benefited their classroom teaching practices. All teachers strongly agreed or agreed that increasing student reading assessments from three times per year as required by the district to five times per year benefited their teaching practices. However, the third-grade teachers found it more beneficial to administer two multiple-choice comprehension assessments than to perform additional running records. Moreover, all teachers agreed or strongly agreed that increasing student writing assessments from one time per year as required by the district to eight times per year benefited their teaching practices. Teachers believed that these additional writing assessments aided their understanding of student's developmental needs and that they highlighted the areas where writing instruction was needed. These additional writing assessments also assisted teachers in giving writing greater prominence within their curriculum. In addition, all teachers strongly agreed or

agreed that implementing the Beach home reading log benefited their classroom teaching practices. Teachers believed that children had received a greater amount of home reading support as a result of the home reading log, and teachers believed that they were better informed about the level of home reading support. Finally, all teachers strongly agreed or agreed that after BELP that they would continue to assess student reading and writing more frequently than they were required by their district and that they would continue using the home reading log as part of their homework program.

Research Question Two investigated the extent to which teachers believed that observing effective teaching practices in other classrooms benefited their teaching. Overall, teachers found having the opportunity to observe in other classrooms quite valuable. Moreover, teachers also found it valuable observing in other classrooms with teachers from their grade level. By having this grade-level support, teachers were able to debrief immediately with a colleague after the observation, and many teachers believed that they may have transferred more of what they observed into their own classroom instructional practices because their peers afforded them the opportunity for ongoing support at their school site.

Research Question Three examined the extent to which teachers believed that increasing teacher collaboration benefited their classroom teaching practices. All teachers surveyed believed that during BELP they collaborated more often with teachers at their grade level and with teachers at other grade levels. In addition, teachers believed that the time allocated during BELP for this grade-level and cross grade-level collaboration time was valuable. Teachers believed the time used for scoring student writing samples, problem-solving student learning concerns, and discussing instructional

techniques benefited their classroom practices. Many teachers believed that adding additional time during BELP for grade-level lesson planning would have enhanced this collaboration time. Finally, all teachers agreed that in the future, without the structure of BELP, they would continue to collaborate with their grade-level team. All but one teacher agreed that she would continue collaborating with teachers at other grade levels after BELP.

Research Question Four investigated the extent to which teachers believed that teacher-selected, site-based staff development benefited their teaching practices. Overall, every teacher agreed that having BELP training at their school site was valuable. Moreover, all teachers agreed that because BELP training was at their school site they (1) were more comfortable implementing training techniques, (2) were more comfortable working with a peer to implement training, and (3) actually implemented BELP training techniques into their classroom practices. Finally, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that being able to choose their training topics was valuable and that having this choice helped them meet their professional learning needs.

Research Question Five investigated the extent to which teachers believed that school- and district-administrative support for BELP benefited their classroom teaching practices. Whether teachers perceived school- and district-administrative support for BELP and whether this perception of support impacted classroom instruction is difficult to determine. On their surveys, all but one teacher agreed that there was school administrative support for this program. However, during their interviews many teachers stated that they believed there was a lack of support from the principal during BELP and that the principal discouraged teachers from continuing the program. Regarding BELP

teachers' perceptions about the level of district administrative support for this program, the converse was true. On their surveys some teachers agreed while others disagreed that adequate district administrative support existed for this program. However, during their interviews teachers identified with the district mission and vision and they did not seem particularly critical about a lack of district support for this program. In fact, many teachers believed that BELP was consistent with the district's literacy training and that BELP even extended the district's training program. Other than the fact that questionnaire and interview data were collected at different times during which attitudes may have changed, it is difficult to explain the discrepancy between teacher survey and interview responses. For this reason, it is not possible to determine whether teacher's perceptions of school- and district-administrative for BELP benefited their classroom teaching practices.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and
Recommendations of the Study

Summary of the Study

Restatement of the Purpose, Background, and Need

This study on a teacher-initiated early literacy staff development program had five

goals. First, this study investigated to what extent teacher's believed that increasing

student reading and writing assessments benefited classroom instruction. Second, this

study explored to what extent teachers believed their classroom instruction benefited

from observing effective literacy instructional techniques in other classrooms. Third, this

study examined to what extent teacher's believed that increasing teacher collaboration

benefited classroom instruction. Fourth, this study explored to what extent teachers

believed classroom instruction benefited from teachers participating in teacher-selected,

site-based staff development. Fifth, this study investigated to what extent teachers

believed that school- and district-administrative support for this teacher-initiated change

program benefited their classroom teaching practices.

This study focused upon Beach School's teacher-initiated change effort. From its

inception, the Beach Early Literacy Program (BELP) sought to take advantage of the

considerable talent that already existed at Beach in the form of its own teaching staff.

Teachers worked with other teachers, both at their own grade level and at other grade

levels, to solve problems particular to their school site and their classrooms. Moreover,

Beach teachers were asked to reflect upon and evaluate their individual and collective

professional learning needs in order to select staff development trainings and classroom

observation locations that would assist them in meeting their professional learning goals. This program differed from previous professional development programs at Beach because it was principally concerned with capitalizing upon the existing assets of its highly-skilled and professional teaching staff, rather than addressing administratively-determined deficits upon which teachers would be, in effect, "remediated."

Because of this considerably different approach to professional development, there existed a clear need to study this program. In doing so, educators may better understand how to create a school environment where the role of the teacher is expanded to include that of learner, instructor, and change agent. By creating this program, the teachers at Beach Elementary School attempted to reconceptualize the teaching and learning process for themselves and for their students in order to make Beach a more instructionally effective school. This research study has attempted to understand teacher's perceptions of the success of this change program, as well as teacher's perceptions of school- and district-administrative support. Research such as this has the potential of illuminating the characteristics of effective teacher professional development in particular, as well as the educational change process in general.

Restatement of the Research Design and Method

This research study was conducted in two stages. Stage One utilized the descriptive research design of a time-bound mailed survey. A cover letter and survey questionnaire were mailed to first-, second-, and third-grade teachers (n=12) who participated in BELP. The questionnaire sought to assess teacher's perceptions of the professional development program and to assess teacher beliefs about school- and

district-administrative support for the program. In Stage Two, qualitative, face-to-face individual interviews were conducted by the researcher with 11 of the teachers who participated in BELP. Follow-up interview questions were determined in part by analysis of questionnaire data, with the intent of gaining additional depth and detail about the benefits of BELP and teacher beliefs about administrative support for the program. An interview was also conducted by the researcher with the school reading specialist who helped develop and fully participated in the program. In addition, the school principal, district assistant superintendent, and district superintendent were interviewed to gain a clearer understanding of the benefits of the program and how the program fit into the broader vision and mission of the school and the district.

In September 1999, the 12 teachers who participated in BELP were mailed a cover letter from the researcher explaining the purpose of the research study, a copy of the *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire*, and a postage-paid return envelope. Each questionnaire was coded to permit identification of individuals who failed to return the survey instrument. Within three weeks after the initial mailing, all nonrespondents were mailed a second copy of the survey and cover letter. A cut-off date of four weeks after the initial mailing was established. After the assigned four-week period, all 12 participants (100%) had responded. Questionnaires were then compiled and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to calculate frequencies and percentages of survey responses.

In October, November, and December 1999, interviews were conducted using open-ended questions from the Interview Questionnaire I and II. Interviews were tape-

recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. These interviews were used to both validate and extend survey questionnaire results.

Restatement of the Study Demographics and Findings

As depicted in Table 3 on page 57, of the 12 teachers surveyed, all were female (100%) and all were Caucasian (100%). Moreover, one-half of the teachers (50%, n=6) had zero to four years of teaching experience at the start of this program. Two teachers (16.6%) had five to nine years of experience, while two others (16.6%) had taught between 10 to 14 years. Only one teacher (n=1) had over 25 years of experience.

All of the teachers (n=12) who participated in the 1998-99 Beach Elementary School professional development program also participated in this research study. These teachers were full-time Beach staff members who worked in self-contained, multiple-subject first- through third-grade classrooms. When participating in the program, four teachers (33.3%) taught first grade, three teachers (25%) taught second grade, and five teachers (41.6%) taught third grade. Ten of the program's participants (83.3%) were fully credentialed California teachers, while two teachers (16.6%) were working with an emergency teaching credential because they had yet to fulfill the California teacher credential requirements.

As noted in Chapter Four, the purpose of the analysis of this study was to ascertain teacher's perceptions of the success of BELP. Research Questions One through Four examined to what extent teachers believed that (1) increasing student assessment, (2) observing effective teaching practices, (3) increasing teacher collaboration, and (4) providing teacher-selected, site-based staff development benefited their teaching

practices. It is evident through the analysis of teacher survey and interview response data that teachers believed they benefited from each of these components of the program. Research Question Five examined the extent to which teachers believed that school- and district-administrative support for this program benefited their teaching practices. Based upon the data collected and analyzed in this study, it is not possible to determine whether teacher's perceptions of school- and district-administrative support for BELP benefited their classroom teaching practices.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this research study are summarized by the topics of the major research questions: (1) Increasing Student Assessment, (2) Observing Effective Teaching Practices, (3) Increasing Teacher Collaboration (4) Offering Teacher-Selected, Staff Development, and (5) Benefiting from Administrative Support. These conclusions will be followed by a summary statement about teachers' general beliefs concerning their overall participation in BELP.

Increasing Student Assessment

All BELP teachers believed that increasing student reading and writing assessments benefited their classroom teaching practices. Teachers stated that they were better informed about their students' strengths and weaknesses, and teachers believed that they were better able to design and implement instruction based upon the information they gained from student reading and writing assessments.

Research focusing upon the characteristics of effective early literacy programs also emphasize the need for current and consistent student assessment data. For example, children enrolled in schools employing the Success For All program (Slavin et al., 1992) are assessed in reading once every six weeks, while children working with a teacher using the Reading Recovery Model (Clay, 1985) are assessed in reading once per day. Both of these comprehensive early literacy programs and BELP feature student assessment as an integral part of their program because this type of assessment is critical to informing and guiding instruction, both within and beyond the child's regular classroom. The findings of BELP regarding the benefits of increased student assessment are consistent with this research insofar as teachers believed that increasing these teacher-generated assessments assisted them with making moment-to-moment curricular and instructional decisions and addressing the particular developmental needs of their students.

Observing Effective Teaching Practices and Increasing Teacher Collaboration

Teachers participating in BELP believed that they benefited from observing effective teaching practices and by increasing teacher collaboration. Moreover, teachers believed that observing in other classrooms with a teacher from their grade level also benefited their observation experience.

The literature relating to the characteristics of effective schools indicates that changes are required in the type and quality of learning experiences created and facilitated by all those who work in schools. Little (1982) determined that four types of interactions were critical if continuous professional development is to be achieved in

schools. Four types of interaction were: (1) teachers engage in frequent and concrete talk about teaching practices; (2) teachers are frequently observed and provided with useful critiques of their teaching; (3) teachers plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together; and (4) teachers teach each other the practice of teaching. In schools where these interactions were present, Little found that professional development appeared to have the greatest impact because it built upon knowledge that already existed in the school and because it was viewed as a shared undertaking. In their research, Saphier and King (1985) indicated the need for schools to nurture the positive cultural norms that contribute to effective schools. Such norms include (but are not limited to) experimentation, collegiality, high expectations, reaching out to the knowledge bases, and involvement in decision-making.

The data in this study indicated that Beach teachers did many of the things that Little (1982) found to be critical for successful professional development. Through their Wednesday collaboration time, BELP teachers participated in concrete discussions about classroom teaching practices, and they shared efforts to design and prepare curriculum. Moreover, by observing effective teaching practices in other classrooms, collaborating on a weekly basis, and participating in site-based staff development, BELP teachers were able to learn new teaching practices from the teaching professionals within their school and in surrounding schools. Furthermore, during BELP, teachers participated in developing a school environment where positive norms of school culture were strong. Through the components of BELP, such positive norms as collegiality, experimentation, and honest and open communication were fostered among the BELP teaching staff. In fact, 9 of the 11 teachers interviewed stated that during BELP they experimented more

with their classroom teaching practices than they had previously. When asked about

classroom experimentation, Bridget said:

> I think I experimented more often. Just by listening to what works in other environments, I thought perhaps it would work with some of my kids. I think that every teacher has a special gift, and I'm very different from other teachers at the school. By listening to guest speakers or other teachers and by being exposed to more ideas, I was able to incorporate them into my classroom. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 11)

Alice responded in a similar fashion:

> I think I experimented and tried new things more because that was the whole kind of culture of last year. We were trying new things, we were having staff development, we were really supportive of each other, and we knew we were all in the same boat together. So we learned something new or we would hear about something, and if it didn't go well then we would go on to the next thing to see how it would fit. So I think I tended to do more last year. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 5)

Finally, Grace spoke about experimenting more during BELP within the context of being

a second-year teacher.

> I definitely experimented more. I did some stuff my first year — a little of this and that — because I had so many ideas. However, as far as really taking risks, I did that more during the program. I was given the tools that I could really take out of there, and I was more confident because I was collaborating more often with other teachers that I knew and respected. I would have to say I definitely experimented more. I also got a sense that the other people that I was working with were experimenting more, and that made me feel that I could take more risks and collaborate with them about risk-taking. The more risks they were taking, the more risks I was taking, and we were talking about it. We were really talking about what was and what was not working, and we were trying to fine-tune that. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 39)

These responses indicate that during BELP teachers believed they were building upon the

knowledge that existed at Beach School and that they viewed their learning process as a

shared undertaking, that involved frequent collegial conversations about teaching, that

promoted experimentation and risk-taking, and that took advantage of the extensive

knowledge-base collectively represented by this cadre of teachers. These findings are

consistent with the research reviewed in this study on the characteristics of effective schools.

Offering Teacher-Selected Staff Development

In the Rand study, Berman and McLaughlin (1979) indicated that staff development training that involves teachers in the planning of programs, that is conducted locally, and is part of an ongoing school program is likely to have longer lasting effects. From its conception, the Beach professional development program strove to adhere to these principles. The staff development component of BELP was orchestrated and maintained by teachers; teachers selected staff development topics, teachers found local teacher trainers, and teachers participated in training within the broader, ongoing school and district programs.

The findings of this study regarding staff development are consistent with the Rand study. Teachers believed that they were able to learn with other teachers at their school-site and that they were able to do so in a safe, supportive environment. Moreover, teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of being able to select their staff development topics after reflecting upon the needs of their students and their personal learning needs. Finally, in both their surveys and interviews, all participating teachers agreed that the staff development component of BELP benefited their classroom teaching practices.

Benefiting from Administrative Support

Data collected in this study was unclear and, at times, seemingly contradictory regarding participating teachers' beliefs about the presence and influence of

administrative support for BELP. On their surveys, all but one teacher agreed that there

existed school-site administrative support for this program. However, when interviewed,

many teachers stated that they believed there was a lack of active support from the

principal during BELP and, at times, teachers believed that the principal even

discouraged them from continuing the program. Regarding BELP teachers' perceptions

about the level of district administrative support for this program, teachers were again

unclear. On their surveys, some teachers agreed while others disagreed that adequate

district administrative support existed for this program. Yet, when interviewed, teachers

were not as adamant about a perceived lack of district administrative support for BELP.

In the Rand study, Berman and McLaughlin (1979) found that one of the most

important factors determining the outcome of a successful professional development

program was active administrative support. Rand found that unless the district really

wanted the program in the first place, and principals actively supported it by participating

regularly in the training activities, then the program seldom continued over the long-run.

Principals who became involved with program training updated their classroom skills,

were able to assist teachers, and imparted the message to teachers that the program was

important.

The findings of this study regarding school administrative support for BELP are

consistent with the findings of the Rand study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1979). When

surveyed and interviewed, teachers were unclear and inconsistent in their responses

regarding their perceptions of school administrative support for BELP. Moreover, when

interviewed, the principal was also unclear and inconsistent in her responses regarding

her support for this program. At the beginning of her interview the principal stated that

her role was "To step back. I needed to step back so that the change could be done by the

teachers" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 75). Later in her interview, the principal stated that the

program didn't continue because "It was the inability of the teachers to sustain it, for

whatever reason" (Molinelli, 2000, p. 81). Yet, at the end of her interview the principal

said,

> I wish that it would keep going. I wish that people would come forward and just continue to sustain it. I think that it was really beneficial. I can really say, I think it was the best change at Beach School in easily the last ten years because it really did develop teacher leadership and responsibility — there own willingness to take on a job. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 84)

Based on these responses from the principal, it appeared that because this program was

teacher-initiated, the principal believed that her job was to remain uninvolved in BELP

and to "step back" and let the teachers coordinate, implement, and participate in the entire

program without her. Even though the principal believed that BELP was beneficial to the

school and student learning, she did not actively demonstrate her support for the program.

It appeared that teachers may have interpreted the principal's lack of active support for

the program as subtle yet perceptible judgment about the overall worth of the program.

During her interview Lauren, the reading specialist, discussed the principal's

involvement in the program by saying:

> It would have been nice to see the principal in the classroom more often to notice that you talked about such and such at your last training. It would have been helpful to hear her say, 'When I come into visit in the next couple of weeks I'd like to see what you learned and see it in action.' It would have been nice to have a follow-up validating that it was a good direction to go. (Molinelli, 2000, p. 72)

This kind of classroom follow-up by the principal for which Lauren advocated was also

found to be an important factor in program success during the Rand study where Berman

and McLaughlin (1979) found that such administrative support demonstrated to teachers

that the principal believed the training was important. Perhaps if the school principal had observed more frequently in classrooms and then related her observations back to BELP goals and trainings, teachers might have perceived her as more supportive of BELP.

Teachers were also unclear about the nature and degree of district-administrative support for BELP. Most teachers believed that BELP was consistent with the district mission, but they were unclear about the extent to which district administrators believed in the four components of BELP. When discussing BELP with the district assistant superintendent, it appeared that she had a fairly clear sense of the overall components of BELP. However, she did not realize that the staff development component of BELP included the hiring of local teacher-trainers, but instead she believed that all training had been done internally by Beach teachers. The district superintendent stated in his interview that he was only marginally aware of the program. He knew that the school had been awarded a literacy grant, but he stated that he was unaware of the specific components of BELP. Both of these district administrators stated that it would have been beneficial to have been kept better informed about the program. Moreover, they believed that both the school principal and the teacher leaders of the program together probably could have kept them better informed. Overall, it was unclear to what extent the district believed in the value or efficacy of this program.

In summary, when speaking with teachers about administrative support for BELP, most were unclear about whether school- or district-administrators supported their efforts to make change at their school. Based upon Berman and McLaughlin's (1979) findings in the Rand study, without this clear school- and district-level administrative support, such programs are unlikely to achieve long-term success.

<u>Overall BELP Participation</u>

When surveyed and interviewed, BELP teachers believed that increasing student

assessment, observing effective teaching practices, collaborating with other teachers, and

participating in teacher-selected, site-based staff development benefited their classroom

teaching practices. These beliefs about the benefits of the program are reinforced by the

survey data relating to overall participation in BELP from Subscale F, General

Participation. This data was summarized by frequency and percentage distributions. The

distributions are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

<u>General Participation in BELP (n=12)</u>

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
In general, participating in BELP was valuable.	n = 10 83.3%	n = 2 16.7%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%
If given the opportunity, I would participate in a program like BELP again.	n = 9 75%	n = 3 25%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%	n = 0 0%

Ten teachers (83.3%) strongly agreed and two other teachers agreed that

participating in BELP was valuable. Moreover, nine teachers (75%) strongly agreed and

three teachers (25%) agreed that, if given the opportunity, they would participate in a

program like BELP again. In open-ended survey question item 56, teachers were asked

to name one aspect of the program they found especially valuable as a participant in

BELP. Many teachers could not limit their responses to simply one item. Nine teachers

commented on the value of collaborating with other teachers, and five teachers remarked

on the value of administering and scoring writing assessments with their grade-level

teams. One teacher found observing other teachers to be most valuable to her, while one other teacher found the staff development most beneficial. Finally, one teacher said that she believed everything was equally valuable.

In open-ended survey question item 57, teachers were asked to name the one aspect of the program they found of little or no value to them as BELP participants. One teacher said that she did not find much value in reading and discussing the book, *Classrooms That Work*. One teacher remarked that watching a video during a reading staff development training was not valuable, while another teacher found grade-level collaboration not valuable because members of her grade-level team were generally reluctant to share ideas. Two teachers commented that the staff-development training was not as valuable as they had hoped, but they also commented about feeling a certain amount of "training overload," noting that they needed "think time" instead. Five teachers believed all of the components were valuable, and two teachers did not answer the question. Despite these recommended changes, every BELP participant (n=12) found the program to be beneficial overall and, if given the opportunity, all teachers agreed that they would participate in such a program again.

Implications

Several implications can be drawn from the findings of this study which may be helpful in the future planning, implementation, and management of teacher professional development programs. Each of the following seven implications centers around restructuring teacher's use of time and ceding more authority to teachers for professional decision-making.

First, teachers need time built into their daily schedules to reflect upon their professional practice. Such reflection will allow teachers to examine student needs and to consider how best to design and improve classroom instruction. Moreover, teachers may also benefit by using this reflection time to design assessments or to read professional articles pertinent to their student population.

Second, teachers need time to collaborate with one another by engaging in concrete discussions about classroom instructional practices, as well as by planning, designing, researching, evaluating, and preparing teaching materials with one another. Furthermore, teachers can benefit from collaboration with teachers at their grade level and at other grade levels. As was seen during BELP, teachers believed they benefited from both types of collaboration.

Third, teacher collaboration time should be structured around authentic issues of teaching and learning. Through this kind of structured collaboration, teachers focus upon real instructional issues, not just the selection of next week's handouts or homework assignments.

Fourth, teachers need the authority and support to implement and sustain school change efforts such as BELP. Active school- and district-administrative support demonstrates for teachers both that they have the authority to make changes to improve their school and that the administration is a partner in that change process. It is not enough for administrators to support a program in words only; their support must be *active* to sustain change.

Fifth, teachers need the authority to design and implement assessments that are teaching and learning driven. These kinds of authentic, curriculum-based assessments

must be carefully linked to classroom instruction and sensitive to the particular learning needs of students.

Sixth, teachers need to be given the authority to take an active role in their own professional development. This may include, but is not limited to, collaborating with other teachers, observing in other classrooms, attending staff development training, and working with a teacher coach. By reflecting upon their classroom instructional practices, teachers can decide upon how to improve their craft. School administrators can support this teacher self-reflection by periodically meeting with teachers to discuss their development and to offer any assistance with the implementation of teacher's reflection-driven goals.

Seventh, and finally, BELP teachers initially struggled with assuming the authority to implement this program and with believing that they could collectively change their approaches to literacy instruction. Teachers and administrators need to work together to address the cultures of mistrust and isolation that are still so prevalent in our schools. Until educators work together to address these insidious barriers to collaboration and responsive school change, classroom instruction and student achievement will continue to fall short of their vast potential.

<div align="center">Recommendations</div>

This case study at one elementary school found that teachers benefited from the opportunity to collaborate with their peers to address the teaching and learning issues that they faced. The findings of this study suggested new questions and new avenues for

research to further our understanding of teacher-initiated professional development

programs. The following recommendations are offered as an extension of this study.

First, this study needs to be replicated in order to confirm teachers' perceptions

about the benefits of BELP. Moreover, replicating this study will help to clarify our

understanding of teachers' perceptions about the specific kinds of administrative support

that appear to be most critical to the ultimate success of teacher professional development

programs.

Second, experimental studies might be used to explore the relationship between

such programs and student assessment data. Because student achievement on norm-

referenced and some criterion-referenced assessments increased substantially by the end

of this program, it would be helpful to examine the relationship between student

achievement and programs such as BELP. (Appendix I contains historical and BELP

student assessment data, contained within the Final Report submitted to the Foundation

which funded the Beach program.)

A third and final area for research suggested by this study might be to examine

the degree to which teachers' beliefs about their jobs, their roles, and their self-efficacy

have been influenced by this program. A longitudinal study such as this might help

educators ascertain more clearly the long-term impact of such professional development

programs and the extent to which teachers continue to benefit from their impact.

Concluding Remarks

It probably goes without saying that there are no quick fixes to improving schools

(Allington & Walmsley, 1995). Moreover, no intervention or "fix" will be successful

without the active involvement of the classroom teacher. Giving teachers the authority,

time, and resources to collaborate with their peers capitalizes upon the enormous and

relatively untapped potential of many classroom teachers who are, after all, at the

forefront of improving classroom instruction and student achievement. In *The Culture of*

Education (1996), Jerome Bruner forcefully and eloquently addressed the critical role of

the teacher within the reform debate:

> No educational reform can get off the ground without an adult actively and
> honestly participating — a teacher willing and prepared to give and share aid, to
> comfort and to scaffold. Learning in its full complexity involves the creation and
> negotiation of meaning in a larger culture, and the teacher is the vicar of the
> culture at large. You cannot teacher-proof a curriculum any more than you can
> parent-proof a family. And a major task for any effort at reform…is to bring
> teachers into the debate and into the shaping of change. (p. 84)

In order for teachers to help shape educational reform, they need to be full participants in

the change process. Given the authority and opportunity to collaborate, the teachers at

Beach Elementary School participated in their own local change effort as they created

and implemented the Beach Early Literacy Program. Ultimately, students became the

final beneficiaries of these efforts as these teachers took the risk and made the

commitment to reconceptualizing teaching and learning for both their students *and*

themselves.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Harmony Hall Early Literacy Reading Assessments

Kindergarten/1st Grade Assessment
Concept of Print

This assessment is designed for kindergarten or beginning first grade students to determine their reading stage.

Test Dates:

STUDENT: _____ DATE OF BIRTH: _____

CLASSROOM TEACHER: _____

Say: *Let's look at this book together.* (Vamos a mirar este libro júntos.)
(HAND THE BOOK ENTITLED THE BIRTHDAY CAKE / or A PARTY, or EL PASTEL DE CUMPLEANOS TO THE STUDENT UPSIDE DOWN WITH THE SPINE TOWARD HIM/HER.)
SAY: *Show me the front of the book.* (¿Enséname la frente del libro?)
(Student indicates right side up and front of book.)..1 point..

Do a quick picture survey to give the student the background information he/she needs to make semantic and syntactic approximations. Avoid discussing, prompting the student in what to say, and using any of the words that appear in the print. Remain an observer throughout the assessment procedure.

(GO BACK TO THE FRONT COVER.)
SAY: *Where should I begin to read?* (¿Donde comienzo a leer?) (points to any print)................1 point..
(POINT NEAR THE TITLE.)
Say: *Could you read this to me?* (¿Me lo puedes leer?)
(Student reads title. If unable to read, the teacher reads the title.)...............1 point
(TURN TO THE TITLE PAGE.)
Say: *Now, you read the title to me.* (Ahora, leeme el titulo.) (Student reads title correctly.)..... 1 point..
(OPEN BOOK TO PAGE 2.)
Say: *On what page should we start?* (¿En cual página comensamos?) (Student indicates left page.)..1 point..
Say: *Show me where to start reading.* (¿Enséname donde se comienza a leer.)
(Student indicates first word on left page.)... 1 point..
Say: *Could you read it to me?* (¿Me lo puedes leer?) (Students read text.)................................ 1 point..
(Student's reading and pointing matches text on a one-to-one correspondence.)........................... 1 point..
(If student is unable to read, the teacher reads the text and invites the student to point to the words as she/he reads. If the student has one-to-one correspondence with the teacher's reading, mark one point above.)
Say: *Show me a capital letter.* (¿Enséname una letra mayuscula.) (Student gives correct response.)1 point..

(PAGE 3)
Say: *Now you read the next page* (Ahora, lee la próxima página.)
(Student follows syntax and is correct or close semantically.)..1 point..
Say: *How many words do you see?* (¿Cùantas palabras ves aqui?) (Student gives correct answer.)...1 point..

OTHER OBSERVATIONS USING PAGES 4-8 OF THE BIRTHDAY CAKE or A PARTY
Book handling (consistently turns pages appropriately)... 1 point..
Does not pretend or embellish any text.. 1 point..
Directionality (consistently points or sweeps left to right).. 1 point..
Read-like behavior using pictures and print to follow book pattern.................................. 1 point..
Consistently looks at print and tries to process.. 1 point..
Tracks (consistent one-to-one correspondence).. 1 point..

TEXT APPROXIMATIONS
*Semantic predictions (consistently correct or close sensible approximations; follows pattern).1 point....
*Syntactic predictions (consistently correct or appropriate approximations; follows pattern)..1 point..
*Graphophonic predictions (consistently correct or close approximations)..........................1 point...
Consistently recognizes repetitive sentence pattern from page to page..............................1 point...
Accepts and transfers teaching points... 1 point..
Consistent attention on processing task.. 1 point..

0-10 Early Stage 0	11-14 Stage 0	15-18 Stage .5	19-22 pts. Stage 1	23 pts. Stage 2

Total Score

Early Literacy Assessment, 9/97

Adapted from **Accelerating Literacy** by Rena Walker

1.5

(Permission granted from the school district on 11/22/99 to include this document.)

Kindergarten/1st Grade Assessment
Phonemic Awareness - Spanish
Score Sheet

Name _____

LEVEL 1: Rhyming Words   Date:_____   TEST SCORE: [/20]
Mark a ✔(Check mark) for each correct response

rama - cama	flan-flor	jugar - lugar	si - mi
son - sol	sala - mala	raton - pinta	gato - rato
junto - punto	boca - toca	falta - salta	rie - llora
pasa - casa	beso - queso	ojo - rojo	globo - silla
bandera - libro	mano - pie	pàjaro - canta	beta - meta

LEVEL 2: Blending speech sounds into words Date:_____   TEST SCORE: [/30]
Mark a ✔(Check mark) for each correct response

List 1	List 2	List 3
e-n	s-ed	m-a-n-o
e-s	m-is	d-ie-z
u-n	d-edo	c-a-s-a
a-l	t-odo	d-ie-n-te
e-l	p-erro	m-a-dre
s-i	ll-ave	f-ie-s-t-a
s-oy	f-eliz	ch-i-v-o
v-oy	t-res	e-str-e-ll-a
d-e	c-ria	qu-e-s-o
l-o	g-a-t-o	n-u-b-e

LEVEL 3: Isolating speech sounds   Date: _____   TEST SCORE: [/15]
Mark a ✔(Check mark) for each correct response

carro - primer	làpiz - final	sed - medio
pide - final	pon - medio	diente - primer
ala - medio	pared - final	boca - primer
jabon - final	jarro - primer	reloj - final
tambor - primer	doctor - final	dos - medio

LEVEL 4: Segmentation of phonemes Date _____   TEST SCORE: [/22]
Mark a ✔(Check mark) for each correct response

pato (p-a-t-o)	*tres* (t-r-e-s)	*para* (p-a-r-a)	*ojo* (o-j-o)
perro (p-e-rr-o)	*seis* (s-ei-s)	*fino* (f-i-n-o)	*no* (n-o)
silla (s-i-ll-a)	*crece* (c-r-e-c-e)	*siete* (s-ie-t-e)	*me* (m-e)
dos (d-o-s)	*sea* (s-e-a)	*suelo* (s-ue-l-o)	*vaca* (v-a-c-a)
red (r-e-d)	*pie* (p-i-e)	*oso* (o-s-o)	*hola* (ho-l-a)
mapa (m-a-p-a)	*luz* (l-u-z)		

2nd Grade Basic Word Test
Score Sheet

Name: _____   TEST SCORE: | /20 |

Date _____

Directions: Use any **one** list of words.   Record the incorrect responses beside the word.
✔(Check mark) Correct Response   ● (Dot) No Response

List A	List B	List C
and	ran	big
the	it	to
pretty	said	ride
has	her	him
down	find	for
where	we	you
after	they	this
let	live	may
here	away	in
am	are	at
there	no	with
over	put	some
little	look	make
did	do	eat
what	who	an
them	then	walk
one	play	red
like	again	now
could	give	from
yes	saw	have

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1st Grade Running Record - Fall

Name:	Date:			
Title:	Level	Word Count	Error Rate	Accuracy = # words correct
				total # words
1. Reading is Everywhere	5	56		_____%

Introduction to text: (to be read by teacher): *"This is a story about all the words a little boy can read. Will you please read the story to me."*

Reading is Everywhere	E	SC	Information used	
			E MSV	SC MSV
Reading is everywhere				
I can read.				
I can read the words in the supermarket.				
I can read the words on the signs.				
I can read the words on TV.				
I can read the words on these packets.				
I can read the words at the zoo.				
I can read the words on the menu.				
I can read				

Reading Level: ☐ Easy 95-100% ☐ Instructional 90-94% ☐ Hard 80-89%
(5 errors)

Analysis of Errors and Self-Corrections
Information used or neglected [Meaning (M), Structure or Syntax (S), Visual (V)]

_____

_____

Fluency: Rubric Score: ☐ 1 = all word-by-word; 2= mostly word-by-word; 3 = Mixture of word-by-word and fluent;
4 = fluent, phrased reading Additional comments on fluency: _____

Comments on comprehension: To be read by the teacher: *"Can you tell me what happened in this story?"*

_____

1. Where did the boy read? _____
2. Where can you read? _____

Student Response: ____ Excellent Understanding ____ Adequate Understanding ___ Very Little Understanding

Early Literacy Assessments, 9/98   1.24

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1st Grade/2nd Grade Assessment
Sentence Dictation

This test helps you determine if the child is able to hear and record the sounds in words. Children need to learn how the language knowledge they already have can help them to read and write messages.

Administration: This test can be given to a small group of students at one time

Provide a blank piece of paper for the children to record the 'story' you dictate.

Say to the children:
I am going to read you some sentences. When I have read them once, I will read them again very slowly so that you can write down the words in the sentences.

Read the text sentence to the child at a normal speed.

FIRST GRADE:
Sentence one

The boy is riding his bike.
1 2 3 oy 4   5 6   7 8 9 10 11 12   13 14 15   16 17 18

He can go very fast on it.
19 20   21 22 23   24 25   26 27 28 29   30 31 32 33   34 35   36 37

Sentence two

I can see the red boat that we are going
1   2 3 4   5 6   7 8   9 10 11   12   13 14   15 16 17   18 19   20 21   22 23 24 25 26

to have a ride in.
27 28   29 30 31   32   33 34 35   36 37

FALL TEST
SECOND GRADE:

Three boys slipped in the stream. The water was
1 2 3   4 5 6 7 8 9 10   11   12 13   14 15   16 17 18 19 20   21 22   23 24 25 26   27 28 29

very cold.
30 31 32 33   34 35 36 37

SPRING TEST
SECOND GRADE

Dogs are so smart they can be trained to lead
1 2 3 4   5   6 7   8 9 10 11 12   13   14 15 16   17 18   19 20 21 22 23   24 25   26 27 28

blind people.
29 30 31 32 33   34 35 36 37

APPENDIX B

Harmony Hall 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Grade Writing Rubrics

FIRST GRADE WRITING RUBRIC

6	• <u>Ideas sequenced to convey thoughts that are directly related to topic</u> • Has a logical flow. • Use adjective(s) and/or verbs. • Uses correct or logical phonetic spelling. Uses correct capitalization and ending punctuation. • Picture relates to topic.
5	• <u>Lengthens sentences by expanding vocabulary and/or using more complex sentence structure.</u> • Uses more than two sentences that relate to the topic. • Uses mostly standard spelling of high frequency words and beginning and ending punctuation. • Picture relates to topic.
4	• <u>Uses at least two full sentences related to the topic.</u> • Uses phonetic spelling mixed with correct spelling of high frequency words. • Uses correct ending punctuation. • Picture relates to topic.
3	• <u>Uses a sentence that is decipherable and related to the topic.</u> • Relies heavily on logical phonetic spelling. • Spaces between words. • May or may not have punctuation. • Picture relates to topic.
2	• <u>Uses words or a phrase relating to topic using beginning and/or ending sounds.</u> • Has writing sense (left to right, spaces between some words). • Little or no punctuation. • Picture relates to topic somewhat.
1	• <u>Uses letters or letter like marks.</u> • Possibly copied random words or random letters. • Picture relates to topic somewhat.

* Underlined descriptors are the major reasons for moving from one stage to another.

revised: August,. 1998

SECOND GRADE WRITING RUBRIC

6	• **Writes in paragraph form** which addresses topic effectively, using introductory sentence, supporting details, and a closing. • Is grammatically correct. • Writes a paragraph that flows logically and smoothly from beginning to end. • Uses correct beginning and ending punctuation. • Uses correct spelling. • Uses **vivid descriptive** vocabulary.
5	• **Writes in paragraph form with introductory sentences, supporting details and a closing.** • Has a logical flow from beginning to end. • Uses correct **capitalization and punctuation**. • Uses correct spelling **or logical phonetic spelling.** • Uses descriptive words.
4	• **Writes a paragraph** which addresses topic. • Flows reasonably well from beginning to end. • Uses mostly standard spelling of high frequency words and words with spelling patterns. • Uses correct ending punctuation and capitalization. • Uses some descriptive words.
3	• Writes **sentences** which relate to topic but not necessarily to each other. • Not well organized, **difficult to follow.** • Sentences do not conform to paragraph structure. • Uses some ending punctuation and capitalization. • Spelling is sometimes difficult to decipher. • Few descriptive words. • Uses repetitive sentences or words.
2	• **Writes phrases** (not sentences) or just one sentence which relate somewhat to topic. • No evidence of a paragraph structure. • **Uses minimal punctuation.** • **Spelling is usually quite difficult to decipher.**
1	• Writes one or two phrases. • **Relationship of phrases to topic is questionable.**

/November, 1998
Work needs all or most of the needed characteristics.

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THIRD GRADE WRITING RUBRIC - Student Version

6	• Response to topic is clear. • Well organized: contains beginning, middle, end. • Exciting word choice. • Interesting details. • Very good sentence structure. • Correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
5	• Good response to the topic. • Well organized: contains beginning, middle, end. • Very good word choice. • Clear details. • Good sentence structure. • Few errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
4	• Good response most of the time • Uses paragraph format correctly • Good organization, but may need a better beginning or ending. • Good word choice. • Enough details to communicate the meaning. • Many or most of the sentences are correctly written.
3	• Mostly sticks to the topic but has unnecessary details. • Organization not completely clear (may be missing beginning, middle, or end). • Use simple words • Less than three details about the topic. • Incorrect structure* in some sentences. • Many errors in punctuation, capital letters, and spelling.
2	• Tries to write about the prompt but gets off the track • Poor organization (beginning, middle, end are unclear; does not make much sense). • Uses very simple words. • Few or no details. • Incorrect structure* in many or most sentences. • Many errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
1	• No attempt to write about the prompt. • No organization (does not make sense). • Words do not say what the writer means. • No details. • Incorrect sentence structure* • Very little correct in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

* Sentence structure = incomplete sentences, noun-verb agreement, verb tense, doesn't "sound" right, or doesn't make sense

August, 1998

APPENDIX C

Teacher Questionnaire Cover Letter

September 24, 1999

Name
Street
City, CA   Zip

Dear [Teacher's Name],

In addition to working with you as a teacher at Beach, for the last five years I have also been a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco in the Organization and Leadership Department of the School of Education. I am currently working on my dissertation research under the supervision of Dr. Robert Niehoff, S.J., the Associate Dean of the School of Education and a professor in the Organizational Leadership Department. With this letter, I am requesting your assistance with my dissertation research. I am interested in conducting a summative program evaluation of the Beach early literacy program in which (a) I identify the components of the program that teachers found most useful and (b) I assess the school and district support factors that assisted you in this program.

I need your help in order to conduct this research study. I have developed the attached *Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire* to understand more clearly how the program did or did not meet your needs. It will greatly help my research if you will take the time (approximately 20 minutes) to complete this questionnaire for me. Your confidential response is very important and will contribute significantly to the outcome of this study. A response from each program participant is particularly important because it will ensure a more balanced representation of opinions about this program. However, please know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and is *not* a requirement of your employment.

I have included an identification number on the survey so that I can match your completed survey with your name in my database. I am doing this for three reasons: (1) to identify nonrespondents so that I can send them a second request to complete and return their survey; (2) to identify respondents so that I can thank them for their response and follow-up with a brief interview; and (3) to identify respondents who wish to receive a summary of my survey results. I assure you, however, that the cross-referenced list of coding numbers and names will be destroyed as soon as the final deadline for responding passes, and your identification number will be marked-out on your survey prior to survey analysis. Furthermore, I fully guarantee you that your name will not appear in any public document reporting this research.

Once again, your survey questionnaire is confidential and will only be used for my dissertation research. All coding sheets and completed questionnaires will be stored in my home, and all study materials will be destroyed upon the completion of this research. Neither the Harmony Hall School District management nor any Harmony Hall teacher

other than myself will have access to your completed questionnaire. Furthermore, only aggregate survey data will be used, and pseudonyms will be used in my dissertation when referring to program participants, the school, and the district.

For your convenience, I am enclosing a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. *Please return your completed survey to me by Monday, October 4th*. If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at (408) 280-6950 or by e-mail at molith00@dons.usfca.edu.

Thank you for your generous assistance.

Sincerely,

Theresa C. Molinelli   Dr. Robert Niehoff, S.J.
440 Hannah Street   Professor of Education
San Jose, CA 95126
(408) 280-6950
molith00@dons.usfca.edu

APPENDIX D

Beach Early Literacy Program Questionnaire

BEACH EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose: The purpose of this questionnaire is to study the complexity and support factors of the 1998-99 Beach Early Literacy Program. Supported by a grant from the Foundation. Throughout this questionnaire BELP refers to the Beach Daily Literacy Program.

Confidentiality: Your survey questionnaire is confidential and will only be used for dissertation research. Neither the Harmony Hill School District management nor any Harmony Hall teacher other than myself will have access to your completed questionnaire. All questionnaires will be stored in my home, no one will view them other than myself and they will be destroyed upon the completion of my dissertation. Only aggregate surveys and results will be used. Pseudonyms will be used when referring to teachers, the school and the school district.

Directions: Please rate the items below by circling one number on the scale that best describes how you feel about each statement. It is essential that you respond to each item and that you circle only one number.

A. Student Assessment

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Completing the Harmony Hall-sponsored early literacy reading assessments three times per year helps my understanding of my students' reading needs.	6	5	4	3	2	1
2. Adding two additional reading assessments in November and January sponsored by the BELP further helped my understanding of my students' reading needs.	6	5	4	3	2	1
3. Even though the BELP has ended, I will continue to assess my students' reading needs through grade-level appropriate reading assessments more frequently than required by the district.	6	5	4	3	2	1
4. Completing the Harmony Hall-sponsored writing assessment one time per year helps my understanding of my students' writing needs.	6	5	4	3	2	1
5. Administering a student writing assessment almost every month as sponsored by the BELP further helped my understanding of my students' writing needs.	6	5	4	3	2	1
6. Even though the BELP has ended, I will continue to assess my students' writing needs through similar writing assessments more frequently than required by the district.	6	5	4	3	2	1

			Strongly Agree	Agree				Disagree	Strongly Disagree
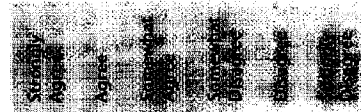
7. Having children maintain a home reading log as part of their homework was valuable.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

8. Having a home reading log helped me be more consistent in my expectations of home reading.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

9. Even though the BELP has ended, I will continue to use the home reading log as part of my students' homework.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

10. As a result of doing a monthly writing assessment, did you incorporate more writing into your daily instructional routine? Why do you think this is so?

_____

_____

_____

B. Observing Effective Teaching Practices

11. Next to this statement, please circle the number of BELP observation days you used during the 1998-99 school year. If you did not use any observation days, please circle "0" and go on to question 17. ....

    0   1   2

12. During my observation(s), I observed literacy teaching techniques that I already use in my classroom practices.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

13. During my observation(s), I observed teaching practices that support the literacy strategies taught during the BELP staff development trainings.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

14. After observing, I incorporated new literacy instructional techniques into my classroom practices.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

15. Overall, having time to observe was valuable.

    6   5   4   3   2   1

16. What, if any, instructional techniques did you incorporate into your classroom practices as a result of your observations?

_____

_____

_____

C. Teacher Collaboration

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. During the BELP, I collaborated more frequently with teachers at my grade level.	6	5	4	3	2	1
18. During the BELP, I collaborated more frequently with teachers at other grade levels.	6	5	4	3	2	1
19. During the BELP, I evaluated student writing more frequently with other teachers.	6	5	4	3	2	1
20. During the BELP, I problem-solved student learning concerns more frequently with other teachers.	6	5	4	3	2	1
21. During the BELP, I discussed instructional techniques more frequently with other teachers.	6	5	4	3	2	1
22. During the BELP, I discussed what I want learning to look like in my classroom more frequently with other teachers.	6	5	4	3	2	1
23. Time allocated during the BELP for collaboration with teachers at my grade level was valuable.	6	5	4	3	2	1
24. Time allocated during the BELP for collaboration with teachers at other grade levels was valuable.	6	5	4	3	2	1
25. Time allocated during the BELP for evaluating students writing with other teachers was valuable.	6	5	4	3	2	1
26. Time allocated during the BELP for problem-solving student learning concerns with other teachers was valuable.	6	5	4	3	2	1
27. Time allocated during the BELP for discussing instructional techniques with other teachers was valuable.	6	5	4	3	2	1
28. Time allocated during the BELP for discussing with other teachers what I want learning to look like in my classroom was valuable.	6	5	4	3	2	1
29. In the future, without the structure of the BELP, I intend to collaborate with teachers at my grade level.	6	5	4	3	2	1
30. In the future, without the structure of the BELP, I intend to collaborate with teachers at other grade levels.	6	5	4	3	2	1

31. In the future, without the structure of the BELP, I intend to evaluate student writing with other teachers.

6 5 4 3 2 1

32. In the future, without the structure of the BELP, I intend to problem-solve student learning concerns with other teachers.

6 5 4 3 2 1

33. In the future, without the structure of the BELP, I intend to discuss instructional techniques with other teachers.

6 5 4 3 2 1

34. In the future, without the structure of the BELP, I intend to discuss with other teachers what I want learning to look like in my classroom.

6 5 4 3 2 1

35. Do you think that lesson planning during the BELP time would have made teacher collaboration time more valuable? Why?

_____

_____

_____

D. Staff Development

36. Having the BELP staff development trainings at my school site was valuable.

6 5 4 3 2 1

37. Having the staff development trainings at my school site made me feel more comfortable implementing training techniques into my classroom practices.

6 5 4 3 2 1

38. Having the staff development trainings at my school site made me feel more comfortable working with a peer to implement training techniques into my classroom practices.

6 5 4 3 2 1

39. I have implemented training techniques from the BELP staff development trainings into my classroom practices.

6 5 4 3 2 1

40. I found it valuable to choose the topic of the BELP trainings with other teachers participating in the program.

6 5 4 3 2 1

41. Because I was able to help choose the BELP staff development training topics with other teachers, my professional learning needs were better met.

6 5 4 3 2 1

42. I found it valuable to read *Classrooms That Work*. 6 5 4 3 2 1

43. I found it valuable to discuss *Classrooms That Work* with teachers in my school. 6 5 4 3 2 1

44. I have implemented instructional techniques from *Classrooms That Work* into my teaching practices. 6 5 4 3 2 1

45. Overall, having staff development as a component of the BELP was valuable. 6 5 4 3 2 1

46. Do you think it makes a difference to have your staff development trainings at Beach rather than at another school or in the IMC? Why?

_____

_____

_____

E. Teacher Support

47. My school administration supports the instructional practices advocated by the BELP. 6 5 4 3 2 1

48. My school administration has provided me with the support necessary to implement the instructional practices advocated by the BELP. 6 5 4 3 2 1

49. My school administration supports the teacher collaboration component advocated by the BELP. 6 5 4 3 2 1

50. My district administration supports the instructional practices advocated by the BELP. 6 5 4 3 2 1

51. My district administration has provided me with the support necessary to implement the instructional practices advocated by the BELP. 6 5 4 3 2 1

52. My district administration supports the teacher collaboration component advocated by the BELP. 6 5 4 3 2 1

152
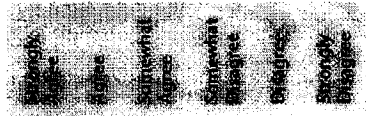
53. In what additional way(s) might the school and district
administration support you in your effort to get every child
in your class "above the red line"?

_____

_____

_____

F. General Participation

54. In general, participating in the BELP was valuable.   6   5   4   3   2   1

55. If given the opportunity, I would participate in a program
like the BELP again.   6   5   4   3   2   1

56. What one thing did you find particularly valuable as a
participant in the BELP?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

57. What one thing did you find to be of little or no value as a
participant in the BELP?

_____

_____

_____

_____

G. Demographic Information

Directions: Please check or enter the information that pertains to you.

58. What is your gender?   Female _____   Male _____

59. When participating in the BELP, did you have a Preliminary, Professional Clear, or Lifetime California teaching credential?

    Yes _____   No _____

60. When participating in the BELP, how many years had you been teaching?

    0 to 4 years _____   5 to 9 years _____   10 to 14 years _____

    15 to 19 years _____   20 to 24 years _____   25+ years _____

61. What is your ethnicity?

    African-American _____   Asian _____   Caucasian _____

    Hispanic _____   Native American _____   Other _____

62. When participating in the BELP, what was your age?

    Under 25 _____   25 to 29 _____   30 to 34 _____

    35 to 39 _____   40 to 44 _____   45 to 49 _____

    50+ _____

63. When participating in the BELP, what was your primary teaching assignment?

    _____

64. Would you like to receive a summary of the questionnaire results?

    Yes _____   No _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

APPENDIX E

Interview Questionnaire I and II

<u>Interview Questionnaire I</u>

<u>Interviewees</u>: Beach Early Literacy Program Teachers

<u>Student Assessment</u>
1.   To what extent did increasing the number of student reading and writing
       assessments benefit your classroom teaching practices?
       • How might this component of the program been improved so that it benefited
       you more?

<u>Classroom Observation</u>
2.   To what extent did observing effective teaching practices in other classrooms
       benefit your classroom teaching practices?
       • How might this component of the program been improved so that it benefited
       you more?

<u>Teacher Collaboration</u>
3.   To what extent did increasing teacher collaboration and having time together on
       Wednesday afternoons benefit your classroom teaching practices?
       • How might this component of the program been improved so that it benefited
       you more?

<u>Staff Development</u>
4.   To what extent did having teacher-selected, site-based staff development benefit
       your classroom teaching practices?
       • How might this component of the program been improved so that it benefited
       you more?

<u>Overall Program</u>
5.   Please rank order each of the following components of the program with regard to
       helpfulness for you as a teacher and explain why you put the components in this
       order. Please start with the most helpful component first.
       _____ increased student assessment
       _____ observing effective teaching practices
       _____ increased teacher collaboration
       _____ teacher-selected staff development

6.   While you participated in this program, would you say that you experimented
       with teaching strategies in your classroom more, less, or about the same as you
       normally do during a given school year? Please explain your answer.

<u>School Mission</u>
7.   To what extent do you think this program was compatible with the overall vision
       and mission of the school? What tensions, if any, did you experience during the
       program as a result of any incompatibility with school philosophies or policies?

Continuing School Support

8.   Now that the program has ended, to what extent do you think the school supports the practices of teachers choosing to increase student assessment, teachers observing each other, teachers collaborating with each other, and teachers working together to select their staff development topics?

District Mission

9.   To what extent do you think this program was compatible with the overall vision and mission of the district? What tensions, if any, did you experience during the program as a result of any incompatibility with district philosophies or policies?

Continuing District Support

10.   Now that the program has ended, to what extent do you think the district supports the practices of teachers choosing to increase student assessment, teachers observing each other, teachers collaborating with each other, and teachers working together to select their staff development topics?

Additional Comments

11.   Do you have any additional comments concerning the 1998-99 Beach Early Literacy Program that you have not had an opportunity to express?

<u>Interview Questionnaire II.A</u>

<u>Interviewee</u>: Reading Specialist

<u>General Benefits: Teachers & Students</u>
1. How has the Beach Early Literacy Program helped teachers at Beach?
2. How has the Beach Early Literacy Program helped students at Beach?
3. How could the program have been changed to better help teachers?
4. How could the program have been changed to better help students?
5. Would you say that while participating in this program teachers experimented with their teaching strategies more, less, or about the same as they normally do during a given school year?

<u>Role</u>
6. What is your perception of your role as reading specialist in this change program?

<u>School Mission</u>
7. To what extent do you think this program was compatible with the overall vision and mission of the school?

<u>Continuing School Support</u>
8. Now that the program has ended, to what extent do you think the school supports the practices of teachers choosing to increase student assessment, teachers observing each other, teachers collaborating with each other, and teachers working together to select their staff development topics?

<u>District Mission</u>
9. To what extent do you think this program was compatible with the overall vision and mission of the district?

<u>Continuing District Support</u>
10. Now that the program has ended, to what extent do you think the district supports the practices of teachers choosing to increase student assessment, teachers observing each other, teachers collaborating with each other, and teachers working together to select their staff development topics?

<u>Renewal</u>
11. How much of a shared decision was it amongst the first through third grade teachers participating for the program to end?

<u>Test Scores</u>
12. How and to what extent do you think this program helped raised test scores?

<u>Additional Comments</u>
13. Do you have any additional comments concerning the 1998-99 Beach Early Literacy Program that you have not had an opportunity to express?

Interview Questionnaire II.B

<u>Interviewee</u>: Principal

1.   How has the Beach Early Literacy Program helped teachers at Beach?
2.   How has the Beach Early Literacy Program helped students at Beach?
3.   How could the program have been changed to better help teachers?
4.   How could the program have been changed to better help students?

Role
5.   What is your perception of your role as principal in this change program?
6.   Please discuss the benefits and challenges participating in this capacity?

Vision
7.   What is the vision of Beach School?
8.   To what extent is the vision realized at Beach School?
9.   To what extent do you see the Beach Early Literacy Program contributing to the vision?

Renewal
10   It is my understanding that the grant was not renewed and the program did not continue during this school year due to other demands being placed upon the school — for example, PQR and the new computer lab. Is this accurate or is it more complex than that?
11.   How much of a shared decision was it amongst the first through third grade participating teachers for the program to end?

Test Scores
12.   How and to what extent do you think this program helped raised test scores?

Closing
13.   Do you have any additional comments concerning the 1998-99 Beach Early Literacy Program that you have not had an opportunity to express?

<u>Interview Questionnaire II.C</u>

<u>Interviewees</u>: Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent

<u>Professional Development</u>
1.   What is your general philosophy of teacher professional development? This can include both preservice and inservice efforts.
2.   What are some of the greatest challenges you face in making this professional development philosophy real?

<u>Beach Early Literacy Program</u>
3.   To what extent were you familiar with the 1998-99 Beach Early Literacy Program?
4.   Did you think it was important that you be periodically apprised of the progress and development of this program? (for example, receive monthly schedules or interim & final reports)
5.   How and to what extent was this program consistent and compatible with the overall vision and mission of the district?
6.   How and to what extent do you think this program helped raise test scores on criterion- and norm-referenced assessments at Beach?
7.   Do you have any additional comments or questions concerning the 1998-99 Beach Early Literacy Program that you have not had an opportunity to express?

APPENDIX F

Human Subjects Approval

September 13, 1999

Theresa Connor Molinelli
440 Hannah St.
San Jose, CA 95126

Dear Ms. Molinelli:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF), which operates under the rules and regulations set forth by the federal Office for Protection from Research Risks (OPRR) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has reviewed your initial application for human subjects approval regarding your study, "Changing and Choosing Together: A Case Study on Improving Professional Development and Student Achievement Through a Teacher-Initiated Early Literacy Program."

Your Initial Application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #99-0123) contingent on our receipt of letters of permission/authorization from the school in which you will collect data. Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the date noted above. At that time, if you are still collecting data from human subjects, you must file a Renewal Application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (e.g., changes in subject sample, wording of items, consent procedures, tasks required of subjects) must be proposed in a Modification Application, which must be approved prior to implementation of any such changes.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of human subjects must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days in the form of a Human Subjects Incident Report.

This contingent approval is valid for 60 days from today's date. If we do not receive the authorization letters by that date, your approval will be placed on inactive status.

If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Blanda, IRBPHS Assistant, at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

June Madsen Clausen, Ph.D.
Chair, IRBPHS
USF Department of Psychology
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

cc: Dean's Office, School of Education-ATTENTION Janet Snyder
        Robert Niehoff, Ph.D., Faculty Advisor

Jesuit Education Since 1855

APPENDIX G

Validation Panel

Validation Panel Members

1. Learning Disabilities Specialist
   Canada College
   Redwood City, California

2. Former Kindergarten Teacher
   Beach Elementary School
   San Jose, California

3. Director of Academics
   Archbishop Riordan High School
   San Francisco, California

4. Professor of Education
   University of San Francisco
   San Francisco, California

5. Educational Consultant
   San Jose, California

6. Kindergarten Teacher
   Beach Elementary School
   San Jose, California

7. Director of Educational Technology
   Palo Alto Unified School District
   Palo Alto, California

8. Educational Consultant
   Oakland, California

APPENDIX H

Validation Panel Evaluation Form

Validation Panel Evaluation Form

After completing the questionnaire, please answer the following questions about the instrument. If you need more room for comments, please use the back of either page.

1. Approximately how long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?

    _____ minutes.

2. Do you feel that the questionnaire was too long? _____

    Too short? _____ Just right?_____

3. Do all the items in the questionnaire appear to cover content relevant to the topic of the Beach Early Literacy Program? Yes _____ No _____

    Please identify the ones that do not:

4. Do the items in each section appear to cover the content specified in the subtitle?

    Yes _____ No _____

    Please identify the ones that do not:

5. Are the items clearly written? Yes _____ No _____

    Please identify the ones that are not:

6. Are there any items that you would add? Yes _____ No _____

    For example:

7. Are there any items that should be deleted? Yes_____ No _____

    Please identify the ones that you recommend deleting:

8. Are there any items that should be rewritten? Yes_____ No _____

    Please identify the items and give your suggestions:

9. Are the directions clearly written? Yes _____ No _____

10. Is the questionnaire formatted well? Yes _____ No _____

    Is the questionnaire easy to read? Yes_____ No _____

    Is there enough "white space"? Yes _____ No _____

Please include any additional comments.

Thank you for taking the time to help validate this instrument.

Your help is greatly appreciated!

APPENDIX I

Beach Grant Final Report

Beach School
Final Report
September 1999

In order to increase reading and writing achievement, the teachers at Beach Elementary School created a comprehensive K-3 program aimed at implementing more meaningful student assessment, encouraging greater teacher collaboration, fostering more effective teaching methods, and promoting teacher-centered staff development. This comprehensive program, funded by a grant from the Foundation, proposed many initiatives in order to increase the number of K-3 students able to successfully complete grade-level literacy tasks.

Assessment

The first program initiative focused upon assessment. Prior to this proposal, teachers were required to give early literacy reading assessments three times per year, once in September, April, and June. The proposal added two additional assessments, one in November and one in January, effectively reducing the amount of time between assessments. All reading assessments were administered, scored, and analyzed by classroom teachers. The proposal also called for increased writing assessments from one time per year in March to eight times per year — essentially one per school month excluding April (during which time the school district administers the *Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition* [SAT 9], a national norm-referenced, multiple subject assessment). These writing assessments were scored by grade-level teachers using their Harmony Hall grade-level writing rubric. The primary goal of increasing the number of formal reading and writing assessments was to help teachers develop an ongoing evaluation of their students' particular literacy needs.

As you can see from the assessment data tables on the next page, the K-3 average reading and writing scores improved by several percentage points over last year's scores. 88% of K-3 students in the spring of 1999 were able to complete a grade-level reading task as compared to 82% in the spring of 1998. The average K-3 student able to construct a grade level writing sample went from 58% in 1998 to 73% in 1999. Although the reading scores do not show a significant increase over historical data, the writing

scores do. Clearly, the additional attention paid to the teaching of writing appears to have been beneficial.

K–3 Spring Average Reading Scores

Date Administered	% of Students At or Above Grade Level
Spring 1997	86%
Spring 1998	82%
Spring 1999	88%

K–3 Spring Average Writing Scores

Date Administered	% of Students At or Above Grade Level
Spring 1996	53%
Spring 1997	54%
Spring 1998	58%
Spring 1999	73%

Reading Scores

Breaking down these scores by specific grade levels reveals some valuable information. The following table contains Beach School's 1997 to 1999 spring reading scores on the Harmony Hall reading assessments for each grade level participating in the grant program. When examining this data, it is clear that, with the exception of first grade, all grade levels increased the number of children able to accomplish a grade-level reading task.

Beach School Spring Reading Scores on the Harmony Hall Reading Assessment 1997 to 1999

Grade Level	Assessment Date	% At or Above Grade Level
K	Spring 1997	85%
K	Spring 1998	71%
K	Spring 1999	83%
1st	Spring 1997	80%
1st	Spring 1998	81%
1st	Spring 1999	75%
2nd	Spring 1997	91%
2nd	Spring 1998	88%
2nd	Spring 1999	100%
3rd	Spring 1997	87%
3rd	Spring 1998	89%
3rd	Spring 1999	94%

When analyzing and discussing these scores with teacher program participants, we listed what assisted us in increasing the number of children able to complete a grade-level reading task and what changes may still need to occur in order to get all children successfully completing a grade-level reading task. The overwhelming consensus among Beach teachers is that our intervention and remediation efforts are not being used to help children at an early enough age. During the 1998-1999 school year, the majority of outside intervention efforts focused on second grade students. These efforts were necessary and beneficial to those children, but perhaps, they were available later than they might have been. The first grade teachers who had those second graders the year before said they would have referred those children for extra assistance outside of the classroom in first grade if there had been assistance available. Moreover, in a 1996 document published by the state of California, *Teaching Reading: A Balanced, Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Reading in Pre-kindergarten Through Grade Three*, the recommendation is made that any student falling below grade level at the beginning of the second semester of first grade should have priority in receiving remedial programs in addition to the regular classroom curriculum. As a primary grade teaching staff, we have discussed and agreed that we need to provide intervention as early as possible and that our school needs to develop a clearer program to do so. However, it is up to the school and district administration to create such an intervention program and allocate the necessary funding to provide these services.

Writing Scores

The next table contains Beach School's 1996 to 1999 spring writing scores on the Harmony Hall writing assessment for each grade-level participating in the grant program. Once again, most grade levels were able to post significant gains in the number of children able to successfully create an age-appropriate piece of writing.

**Beach School Spring Writing Scores on the Harmony Hall Writing Assessment
1996 to 1999**

Grade Level	Assessment Date	% At or Above Grade Level
K	Spring 1996	52%
K	Spring 1997	75%
K	Spring 1998	63%
K	Spring 1999	89%
1st	Spring 1996	66%
1st	Spring 1997	33%
1st	Spring 1998	69%
1st	Spring 1999	64%
2nd	Spring 1996	64%
2nd	Spring 1997	65%
2nd	Spring 1998	72%
2nd	Spring 1999	85%
3rd	Spring 1996	30%
3rd	Spring 1997	44%
3rd	Spring 1998	29%
3rd	Spring 1999	54%

Teachers unanimously agreed that assessing student writing more frequently than required by the district contributed to this increase in student achievement. We believe much of the increase in reading and writing scores occurred as a result of this early literacy program, and we have decided during the 1999-2000 school year to continue the practice of assessing student performance more frequently than required by the district.

State Standardized Assessment

In addition to increasing our scores on district criterion-referenced assessments, Beach students also improved their performance on the state norm-referenced assessment. Each spring, all second through fifth grade students in California take the SAT9. During the 1997-98 school year, this test replaced the *California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition* (CAT5) for Beach students. The following table contains the historical test score data for second and third grade students on both the CAT5 and SAT9 tests. The publishers of these tests consider the scoring on both tests to be comparable.

Beach School Spring Standardized Test Scores
1996 to 1999

Grade 2 Total Reading

Test	Assessment Date	% At or Above Grade Level
CAT5	Spring 1996	59%
CAT5	Spring 1997	50%
SAT9	Spring 1998	64%
SAT9	Spring 1999	73%

Grade 2 Total Language

Test	Assessment Date	% At or Above Grade Level
CAT5	Spring 1996	57%
CAT5	Spring 1997	61%
SAT9	Spring 1998	67%
SAT9	Spring 1999	80%

Grade 3 Total Reading

Test	Assessment Date	% At or Above Grade Level
CAT5	Spring 1996	65%
CAT5	Spring 1997	62%
SAT9	Spring 1998	55%
SAT9	Spring 1999	64%

Grade 3 Total Language

Test	Assessment Date	% At or Above Grade Level
CAT5	Spring 1996	62%
CAT5	Spring 1997	54%
SAT9	Spring 1998	57%
SAT9	Spring 1999	72%

These norm-referenced tests are valuable to us because they provide both the school and district with information on how our Beach students are performing in relation to other children taking this test. We are pleased with the significant growth that our students made on the SAT9 test during the 1998-99 school year. These scores at the second and third grade level are clearly higher than our historical data, and once again we believe that the teacher-initiated collaboration and changes that occurred through the early literacy program were significantly responsible for this growth.

Teacher Collaboration and Planning

The second program initiative provided for grade-level and cross grade-level weekly planning time on Wednesday afternoons. By releasing students one hour early on Wednesday, teachers were able to meet for structured teacher collaboration and literacy

staff development. In order to facilitate this change, the following monthly Wednesday schedule of activities was adopted.

The first Wednesday was devoted to grade-level meetings to score monthly writing samples and discuss strategies to further student success. Even though the grant program has ended, teachers have unanimously endorsed the continued practice of administering regular writing samples, believing that their student writing improved greatly. Both teachers and students became more familiar with the grade-level standards and the district rubric. Writing scores reflected this increased emphasis and practice.

The second Wednesday was devoted to grade-level and cross grade-level meetings where teachers discussed literacy issues and devised plans for working with those students who were functioning below grade level. Throughout the course of the year, grade-level teams listed specific strategies, activities, and materials that would be implemented for the purpose of increasing student achievement. In May, each grade level identified those at-risk students to be targeted for intervention at the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year. This allows for immediate remedial action to be taken by the reading specialist, resource specialist, and the CHIP reading tutor.

The third Wednesday was dedicated to K-3 early literacy staff development. Based upon teacher needs, money from the grant was used to hire experienced teacher consultants and to purchase staff development videos. This training differed from district training in that Beach teachers had a voice in choosing the training topics that would best meet their needs, and this training was provided at the Beach School site. We believe this training supports the idea that Beach teachers are knowledgeable professionals who can identify the areas where they need to develop as teachers. We are pleased that the Harmony Hall School District has recently adopted a similar training approach during the 1999-2000 school year. All Harmony Hall teachers will now have the opportunity to sign up for workshops that address their specific needs.

The fourth Wednesday was set aside for grade-level planning time dedicated to discussing the implementation of the newly-adopted reading series. Teachers also discussed how they envisioned incorporating instructional practices they learned during the previous weeks' staff development training into their classroom practices. Time was also set aside during the fourth Wednesday to discuss recent off-site school visitations.

One of the difficulties we encountered during the 1998-1999 school year was the fact that kindergarten teachers were unable to attend our Wednesday meetings due to their schedule. The district school board recognized that kindergarten teachers were missing out on important staff development opportunities and grade level collaboration. In the spring the district adopted a plan that allows for early release Wednesdays for all kindergarten teachers district-wide. Kindergarten teachers will now be available for teacher collaboration and staff development both at the school site and at the district level.

Observation and Peer Coaching

The third program initiative provided for the staff development philosophy of "teachers teaching teachers" through observation and peer coaching. The observation model adopted and funded by this early literacy program allowed each primary grade teacher to observe best teaching practices in other classrooms, both within Beach and in surrounding Bay Area schools. Moreover, this peer coaching model provided teachers with consistent support from one of three school literacy coaches. For example, if a teacher was having difficulty structuring her reading time, she could get assistance from a "teacher coach" in setting up and maintaining her reading program. This coaching support was funded by the school district and not the early literacy program; teachers were encouraged to use this valuable resource, but it was not required of them.

Since our interim report in January, we have achieved more success in releasing teachers to observe in other classrooms. However, the lack of substitutes and the increased demands upon teacher's time hindered the full implementation of this component of the plan. All teachers visited at least one school outside of Beach, and many believed that this experience was extremely valuable in that it validated what we were already doing well and inspired us to try out new ideas and practices. Many teachers also observed summer school sessions and classrooms at year-round schools during their vacation. Recognizing the importance of observing best teaching practices in action, our principal, with the support of the School Site Council, has set aside money in the 1999-2000 budget to support the continued practice of teachers observing other teachers.

Staff Development

The fourth program initiative provided for teacher-centered staff development at the school site. The Harmony Hall School District had already provided approximately 50 hours of early literacy staff development for each primary grade Beach School teacher during the year-and-a-half prior to the writing of the grant proposal. This included a three-day early literacy summer institute followed up with bimonthly two-hour trainings. Although teachers had attended much training, only part of it had been incorporated into classroom instruction. While the Harmony Hall early literacy training advocated the use of many current early literacy instructional techniques, all of the training was done in a traditional, district-mandated style with specific training topics selected for teachers. The monthly staff development incorporated within the Beach program differed from the district training because it allowed for staff development at the school-site as determined by teachers through an ongoing informal needs assessment. As a result, this collaborative teacher-centered staff development program addressed the particular needs of Beach teachers. Most importantly, this model of staff development assumed that teachers were already knowledgeable professionals, capable of assessing many of their own instructional needs.

As mentioned previously, the Harmony Hall School District will continue to provide ongoing literacy staff development to its teachers, and teachers now will also be able to choose the training they wish to attend from a list of staff development topics. This will allow teachers to focus on the areas which best meet their individual needs. We are excited about this change because it embodies what we believe to have been one of the most effective components in the Beach early literacy program: "choice," and the renewed sense of professional self-efficacy.

Instructional Materials

The fifth program initiative provided teachers with more leveled books for reading instruction. We purchased books based on the needs expressed by grade-level teams. Kindergarten and first grade teachers expressed the need to purchase leveled readers to fill-in the gaps where they had few titles. These teachers also purchased more

complete sets of books to fill in the titles already owned by the school so they would have packets of seven books per title. At their grade levels, second and third grade teachers purchased beginning chapter books to use for reading instruction and small group literature discussions. The need was also expressed for more non-fiction titles. These books were purchased during the second semester, and they were quickly cataloged and placed into circulation soon after they were received.

Continuing Efforts

Many of the implemented programs that came out of our teacher collaboration time will continue. First, weekly reading logs will continue to be sent home with all kindergarten through third-grade students to support at-home reading. We found that students were excited about reading and charting their progress. Their efforts were, and will continue to be, rewarded in various ways by the classroom teachers. Second, the *Partners in Print* program will continue for another year and will be expanded, thanks to an additional grant awarded by the Foundation. This program will continue to bring parents and children to school in the evenings to learn activities and strategies for supporting literacy development at home. We will also continue to target low-achieving students and their families with our *Partners in Print* evenings, believing that our continued support of this home-school connection is vital to future reading success. Third, for the first time ever, the Beach School library opened for three days during the summer to encourage reading at home. We hope to do this again next summer. Fourth, our reading specialist held two workshops for kindergarten parents in May to discuss how they might help their children prepare over the summer for first grade.

Conclusion

We wish to thank the Foundation for its funding support for this teacher-initiated early literacy staff development program. In our original grant proposal, we said that by funding this project, the Foundation can significantly contribute to the development of a more literate society. A little over a year later and after a considerable amount of hard work, we believe that your financial commitment to this program has indeed made such a contribution in the ways that it has touched Beach students, their parents, and its teachers.

For the children of our school, your support has helped us develop programs that will better ensure that our students develop the literacy skills necessary to succeed in a complex world. For our parents, you helped us create a program that can assist them in developing valuable literacy practices that may impact their family for generations to come. And as for us, the teachers of Beach Elementary, your support has dramatically influenced our role as active change agents in this most important educational enterprise. This program has allowed us to reconceptualize the learning process both for our students *and* for ourselves. Through our collaboration, we have been able to challenge the isolation that is so prevalent in education by making changes in our classrooms and in our school resulting in more effective instruction for our students. Through your financial assistance, you have set in motion valuable changes that we hope will have a long-lasting effect upon our school community.

Once again, we thank you for believing in and supporting this professionally rewarding and educationally successful change program.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Changing and Choosing Together:

A Case Study on Improving Professional Development

and Student Achievement Through a Teacher-Initiated
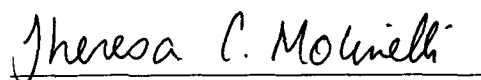
Early Literacy Program

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to ascertain teacher's perceptions of the success of an early literacy professional development program designed to achieve more meaningful student assessment, foster more effective teaching practices, promote teacher-centered staff development, and encourage greater teacher collaboration; and (2) to examine the extent to which teachers believed that school- and district-administrative support for this program benefited their classroom teaching practices. This research study focused upon ascertaining the perspectives of the program participants as they enacted one school's solution to improving staff development and increasing student achievement, a solution that attempted to challenge more traditional, top-down approaches to school reform and renewal through a local, teacher-initiated change program.
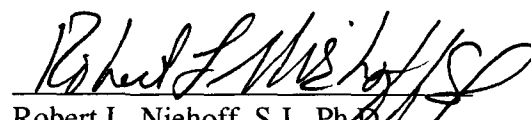
This study was conducted in two stages. Stage One utilized the descriptive research design of a time-bound mailed survey, while Stage Two consisted of individual face-to-face interviews to augment and validate survey responses. Survey results specifically related to each research question were analyzed according to frequency and

percentage distribution of survey response items. The qualitative data, which included open-ended survey responses and staff interviews, were inductively analyzed by the researcher and were coded according to naturally emerging themes.

Among the findings of this study were that (1) teachers believed that increasing the use of teacher-developed reading and writing assessments benefited their classroom teaching practices, (2) teachers believed that they benefited from observing effective teaching practices and participating in teacher-selected staff development, (3) teachers were overwhelmingly supportive of increasing time for teacher collaboration, (4) teachers were unclear and inconsistent in their assessment of site- and district-administrative support for this program, and (5) all teachers believed that participating in this program was a professionally valuable experience.

Several implications and recommendations emerge from these findings and relate primarily to restructuring teachers' use of time and ceding teachers more authority for instructional decision-making. In sum, this study may help teachers better appreciate their potential learning capacity when collaborating with other teachers, it may help principals appreciate their critical role in the change process, and it may help districts understand what facilitates and impedes professional development efforts.

_____   _____
Theresa Connor Molinelli   Robert L. Niehoff, S.J., Ph.D.
                                          Chairperson, Dissertation Committee