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Process and outcomes of an urban charter school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model

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Process and outcomes of an urban charter school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model.

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We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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Dedication

      This research is dedicated to Doug Thomas, Executive Director of EdVisions Schools. It was through Doug's patience and guidance that I am the organization development professional I am today. Doug taught me the importance of being a disruptive innovator while at the same time valuing the hard work and insights of everyone within a learning community.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This positivistic case study documents the processes and outcomes of an urban charter school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model from conception to the end of year three. Currently throughout the United States innovative school reformers are actively designing and implementing new schools. Historically, school models that go beyond traditional teaching and learning paradigms have faced significant resistance and, once in place, have been difficult to sustain. Utilizing the theoretical framework of organization development and systems thinking (Senge, 1990, 1994, 2000) and applying a lens of critical theory (Brookfield, 2005) the researcher examined the challenges and achievements of starting a new charter school.

The researcher created a theory and tested it for developing and sustaining successful charter schools. The study examined data from nationally normed formative and summative assessments, as well as satisfaction surveys. Data was also collected to assess autonomy, belongingness, goal orientation, academic press, engagement and hope. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both staff and students. The analysis of the data supported the fourteen essential processes defined in the theory that are needed to help implement and sustain a new school.

To implement an innovative new school, planners have a school design or design essentials that act as a roadmap. Often missing are the essential processes needed to reinforce or activate the intended design. Additional research is needed concerning how the process essentials identified in this study may contribute to successful school development.

The data also identified an implementation effect and limits of growth that was linked to the negative impact of compliance to requirements of the federally mandated No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. More research is needed to determine if the implementation effect and limits of growth transfers to other schools throughout the United States.

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Chapter I

The researcher has spent the last twenty-five years actively engaged in the study of experiential learning and the construction of unique learning environments that are transformational. He finds joys in being a teacher and a learner with his students. Twenty years ago, the researcher created an effective learning program at an alternative high school that was recognized by the County's Social Services agency as making a significant difference in the lives of his students and he was asked to expand the program. Five years later, the program was established as the Center for Experiential Learning at the University of Minnesota. As the founding Director, the researcher was able to create a team of educators that worked directly with students and educators throughout Minnesota. With the collective effort of many people they were able to help schools develop learning experiences that engaged both the students and adults while connecting the learning to state standards.

During his time at the Center for Experiential Learning, the researcher was asked by Outward Bound to accept a contract as the Course Director for a new project: Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound. As a field instructor, the researcher had the experience of leading groups into the wilderness and newly created urban expeditions, this background combined with the knowledge of how to design learning experiences to meet state standards provided the basic skill set. The researcher worked collaboratively with a team of highly skilled Outward Bound Instructors to develop the initial staff that trained the educators that later opened the first series of Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound Schools.

The researcher's experiences with Expeditionary Outward Bound encouraged him to obtain his K-12 Principal's license and to spend more time helping to transform struggling schools. One of his last contracts with the Center for Experiential Learning was to re-engineer a struggling K-8 school that had at one time had been the pride of a school district. Over the period of one year, the team transformed the school into a vibrant learning community. After reflecting on this work, the researcher became increasingly aware of the possibilities of school reform and the challenge of sustaining change.

In 2005 the researcher left the University of Minnesota to join a project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to develop project-based schools around the United States. The researcher spent the last five years traveling around the country working with districts and educators interested in designing new, small schools that are fundamentally different than traditional schools. The researcher has spent an extensive amount of time in over twenty-five schools and supported school wide reviews and school improvement projects for the *Coalition of Essential Schools*, the *Alternative High School Initiative* and *EdVisions*.

In 2008, the researcher received a request to support a successful school district (named in the study as Achieve School District) in a large urban center that has created five innovative elementary charter schools. The district's vision was to create a new high school (named in the study as Brandon High School) that would meet the needs of all students in a predominately low-income community, utilizing the EdVisions model. The researcher was selected to be the external organization development coach from the planning phase to implementation and through the completion of year three; this role did

not include any supervisory, evaluation or disciplinary authority. Prior to the organization development work at Brandon High School, the researcher worked with EdVisions as a school coach, specializing in organization development. The researcher witnessed first-hand the challenges many urban schools were experiencing in implementation and sustainability and it is through this experience the original research questions were created and the need for further research was identified. As the Brandon High School team struggled with the implementation of the EdVisions model, a need for this study was established. The researcher worked closely with Achieve School District, EdVisions and his Advisor to design the study and control bias. The researcher acknowledges that the unique relationships that allowed for the creation of this study are both its strength and limitation. In an effort to limit bias, the researcher removed himself from any contractual obligations in the writing and documentation of this research. The research is a case study based on the process and outcomes of implementing the EdVisions model in this newly formed, urban charter school.

Problem Statement

As the researcher traveled throughout the United States working with a wide variety of schools, he found outstanding teaching and learning occurring in select areas. He also found schools that struggle to provide a learning environment that has the basic resources needed to engage students and their families in a safe and productive learning community. One's experience as a student is heavily influenced by where the student lives and the sum of the resources within the community. The fundamental problems in American education are nested around equity and the lack of awareness of most Americans around the hegemony that perpetuates this educational paradigm.

From the beginning, public schools have been strongly influenced by business models to be efficient and cost effective. Fredrick Taylor and his concepts around scientific management are often quoted in the literature as establishing the mental model of factory schools (Bracey, 2000; Senge, Camron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton & Kleiner, 2000; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), creating a systems paradigm where large schools are run on a bell system with a prescribed curriculum and a lock-step advancement based on age and not ability.

The American educational system as described has been operating in this manner since the nineteen century. The essential problem is that we have a systems failure in many of the urban centers around the United States that is forcing the issue of school reform. According to the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004), large numbers of students are disengaged, disconnected from their learning and are experiencing hopelessness, incidences of school violence and bullying have become widespread with student dropout rates reaching 50% in the large urban centers. Many students who feel trapped in a system that is not meeting their needs have engaged in what Kohl (1994) called creative maladjustment, engaging in disruptive and illegal activities. Steinberg (1996), noted that the issue with American education is the degree of disengagement of students:

> One of the extraordinary changes that have taken place in American schools in the past twenty-five years is the shift in the relative proportions of engaged and disengaged students. Teachers have always encountered students who were difficult to interest and hard to motivate, but the number of these students was considerably smaller in the past than it is today. Two decades ago, a teacher in an average high school in this country could expect to have three or four "difficult" students in a class of thirty. Today, teachers in these same schools are expected to teach to classrooms in which nearly half of the students have checked out. (p. 28)

American schools have also been confronted with the reality of the changing needs of the workforce. The workforce is demanding that individuals be able to solve problems, work in teams and have fluency with technology. The term *21ˢᵗ Century Skills* has become commonplace language in the emerging curriculum. Research supporting *21ˢᵗ Century Skills include:* brain-based learning (McNeil 2009), differentiation based on learning styles and personality type (Kise 2007), and the use of technology to accelerate achievement and engagement (Schrum & Levin, 2009). An on-going challenge with the integration of *21ˢᵗ Century Skills* is that the buildings have been built and the educators have been trained to use a traditional/ factory model of education and the system is resistant to change.

Currently throughout the United States, school reform models are actively working to design and implement new schools that meet the needs of students, educators and the community. The problem is that historically, school models that go beyond traditional teaching and learning paradigms have faced significant resistance and once in place, are difficult to sustain.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study the effectiveness of implementing an established school reform model within the context of an inner city and to test an organization development model to assist in new school development. Many inner-city schools are struggling with issues of equity, achievement and breaking out of long established traditional teaching paradigms. The school reform model used in the study is a personalized, advisory centered, project-based learning model that is designed to be a transformational process. Creating and implementing successful school models that

address the different learning styles and the complex needs of students is a difficult

process.   Many attempts at reform have resulted in schools that are basically

reconfigurations of traditional paradigms. This study attempts to look at the

organizational dynamics and the overall effectiveness of a school reform model from

start-up to the end of year three. With a better understanding of the organizational issues,

future implementations will be better informed and possibly more successful and

sustainable.

Research Questions and Model Development

It is the belief of the researcher that parents, students, educators and community

members are so deeply institutionalized on what school is and is not that to engage in

school reform requires a fundamentally different paradigm. To shift the existing mental

models and overcome the supporting hegemony it is essential to consider how new

members will be oriented to the system and how existing members will continue to

reflect upon their mental models and participate as a collaborative team member.

In preparation for the study, fourteen commonly occurring elements in

organization development were identified in the literature and observed as occurring at

existing schools that have implemented the proposed school reform model. Throughout

the study these elements were monitored and analyzed to determine their role in the

organizational development of the system. How the fourteen elements interact is

described in the *Theory of Successful School Development* (Figure 1). It is the theory of

the researcher that to implement a school reform model that is fundamentally different

than existing school paradigms, an intentional sequence of elements based on

organization development and critical theory, needs to occur to shift the mental models

and step outside the existing hegemony.   Historically as schools seek to implement

different paradigms of school reform, challenges have been documented in the literature

that pulls the organization back to traditional paradigms. Utilizing the tools of

organization development within the context of the *Theory of Successful School*

Development, school practitioners may be able to identify root causes to the challenges

and suggest potentially interventions that will increase the opportunity for sustained

school reform.
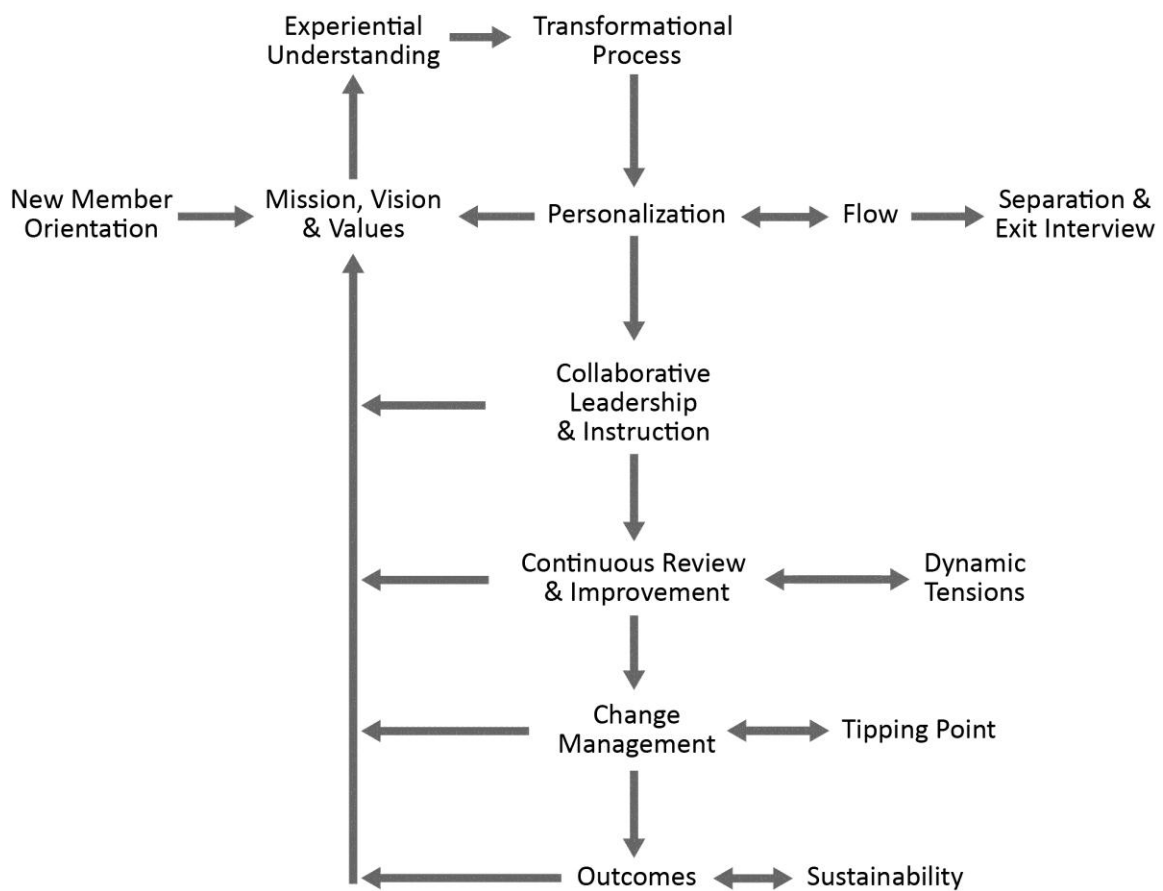
Figure 1. Theory of Successful School Development. The model describes essential
processes that occur in successful school development. The model utilizes a systems
perspective based in organization development and is an on-going cyclic process.

      To assist the reader in understanding the *Theory of Successful School*

Development, the following explanation is provided. The model utilizes a systems

perspective in an on-going, cyclic process. The process begins with the organization establishing a codified *Mission and Vision*, how this is done with fidelity is found in the literature review. Once the mission and vision are established, it is essential to develop an *Orientation Process* for all stakeholders that is in alignment with the mission and vision. Because many of the school reform methods are outside of common mental models of educational pedagogy, an *Experiential Understanding* of the new pedagogy is considered an essential process. To deepen the experience and expand one's mental models, a *Transformational Process* is necessary; this is where double-loop learning as described by Argyris (2000) is utilized as a foundational element. Once the individual has engaged in the transformational process, one needs to consider how this new understanding fits into his/her life and worldview; this is the role of personalization. *Personalization* is formalized based on individual preferences; two common personalization techniques include journaling or the creation of an on-going personal learning plan. With the assimilation of new mental models within personalization, it is important to consider the degree of challenge and skills needed to activate this new thinking. *Flow,* as described by Csikszentnihalyi (1990), helps the individual assess the degree of challenge and skills needed. For example, if an individual agrees to be a teacher in a school that utilizes a unique school reform strategy and realizes that this position is very challenging and to be successful they must learn a significant amount of new skills, this must be considered seriously if one is to avoid frustration and burnout. At times it is an essential process for individuals to *Separate or Exit the organization* and find a better match to one's skills and challenge level; it is also essential to understand why the individual is leaving to better inform future decisions (as well as to support the

individual). If the individual chooses to remain in the organization it is essential to take his/her new awareness of challenges and skills and personalize it, align it with the mission and vision, continue with additional experiential understandings, transformational processes and back through personalization. It is through this cyclic process that the individual develops the *readiness* to join in the *Collaborative Leadership & Instruction* of the team. As one experiences collaborative leadership and instruction one cycles decisions through the lens of the mission and vision and the remaining loop of experiential understanding, transformational process and personalization. As the team moves to continuous review and improvement, utilizing action research as described by Sagor (2002), decisions are filtered back through the lens of mission and vision and the remaining cycle. As a natural part of teaming, differences in opinion develop and can be described as commonly occurring dysfunctions of a team (Lencioni, 2002, 2005); this is the function of *Dynamic Tensions.* Having a process to deal with dynamic tensions helps to create an environment that is safe and productive to discuss differences. The key to this process is that the differences in opinion filter back through continuous review and improvement and continue through the mission and vision and back through the remaining elements of the cycle. This process keeps the dynamic tensions anchored in the mission and vision and within a common experiential understanding. As the team moves to implement elements of change, the essential process *Change Management* is activated. As the team decides on a change initiative, how the team works together to create a *Tipping Point,* as defined by Gladwell (2002), is an essential process. To keep the team on track with the change process, it is important to cycle decisions through the mission and vision and through the remaining elements of the cycle to maintain fidelity

and focus. As the team moves to establish *Outcomes* it is considered essential to consider *Sustainability* and to cycle all decisions back through the mission and vision and the remaining elements of the cycle.

These individual elements are considered process essentials, that work together in an on-going cyclic manner, allowing the individual or group to identify where they are at in the moment on the cycle and consider interventions (for example, moving to the next process essential) to improve organization learning and development.

Research questions

1. In what ways did the issues and process interrelate with the elements of the Successful School Development Theory?

2. What were the outcomes and how effective was the implementation of an advisory centered, project-based school reform model?

3. What adaptations were made from the original model and what was the rational and process used?

4. What was the experience like for faculty and student?

Significance of the study

Within the last decade, the United States has embraced school reform as a central issue. The federal and state governments have created legislation that requires a new level of accountability for achievement with the authorization of No Child Left Behind in 2001 (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). With the advent of new data reporting requirements and advancements in technology the United States has a much clearer understanding of which students are achieving and the students and schools that are struggling. America's Promise Alliance (2009) published *Cities in Crisis* in 2009 and

found that only 53% of all young people in the nation's largest cities are graduating from high school on time. Gallup (2010) conducted a national survey of students, the *Gallup Student Poll*, and found that one-third of students in the United States in grades 5-12 were, "hopeful", "engaged" and "thriving". What is significant is that educational leaders have a new level of data that has never been available in the past.

According to Ravitich (2010), "during the 2008 campaign the Gates and Broad foundations jointly contributed $60 million to launch a project to make education reform a national campaign issue, while advocating for national standards, a longer school day, and merit-pay" (p. 217). Americans are now more likely to be aware of the need and urgency of school reform. What is significant is that school reform has become a national agenda and has broad support including educators, parents and the public sector.

Throughout the United States foundations have invested billions of dollars in school reform. The Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, The Annenberg Challenge, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Walton Family foundation Eli Edythe Broad Foundation are some of the major foundations driving school change (Ravitich, 2010). The largest foundation in the United States is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation actively supported the development of the Small Schools Project. Conceptually the Small Schools Project was to create schools of less than four hundred students and would be constructed around a new paradigm of the three R's: rigor, relevance and relationships. The results of this initiative were mixed. Ravitich (2010) noted that the Gates Foundation spent about two billion dollars between 2000 and 2008 to help create or restructure around 2,600 schools. Since then the funding

has shifted toward teacher effectiveness. Concerns around the quality of student work, rigor and limited curriculum overshadowed the successes in building strong relationships and a pedagogy based on relevance, making all learning real and immediate to each student. What is significant is that some of the schools in this project were exceptional and are still operating today.

The focus of this study is to take a closer look at one of the initiatives of the Gates Foundation. What is needed is to see how the work evolved and where it is currently in the school reform movement.   The Gates Foundation created a vast network of small school reform organizations. It is significant because a few of these organizations are still intact and viable; their sustainability is questionable.   Without the financial support of Gates and additional supporting research, many of these remaining groups will disappear in the next few years and so will their unique work.

This study is significant because it takes a look at how one of the Gates funded small school initiatives has evolved and is currently implementing school reform. The study focuses on the process and outcomes of an urban charter school implementing the EdVisions school reform model and includes the above stated concerns around the quality of student work, rigor and limited curriculum.

The United States has not arrived at a viable solution to school reform. The federal government and foundations throughout the United States are preparing to spend billions of dollars on a new wave of school reform. It seems essential to contribute to the research utilizing the insights of the current small schools reform work within the framework of organization development and critical theory so as to better inform the next generation of school reform.

Definition of Terms

1. Advisory is an established group of students that work together each day to build interpersonal relationships and support each other in academic work, in a designated place within the school

2. Advisory centered school is a school that dedicates a significant portion of each day for students to work independently or collaboratively within their advisory.

3. Advisor is the teacher who leads the advisory and is responsible for the academic and personal growth of each student within the advisory.

4. Critical Theory is a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it (Brookfield, 2005).

5. Dialogue is a process in which individuals explore meaning and assumptions with the intent of being open to new understanding/thinking and is informed by the work of Bohm (1990).

6. EdVisions School Wide Assessment is a tool to determine the level of implementation of the EdVisions model in four major areas: self-directed project-based learning, authentic assessment, teacher-ownership/democratic governance and small learning community.

7. Hegemony is the process by which we learn to enthusiastically embrace a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us (Brookfield, 2005, p. 93).

8. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is an authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is the principal federal law affecting K-12 educators in the United States (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

9. Project-based Learning is a process in which students and staff engage in the creation of projects that are tied to state standards. Projects can be teacher led, co-created with students or created independently as self-directed learning.

10. Process Consultation is the creation of a relationship with the client (which could be the school, the school district, the staff or the students) that permits the client to perceive, understand, and act on the process events that occur in the client's internal and external environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client (Schein, 1999, 2003).

11. Performance Assessment (authentic assessment) is the process in which the learner demonstrates the acquired learning in a public manner and is assessed with input from others students, educators and community members.

12. Personal Learning Plan is a process in which the individual identifies their interests and assesses and monitors their skills and challenges over an extended period of time.

13. Teacher Led School is a school that is owned and managed by the teachers and has autonomy over budget, staffing and the educational pedagogy.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

The researcher's intent in this review of the literature is to focus on school reform and identify issues, patterns and the role of organization development in facilitating school development. To conduct a literature review focused on school reform, it is worthwhile to consider how mental models are established, practiced and their influence on school reform. The work of Argyris (2000) is used to establish an understanding of mental models through his work on *espoused theories* and *theories in use* that inform *Model I & Model II* and *single loop & double loop learning*. Mental models result in *theories in use* that guide how individuals and consequently organizations make decisions, conduct their work and organize themselves. The role of critical theory in the study is to provide a perspective or a lens on how the mental models that dominate school reform were influenced, created, practiced and reinforced. The work of Brookfield (2005) is used to help inform how an understanding of ideology, hegemony, power, alienation and democracy can be used to explore, challenge and evolve our mental models in ways that are potentially more satisfying, sustainable and liberating. A review of the literature that is focused on identifying the mental models and the interwoven critical theory around the purpose and function of public schools, could assist in understanding the facilitating and restraining forces behind school reform efforts.

Divided into sections, this chapter will begin with a review of how public schools were originally developed, the development of the concept of *Factory Schools,* the origins and contemporary role of *Progressive Education and* the emerging role of *Charter Schools* in school reform. The second section will focus on the role of

organization development in school reform and the application of organization development in select school reform issues. A summary of themes and significance to the research will conclude this chapter.

Selected Historical Issues and Strategies in School Reform

The origin of public schools in the United States. Education during colonial times was obtained privately, was originally focused on religious instruction and was attended by children of affluent families. The idea that every child has the right to an education is not explicitly stated in United States Constitution or stated in the Bill of Rights. With the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Cremin (1970,1980), noted the growing need for a well-educated populace with the ability to defend democracy. It was not however, until the 1840's when school reformers Horace Mann and Henry Barnard and others worked to create *The Common Schools*, which later evolved into what we know as public schools. According to Willis et al. (1993), the concept of the Common School was to democratize American education by making education available to all. Kaestle , (as cited by Bernard & Mondale, 2001) notes that the Common Schools were funded by local property taxes, charged no tuition and were open to all white children. By the end of the 19th century, free public education was available for all children who had access to a school. How children were educated evolved into the role of state and local practices. The first compulsory school attendance laws were passed in Massachusetts in 1852 and by 1918, all states had passed laws requiring children to attend at least elementary school.

It is also important to note that for children from families that were poor, and this included many immigrant families, factory or agricultural work was considered

acceptable, therefore many of these children never attended a public school. The history of child labor, (Zinn, 2003) estimates that 2 million school-age children were working 50-70 hours a week in factories by 1810. The business community was benefiting tremendously from cheap, poorly educated, easily intimidated child labor; from a critical theory lens, how the business community viewed children, may represent the dominant ideology of that time period. The religious community, labor groups, educators and concerned citizens worked to limit hours and improve working conditions with limited success. Often the guidelines or laws that were developed did not apply to immigrants. It was not until 1939 when Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which created the guidelines and laws that enforced reform. The Supreme Court upheld the law as constitutional in 1941, defining minimum ages of 16 for work during school hours and 14 for certain jobs after school and 18 for dangerous jobs.

The creation of public schools or Common Schools as they were referred to originally had several distinctly different mental models driving the purpose and organization of these schools. Who was to be educated evolved from the privileged white children, to all white children to all children who did not have to work to support their families, to all children who had access to a school. Another mental model was that children were viewed as cheap labor and an asset to industry as uneducated, easily intimidated laborers. Reforming child labor did not occur until the federal government stepped in to mandate change, the existing market forces worked to support the existing hegemony.

Common schools at the turn of the twentieth century. At the turn of the century, the challenge of meeting the needs of all the students applying to the Common

Schools became overwhelming. With the continuation of large-scale immigration, major urban centers became overwhelmed with the number of children attending their schools. Quality and overcrowding became central themes that challenged the structure of the Common Schools. According to Bernard & Mondale (2001), in 1900 only 50 percent of America's children were in school and they received an average of five years of schooling, the rest could often be found at work. In spite of efforts at reform, an estimated two million children held jobs and lived in slums where housing and sanitary conditions were terrible.

In contrast to the overwhelming challenges facing the Common Schools in the large urban cities, Diane Ravitch recorded the following mental perception of schools in the United States:

> In 1900, the public school was one of the most treasured public institutions in the United States. Americans celebrated their tax-supported free schools as a quintessential symbol of the nation's democratic promise that all girls and boys could improve themselves and rise in the world in accordance with their talents and effort (as cited in Bernard & Mondale, 2001, p.64).

School reformers had a gap between the services the Common Schools could provide in the large urban centers and the goal that *all girls and boys could improve themselves and rise in the world in accordance with the talents and effort*. Many of the urban schools were unable to keep up with enrollment demands, combined with different forms of prejudice around the new immigrants, it was difficult to obtain financial resources. From the perspective of Argyris (2000), the espoused theories of what schools are to be in the United States, did not match what was practiced or experienced by the students and their families.

School reform at this point in history was being driven by urban schools in crisis, it was reasonable to look at the successes the industrialist were experiencing through the

incorporation of scientific management to increase productivity and decrease costs and

apply this methodology to schools. According to Tyack:

> the country came to a turning point in the development of its system of
> education, as leaders redefined democracy in the new urban and industrial
> society of the early twentieth century. Their vision of democracy in twentieth
> century exalted experts and denigrated widespread lay participation (as cited in
> Bernard & Mondale, 2001, p.6).

The development of the factory model of schools. Zinn (1980) documented the

influence of J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie as industrial leaders

whose effect on commerce was significant. Tyack and Hansot (1981) stated that between

1890 and 1920 businessman came to have by far a greater impact on public education

than any other occupational group. Of particular interest to this study is the influence of

Andrew Carnegie and the development of steel plants in Pittsburgh and Ohio. According

to Zinn (1980) Fredrick W. Taylor was a foreman at a steel plant, he analyzed every job

and developed a system of finely detailed division of labor. Workers became

interchangeable and did simple tasks with increased mechanization. Wage systems were

designed through piecework to increase production and profits. Taylor's concepts were

developed at the Carnegie plants of Allegheny County in 1907 where the majority of the

laborers were Eastern European immigrants.

Fredrick Taylor appeared before Congress in 1912 and presented his "scientific

management" methods for making factories more efficient. Sherwood (1998) noted that

Henry Ford was one of the first to successfully utilize this approach in his factories and

the concept became known as *Taylorism*. According to Cummings and Worley (2005),

jobs were intended to be simplified, with routine and repetitive tasks having clear

specifications concerning time and motion. When the work required coordination among

people, such as an assembly line, traditional work groups are developed. Each member

performed a routine and repetitive part of the group task. Members' individual task contributions are coordinated for overall task achievement through such external controls as schedules, rigid workflows, and supervisors.

The Common Schools within the large urban centers in the United States required reform. Steps had already been in motion to take the small autonomous schools and school districts and centralize them into large, centrally controlled districts. The belief was that these large districts would reduce costs and increase efficiency. According to Bracey (2002), Taylor's concepts were applied to the public school system and created a vision that resulted in the factory model of schools. Senge et al. (2000) concluded that the ruling values of this time period were those of the mechanical world, to be perfect was to operate like a machine; schools followed exactly the same model of machine perfection. The school day became organized around factory techniques using time schedules, ringing bells and rigid curriculum. Students were organized by age into grades and moved from stage to stage at a uniform rate. The ideology of modeling schools after factories to produce a standardized product, is the earliest reference in the literature where learning has been reduced to a product, as compared to a value. This mental model appears to have continued into modern times, as Brookfield (2005) describes how the results on standardized test have become the product that is the focus of attention, rather than the value or meaning to students and the larger community.

A common criticism with the factory model of schools is that instruction was often out of context and without visible application, this was a by-product of the efficiency model. Uselding (2004) noted that the public reaction to the new industrial model applied to schools expressed itself in the political environment through the

populist and progressive movements. Critics argued that the method ignored the workers (and students) social and psychological needs. Cummings and Worley (2005) cited the Hackman and Oldham model of job design and the earlier work of Herzberg as two examples of motivational theories that would predict that the factory model of schools would have limited outcomes in internal work motivation, work performance, satisfaction and absenteeism. The dynamic tension is that even with these low motivational outcomes, the schools experienced cost savings, efficiency, output that could be easily measured, and new schools could easily be developed and managed.

Since the development of schools modeled after Taylorism, commonly referred to as *factory schools*, different groups have actively worked to reform, evolve or offer alternative models. One of the most commonly replicated alternatives is based on *Progressive Education.*

The role of progressive education in school reform. According to Cubberley (1919), two distinct philosophies emerged at the turn of the twentieth century; one in which the schools were in a sense, factories in which children were to be shaped and fashioned into products to the various demands of life and the philosophy of John Dewey who advocated for education to focus on the individual complexity of the child and to organize learning from the developmental needs of the student. Dewey's philosophy of organizing the curriculum around the development of the child rather than academic disciplines became one of the foundations of progressive education. Dewey (1902) emphasized that "for a student to realize the potential of any lesson, the principles within the lesson must be restored to the experience from which it was abstracted"(pp.11-12). Dewey (1902,1938) proposed that a school modeled as a community would facilitate the

development of individuals and the improvement of society as individual pupils collectively applied their intelligence to problems beyond the school itself. The school models that Dewey and the progressive educators developed were significantly different in their epistemology than the schools based on *Taylorism.*

Bernard & Mondale (2001) noted that the U.S. Steel Company built the world's largest steel mill in Gary Indiana and almost overnight immigrants arrived to work in the mills. To assimilate these new immigrants, William A. Wirt was hired as superintendent of schools. Wirt was one of Dewey's students from the University of Chicago. According to Spain (1924), Wirt developed a plan to open his schools to all age groups as educational and social centers throughout the entire year, making available to the community all the rooms, auditoriums and laboratories. The Gary Plan started in 1907 and developed into one of the most publicized and influential educational experiments of the first decades of the century. Bourne (1970) noted that the curricular organization of the elementary and secondary schools became known as *The Platoon System*; instead of being assigned permanent homerooms and desks, students spent parts of their days engaged in different activities in different school facilities. Bernard and Mondale (2001) noted that Wirt designed lavish , modern buildings that engaged the students in a wide range of learning experiences. Wirt called his system Work-Study-Play. One student who went on to become a teacher was quoted as saying "it was lovely to go to school. We enjoyed it" (p. 86). This system was functional and affordable because of the split-shift system, every space was in constant use throughout the school and the schools were open at night and on the weekends to serve the entire community.

It is important to note that the leaders of industry hoped that progressive education would socialize students and their families at a time of widespread labor unrest. The challenge with the Gary model was maintaining the system. Financial planners saw the model as a method to increase student enrolment. Cremin (1961) noted that school enrollment in the Gary schools increased by one third. As the model replicated throughout the United States the integrity of the system became compromised and mis-represented. Bernard and Mondale (2001) noted that as the model was being implemented in thirty New York schools, a political candidate John Hylan created a violent controversy by calling the Gary Plan a plot to turn out cheap labor for large corporations. The perception within the immigrant population was that their children were being prepared to work in factories. Brookfield (2005) noted that at times, the dominant group will realize that specific practices (in this case the Gary Plan and Progressive Education) could be economically and politically useful in maintaining the dominant groups position. By representing the Gary Plan as a *method to turn out cheap labor*, the dominant group was able to convince the public to embrace their espoused ideology as being in their best interests. The results led to the re-election of the politician and the discontinuation of the Gary Plan in New York, with the schools reverting back to the traditional curriculum.

Chall (2000) noted that many people, including John Dewey, found the Gary Schools to be the most complete and admirable application of progressive education. Since the development of the Gary Schools many different iterations of progressive education have been proposed, most of them reverting back to traditional paradigms. Historian Larry Cuban, as cited in Bernard & Mondale (2001) suggests that "we have

this cyclical kind of movement between progressive and traditional kinds of teaching, learning and schooling that has gone on in American schools for almost a century" (p. 117). The research site in this study utilized a model based on progressive education.

       Overview of critical theory. This section will begin by provide an example of the potential application of critical theory by using the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) on stakeholders and the resulting challenge to resolve ideological differences. The next section will summarize basic critical theory elements and conclude with the role of critical theory in this study.

       The literature review noted that throughout the history of public schools in the United States, the business community has played a central role in both policy and practice. President, George W. Bush in 2000 proposed transforming the federal role in education from supporting state and local government, to a federal role with direct influence and control. The structure and processes were outlined in legislation known as No Child Left Behind. The legislation laid out a new paradigm of thinking and was made into law through bipartisan support as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002).

       As the federal government moved to implement NCLB, parents, educators and lawmakers began to realize that the ideology imbedded into the legislation was a significant departure from federal educational policy. McDonnell (2005) documented that the Republican controlled Virginia House of Delegates passed a resolution 98-to1 stipulating that NCLB represented the most sweeping intrusion into state and local control of education in the history of the United States. Neil (2003) noted that under NCLB:

              Education will be seriously damaged, especially in schools with large shares of
              low-income and minority children, as students are coached to pass tests rather

than to learn a rich curriculum that prepares them for life in the 21st century. In schools where children don't perform well, there will be intense pressure to eliminate or reduce emphasis on such untested subjects as history, science, languages, and the arts; to cut such "frills" as recess; and to reduce tested subjects to the form and content of the exams (p. 225).

Over the last decade the challenges and opportunities with NCLB have been well documented in the literature. One of the central challenges with NCLB is the inability for stakeholders to come together and discuss concerns openly and to go beyond what Argyris (2000) described as single-loop thinking into much deeper and productive, double-loop thinking. When considering the ideology behind NCLB and the existing hegemony around school reform, the value of critical theory emerges.

Hegemony is the process by which we learn to enthusiastically embrace a system of beliefs and practices that end up harming us and working to support the interests of others who have power over us (Brookfield, 2005, p.93).

To begin a discussion of critical theory it is worthwhile to define the difference between critical thinking and critical theory. Huitt (1998) described critical thinking as a disciplined mental activity of evaluating arguments or propositions and making judgments that can guide the development of beliefs and taking actions. Critical thinking helps solve the technical aspects of a problem but often fails to identify and address productively the unconscious mental models that influence thinking and decisions. Brookfield (2005) defines critical theory as a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it.

According to Brookfield (1995):

> Critical theory views thinking critically as being able to identify, and then to challenge and change, the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs. As a

body of work, critical theory is grounded in three core assumptions regarding the way the world is organized:

1. That apparently open, Western democracies are actually highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities
2. That the way this state of affairs is reproduced and seems to be normal, natural, and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system) is through the dissemination of dominant ideology
3. That critical theory attempts to understand this state of affairs as a necessary prelude to changing it

> Dominant ideology comprises the set of broadly accepted beliefs and practices that frame how people make sense of their experiences and their lives. When it works effectively, it ensures that an unequal, racist, and sexist society is able to reproduce itself with minimal opposition. Its chief function is to convince people that the world is organized the way it is for the best of all reasons and that society works in the best interests of all (pp. viii-ix).

The challenge with hegemony is that many of the forces that shape our thinking and behavior are not visible. As NCLB went into effect nationally, the ideology behind this comprehensive legislation became more visible and a national discussion began around the real intent of NCLB. Based on the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) schools in the United States were underperforming compared to other countries and if we had greater accountability and high standards, annual academic assessments and consequences for schools that fail to educate disadvantaged students, we will close the achievement gap and educate all students to their full potential. Berliner and Biddle (1995) described the premise that schools in the United States are underperforming as a manufactured myth to promote privatization and national testing. Harrison-Jones (2007) reported that six years after the implementation of NCLB no evidence was found that documents significant improvement in the proficiency of students or in closing the achievement gap between white and non-white students. The work of Gatto (2002), described the hidden curriculum that is in place throughout the United States and the

harmful effects of our current institutional schooling that makes school reform unlikely because the existing system is successful in producing students that are not critical thinkers and accept their place in the economy. Just becoming aware of these different perspectives allows the individual to consider the forces that might be in place within the dominant ideology and consider more productive actions that might be more equitable and effective.

Utilizing Critical Theory to deconstruct the ideology embedded within No Child Left Behind could help stakeholders better understand the intent and the supporting processes. Critical theory could also be used to examine the validity and effectiveness of NCLB in the areas of authentically dealing with equity issues and the larger social implications of change.   Critical theory helps a group step out of their existing mindset and explore other perspectives. Cummings and Worely (2005) cited Kurt Lewin's Planned Change Model as a process of unfreezing (the thinking of an individual or group), movement and refreezing. Critical theory helps provide the lens and the language to help the individual or group move through the Planned Change Model or at least to be able to engage in productive conversation or dialogue as described by Bohm (1990).

The intention in this literature review of Critical Theory was to summarize select areas of critical theory and to provide an example of the application of critical theory to a current school reform issue. Critical theory can be applied to a wide range of topics; the role of critical theory in this study is to provide an additional perspective or lens on how the mental models that dominate school reform may have been created, practiced and reinforced.

Selected Issues in progressive education based on organization development

Utilizing the lens of organization development, issues that commonly effect the implementation and sustainability of organizations have been selected and applied to the context of school reform. The review includes the consideration of mental models and the *theory of effective action* as described by Argyris (2000), Critical theory as described by Brookfield (2005) and *systems theory* based on the work of Senge (1990,1994). The following selected topics are frequently cited in the literature on school reform and are utilized in the theory building of the proposed research.

Mission and vision development. The High School Reform Strategy Toolkit (2010) defined a high school mission statement as having five essential elements: reflects the school's core values and beliefs, demonstrates the school's commitment to it constituencies, outlines the school's goals, outlines the steps that the school will take to meet goals, and in the process, reveals the school's ideal self.

Schools interested in engaging in reform need to create a shared vision and mission. Senge (1990) stated that vision is the "what?" or the picture of the future you seek to create; purpose or mission is the "why?" or the answer to "why do we exist?" and core values answer the question "how do we want to act, consistent with our mission, along the path toward achieving our vision?" (p.208). Helping to creating, evolve and keep alive the vision and mission of a school is critical to the success of the organization. A common flaw in school reform is when stakeholders (parents, students, educators, community members and board members) did not contribute to the construction of the mission and vision, are not aware of the essential elements, disagree or misinterpret the intent or do not actively support the day to actions that bring the mission and vision to

life. To actualize the potential of a vision and mission the stakeholders must be in alignment and commit both cognitively and in their daily actions. Based on the work of Argyris (2000), the espoused theories within the mission and vision would ideally match the theories in use or the daily practice of implementing the mission and vision.

To implement any significant change in a school it is essential to have a clear vision that is in alignment with the mission. In 1995 a partnership was created in Boston between the mayor and the office of the school superintendent, the school committee and the teachers union to create the Boston Pilot Schools. The vision and mission of the Boston Pilot Schools provides the framework to be freed from district mandates and union work rules. According to the Center for Collaborative Education (2007), the Pilot Schools are accountable, small, personalized and vision driven. Each school has autonomy in five essential areas; budget, staffing, curriculum and instruction, assessment, governance and policies and scheduling. Ravitch (2010) reviewed two studies of the Boston Pilot schools finding the conditions favorable to charters and noted that some schools are exemplary.

If a school wants to break from traditional pedagogy and governance the staff must be explicit in its vision and mission. An example of breaking from traditional pedagogy would be to create a school that is not teacher-controlled but inner-directed using constructionist pedagogy. Senge (1990) noted that a strong vision and mission is not sufficient, the school needs to consider systems theory and commit to becoming a learning organization. The five disciplines include systems thinking, mental models, shared vision, team learning and personal mastery. Senge (2000) recognized that many teachers and administrators already practice aspects of the five disciplines but did not

have the language or supporting framework. The framework gives them a way to explain

their thinking; it provides alternative ways to interpret their experience. Senge (2000)

established a connection between critical theory and systems theory:

> The emerging language of the five disciplines can provide strategies for those attempting to practice critical pedagogy. By bringing together these two bodies of theory and practice, always keeping in mind the philosophies underlying those practices, educators can develop new capabilities to "read the world" by acquiring the multiple literacies necessary to change deeply embedded practices that harm many students." (p. 209).

The importance of a schools mission and vision statement is well documented in

literature. Within the last decade, the tools utilized in organization development have

extended the importance of mission and vision statements to include the process of

creating and maintaining the mission and vision statements as a tool to engage the

participants in critical theory and the organization in systems theory.

Experiential understanding. Learning through experience is a form of learning

that can be traced back to ancient times and is the basis of the time-tested apprentice,

journeyman and master-craftsman training that was in place long before public schools.

Dewey (1938) established the need and a theoretical framework of the role of experience

in learning that has become the basis of many experiential learning studies. Kolb (1984)

developed the experiential learning cycle based on the work of Dewey that is frequently

cited in the literature. The basic elements of the learning cycle include: concrete

experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

The learner can start anywhere in the cycle and continue moving through the cycle as

many times as they are engaged with the learning. The challenge in practice is that the

learner will experience "mis-educative " experiences and without a means to critically

examine the learning, the student may fall back into existing mental models. What is

needed to create a transformational experiential understanding that embeds a substantive form of reflection.

Argyris (2000) developed a process of substantive reflection that is based on *double-loop learning* that challenges the individual to become aware of their theory in use (Model I) and the attendent defensive routines and supporting self-referential logic. Becoming aware of one's *espoused theories* and making them match one's *theories in use* is a central feature of *double-loop learning.* Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Luca, Smith, Dutton and Kleiner (2000), developed an adapted experiential learning cycle utilizing the basic construct by Kolb (1984) and double-loop learning by Argyris (2000). The single loop elements are: deciding, doing, observing and reflecting. The double loop starts with reflection, then moves to reconsidering, reconnecting, reframing and back to reflecting. The adapted experiential learning cycle, based on double loop-learning establishes the importance of transformational reflection and provides a framework for critical thinking. Engaging educators, students and stakeholders in significant experiential learning experiences with double-loop learning embedded into the reflection process could help deprogram traditional mental models that are preventing more effective school reform practices from taking root. With the emergence of easily accessible media most people are becoming experientially deprived, it is essential that individuals engaged in school reform have a direct experience with the school reform elements and create their own experiential understanding in order to influence their *espoused theories and theories in use*.

Transformational process. School coaches from around the United States who work with educators attempting to implement school reform models often share with the

researcher the need to de-program the educators, students and their parents about what school is and the potential of considering new learning paradigms. What exists is a hegemony around traditional teacher-centered learning as the best way to learn. Over time a system has been developed that reinforces the mental models that educators and college administrators carry in their heads and this mental model is embedded in their language and actions (Jenkins, 2005). Since the creation of public schools educators have developed an implicit *theory of action* that underlies the questions that are asked, the data that is used and the interpretations that in turn reinforces the traditional model of education. Argyris (2000) described *Model One Theory-in-use* as people doing what they have always done and not questioning the validity or legitimacy of their thinking and actions. An environment of hegemony occurs when people do not critically question their *theory-in-use* and willingly consent to beliefs and actions that support the status quo. What is needed is an intentional process to shift educators, students and parents from *Model One* to *Model Two* as described by Argyris (2000).

The experiential learning designs can potentially be enriched by intentionally building into the process a transformational paradigm. Mezirow (1991, 2000), suggested ten phases that are commonly part of a transformational experience. Mezirow shifts an individual's perception through a disorienting dilemma, encourages the development of the habits of mind that help us understand underlying assumptions and establishes the process of critical reflection. Being intentional helps the participants and the facilitators become better prepared to meet the needs of everyone involved in the process of constructionism. The ten phases of perspective transformation are (Mezirow, 1991, pp.168-169):

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles.
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

Utilizing Mezirow's ten phases of perspective transformation could be a tool to help develop a learning community that has the ability to take a critical theory approach to learning and to challenge hegemony. The current educational paradigm has elements of oppression that need to be discussed and exposed if school reform is going to be successful. An essential question is: to what degree are we preparing stakeholders to participate in critical thinking? This is why Senge (1990) and others emphasized the importance of establishing a mutual understanding of the schools vision and mission from the start and to create processes that continually review how the mission and vision is playing out on a daily basis.

Lastly, it is essential to include students within this dialogue and process, documenting that their voice is present in the process, decisions and actions. Parents and grandparents of many students participated in schools that were poorly funded, oppressive or were forced into child labor at an early age. Understanding this legacy of equity issues, prejudice and manipulation for monetary gain is essential to creating new educational paradigms that are transformational.

Personalization. For many people (students, staff and community members) actualizing the mission and vision is an experiential and transformational process. It is

through the process of personalizing their experiences and critical reflections that one can begin to wrestle with, document and practice their mental models and belief systems. For many the school reform that is embedded into the mission and vision statement is a significant paradigm shift from their prior understanding of what school and learning is about. To facilitate the process of understanding what the individual needs to learn, change or even to make the decision to leave the organization/school, a formal process is needed to document the transformational learning. This process in many school reform models is often called a *Personal Learning Plan* and it transcends traditional professional development plans or *Individual Learning Plans* to include this deeper form of critical reflection that challenges assumptions and encourages action planning. These plans are developed by each individual and are often shared in focus groups: with students in a *Student Led Conferences* or with adults in *a Staff Led Conference*.

In 2004, The National Association of Secondary School Principals published *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for leading high school reform.* Within the core recommendations is the personalization of the learning environment through the use of Personal Learning Plans, an adult advocate/mentor (often the Advisor) to personalize the educational experience and the use of Advisories to help facilitate meaningful dialogue. It is through this combination of support that students and staff build relationships and relevance that ideally results in engagement and outcomes each individual can believe in.

Flow state. When a group of educators engage in school reform they need to collectively create a mission and vision statement that stakeholders believe in. The challenge for each individual is to personalize the mission and vision and determine what they will need to do within their own skill set to actualize the work. Every individual will

need to learn new skills and processes; some individuals will need to do a significant

amount of work to be successful. What is needed is a process to help individuals and the

organization as a whole manage the complexity of the work and skill development to

avoid long-term stress, burnout and employee turnover.

Brookfield (2005) helped identify the hegemony that exists throughout the current

educational system and the role each educator plays in determining the amount of work

each provides as part of one's commitment to the vocation of teaching:

> Quite simply, this sense of vocation, of fulfilling a calling to the selfless
> service of others, opens educators to the possibility of exploitation and
> manipulation.   Vocation becomes hegemonic when it is used to justify
> workers taking on responsibilities and duties that far exceed their energy or
> capacities and that destroy their health and personal relationships. In effect
> their self-destruction serves to keep a system going that is being increasingly
> starved of resources. If educators will kill themselves taking on more and
> more work in response to budgets being cut, and if they learn to take pride in
> this apparently selfless devotion to students, then the system is strengthened
> (p.99).

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 2003) describes the state of flow as a sense of

discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushes the

person to higher levels of performance and leads to previously undreamed-of states of

consciousness. In short, it transforms the individual by making one more complex. The

personal growth of oneself is the key to flow activities. Csikszentmihalyi created a

graph, Figure 2. to help illustrate how challenges and skills interrelate to influence flow.

From Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience
by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (page 74)
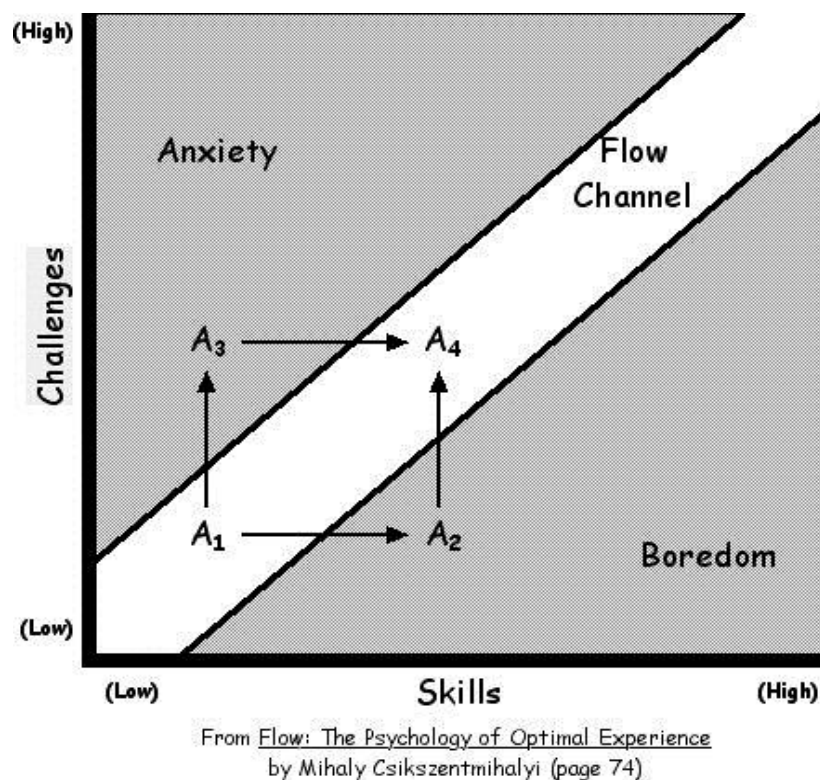
Figure 2. Flow.

Applying the concept of flow as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) into personal

learning plans could be a useful tool to help educators who engaged in school reform

disrupt the existing hegemony by learning how to manage the complex challenges and

skills needed to be not only productive and effective, but to reach flow which could

include elements of satisfaction and joy.

Another dimension of flow is to consider flow as both an individual experience

and as a collective organization. The issues individuals experience could be summated

into an organization flow paradigm. To help inform both individual and organization

flow Brookfield's (1995) *Critical Incident Questionnaire* could be used to inform critical

reflections that could assist in informing practices that are increasing or decreasing flow.

Collaborative leadership and instruction. Ingersoll (2007) has been involved in

extensive research on power, control and accountability in schools over the last two

decades. His research has concluded that most public and private secondary schools are highly centralized internally and teachers have little input on organizational decisions and autonomy.

McGregor (2006) described *Theory X* organizations much like the traditional factory schools based on scientific management that utilize top-down power and control structures working from the assumption that most people want to be directed and avoid responsibility. *Theory Y* schools assume that teachers (and students) will accept responsibility, provided they can satisfy personal needs and organizational goals at the same time. In the *Progressive School*s reform model the organization is intentionally shifted from a Theory X school to a Theory Y school.

Throughout the United States public schools have begun to utilize self-directed work teams and teacher leadership as a step towards collaborative leadership and a step away from absolute top-down power and control. Tim Lucas in *Schools That Learn* , (Senge et al., 2000) noted that many schools have a team or committee, composed of administrators, teachers, parents and sometimes students, responsible for overall school planning. Thomas, Enloe & Newell (2005) described how teacher ownership, a formal process that has the teachers actually become owners of their school and the value of teacher cooperatives that encourage a network of educators to become part of a larger professional learning community can bring philosophically similar schools together for professional development led by the teachers themselves. Minnesota New Country School and the EdVisions Cooperative based in Minnesota is an example of teacher ownership and teacher cooperatives.

Engaging schools in collaborative leadership and instruction is predicated upon the ability of the participants to engage in dialogue as described by Boem (1996) and process consultation as described by Schein (1999). With the framework for communication and collaboration the group has the basic framework to look at issues from a critical theory point of view and to begin the work of action research as described by Sagor (2000).

Continuous review and improvement. Cummings and Worley (2005) noted that Kurt Lewin was instrumental in establishing the term and process of action-research which contributed to establishing Organization Development as a practical social science. Utilizing action-research within the context of continuous improvement could be a useful tool to embed organization development within the routine of the school's learning community.

Data driven decision-making has become a commonly used term in school reform. Often a school is not aware of the different kinds of data that are available and how to use the data effectively. Throughout the United States results of state testing are reported for each school in local newspapers. The average parent and community member reads the results and often misinterprets the data as a summary judgment of the effectiveness/quality of the schools. Schools in turn fear this public reporting because it is tied to student enrollment and public support of their school, therefore become bound to *teach to the tes*t and/or make testing the most important outcome. Since the authorization of No Child Left Behind in 2001, achievement in publicly reported test scores has become the priority rather than educating the whole student or preparing

students to engage in a democratic society and the emerging demands of the 21st century

workforce (Jenkins, 2005).

Educators and school leaders that resist the pressures inherent in state tests put

themselves and their schools at risk. One strategy is to strive for achievement on state

tests and educate the whole child. This strategy is challenging with a national crisis in

school funding, with many schools opting to cancel or limit art, music, physical education

and other subjects that are not included in state testing to save money and allocate more

time to the subjects that are reported. A viable option is to embrace action-research as a

tool to use data for continuous improvement from a systems approach; improving all

aspects of the learning community, including test scores.

Cummings and Worley (2005) defined action research as:

> a cyclical process of diagnosis-change-research-diagnosis-change-research.
> The results of diagnosis produce ideas for changes, the changes are introduced
> in the same system, and their effects noted through further research and
> diagnosis. The number of cycles may be infinite (p. 661).

This definition implies a systems approach embedded within a longitudinal

paradigm. Sagor (2000) outlined a seven-step action research process that is also an

ongoing cycle of continuous review and improvement. The seven steps are: selecting a

focus, clarifying theories, identifying research questions, collecting data, analyzing data,

reporting results and taking informed action. Including the step of *clarifying theories*

helps the team potentially uncover the mental models that support their assumptions and

hence their actions.

Many people lack experience in looking at data and lack confidence in their

ability to understand the numbers and to make decisions (outside of the existing routines)

that result in continuous improvement. Creating a culture of inquiry and a system that

invites stakeholders to learn to use data effectively is essential. Boudett and Moody (2006) have found three key tasks that help set the stage for data work throughout each school year: create a data inventory, take stock of how the data is organized/stored and develop an inventory of the instructional initiatives currently in place in your school. The data inventory should include internal assessments (instruments developed within the school) and external assessments (district, state and federally mandated assessments) and student data. It is also essential to create an assessment calendar and schedule times for staff to review the data and come up with goals and action-plans.

Boudett and Moody (2006) suggested four strategies to get the most out of data focused meetings; establish group norms, use protocols to structure conversations, adopt an improvement process and lesson plan for meetings; a structure that helps provide a positive, hands-on experience with data. This might include repackaging data so it can be more easily understood.

Bernahrdt, (2000, 2002), developed a school portfolio focused on continuous improvement based on Deming's quality principles and the Malcolm Baldrige Award program. In 1987, Congress established the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. It recognizes large and small organizations in business, education and health care for quality achievement along seven dimensions; leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis and knowledge management; human resources focus; process management; and business results. The school portfolio is an organizing framework for continuous improvement with the focus of sharing the data publicly.

Conflict, group dynamics and dynamic tensions. Conflict, group dynamics and dynamic tensions naturally occur when people come together to solve challenging

problems. How any group chooses to address these elements will influence the outcomes and sustainability of the group. Dynamic tensions are essentially the tensions that exist between individuals whose mental models and experiences are fundamentally different. The result is that both individuals defend their perspective in a manner that creates a dynamic tension. Embracing these tensions and learning from them can be very constructive; ignoring them can be destructive or counter-productive in the long-term.

Covert processes are elements that feed conflict and dynamic tensions. According to Marshak (2006), covert process are the processes that impact organizations but usually remain unseen, unspoken or unacknowledged:

> In every culture there are unspoken beliefs and assumptions underlying people's behavior. They effect what we say and do even though we may not be aware of them. From a psychological viewpoint, covert processes include the unspoken mental models and unconscious dynamic of individuals and groups (p. 1).

Marshak developed a process to identify covert processes within an organization, the covert processes diagnostic elements include: identification of issues that are out-of-awareness, denied, unexpressed, repressed and untapped. This diagnostic tool could assist a school in identify key covert processes and possible interventions.

Argyris (2000) clarified how mental models are established and practiced, noting that people usually operate with two frameworks, the one that we espouse or espoused theories and what we really employ or our theories in use. People are often unaware of the gap between our espoused theories and theories in use. To help understand this dynamic tension Argyris and Donald Schon developed a system using Model I and Model II. Model I is most common, people using Model I often engage in defensive reasoning, self-referential logic and become caught in escalating errors. Argyris (2000) noted:

Individuals programmed with Model I produce organizations that are consistent with Model I. Such organizations typically manifest defensive routines that are skillfully designed to prevent their members or constituent parts from experiencing embarrassment or threat. By definition, such routines are, as with individuals, overprotective and anti-learning (pgs. 6-7).

The challenge with many schools is that they are unconsciously often frozen in Model I and hence remain in a single loop of learning that reinforces existing paradigms. Model II engages in double loop learning where underlying current views are questioned and hypotheses about behavior are tested publicly. Individuals and organizations engaged in Model II learn to engage in productive dialogue and productive reasoning that helps identify and make retrievable their theories in use. Learning Model II helps the individual identify their own internal conversation or their espoused theories and reconcile the difference between their external conversation and their theories in use. In practice, engaging in Model I and Model II would help individuals and an organization identify the mental models and dynamic tensions, resulting in increased effectiveness in decision-making and greater productivity with failures and mistakes.

Demarest, Herdes, Stockton and Stockton (2004) developed The Mobius Model as a process to engage people in Model I and Model II. They recognize that people are often stuck in monologue (Model I) and they work to create an environment of understanding that helps shift the group to dialogue (Model II) as described by Bohm (1990). The Mobius Model utilizes six qualities: mutual understanding, possibility, commitment, capability, responsibility and acknowledgment. The Mobius Model is one tool that could be used in a school reform process to help individuals and groups learn to be productive with conflict and dynamic tensions.

Change management. Educators have been overwhelmed with change initiatives, reform strategies, and the constant revision of state standards and

accountability benchmarks. The system has become addicted to the quick fix solution rather than looking at root causes and addressing systems. Fullan (2003) proposed that each time a change initiative is implemented an implementation dip occurs. With an educational system that has capacity as one of its root causes, many educators cannot invest the time needed to fully comprehend and fully implement the proposed initiative. Often lacking is an experiential understanding of the proposed change initiative, educators experiencing the implementation dip sense that *this is not working* and because of poor short-term results, begin to look to another strategy. Schools are commonly under a change paradigm that is in a cycle of dysfunction.

Beckhard and Harris (1987) developed a model of change that is expressed as the mathematical formula: $C=(A+B+D)>X$. C is change and for change to happen it must be greater than the sum of A (level of dissatisfaction with the status quo), B (the desirability of the proposed change or end state), D (practicality of the change; minimal risk and disruption), than X ("cost" of changing). For a school to engage in school reform it is worth determining the extent of each of the variables expressed in Beckhard & Harris's change formula.

Heenan and Evers (2002) noted that "leaders often do not give enough thought to the forces that are working against implementing a strategy or miss the opportunities to take advantage of forces helping to implement a strategy" (p.17). Heenan and Evers reference Kurt Lewin's *Force Field Analysis* process as an effective approach to understanding the overall forces that exist internally and externally that will help or hinder successful implementation of a change strategy.

Tipping point. In physics, if one wanted to build a rocket and send it into space to conduct research you must focus your efforts at designing the rocket to reach what is termed *escape velocity*. Escape velocity is the minimum velocity an object must have in order to escape the gravitational field of the earth, without falling back. Once in space, the rocket changes dramatically, releasing the engines that propelled it into space and transforming into a research/exploration vehicle.

It takes a team of people to put a rocket in space. The focus and the observable behaviors of the team change as the rocket goes through different phases: visioning, design, assembly, final preparation, launch and entering space. The tipping point is when the team is able to get the rocket to reach escape velocity and the rocket enters space itself. When the rocket finally leaves the atmosphere and enters space you often see the strained faces of the team breakout into cheers. They have passed through the tipping point and they are on a new phase of the mission.

When educators engage in school reform a similar process occurs. Visioning, design, assembly, final preparation, launch and then successfully entering the school year. Each phase has a distinct purpose and focus. One could argue that each phase has a tipping point, but like a rocket entering space, one major tipping point often stands out that requires reaching an escape velocity. When a school finally opens it doors and students enter the school is when the rocket is launched, it is when the staff and students believe in, and experience the vision and mission of the school, that is when they have reached escape velocity and the essential tipping point.

To reach a tipping point a team must demonstrate, engagement, hope and commitment to the vision and mission of the project. To remain engaged and hopeful

they need to experience a level of satisfaction. When the space shuttle Challenger exploded trying to reach escape velocity on January 28, 1986, all of these elements were called into question. A tipping point was when this tragedy was turned into a successful failure, with the evolution of new systems and protocols. The same holds for school reform, along the way the systems malfunction and a tipping point must be re-established to transform the malfunction into a successful failure.

Gladwell (2002) defined the tipping point from a sociology perspective as " the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point" (p. 12). Gladwell used the tipping point in the context of how an epidemic spreads, stating three characteristics: contagiousness, the fact that little causes can have big effects and that change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment. The dramatic moment in an epidemic is what Gladwell calls the tipping point.

Strategic Goals and Outcomes. A yearly ritual in schools is to create goals and outcomes. In many schools these goals are being dominated by the federal and state mandates of the No Child Left Behind law authorized in 2001. Focusing on only part of a system does not encourage everyone to effectively work together to achieve the potential of the learning community as a whole. To be a highly productive and successful organization, schools need to consider strategies that go beyond the limited scope of No Child Left Behind and consider establishing goals from a systems perspective. Ideally goals and outcomes are both strategic and comprehensive and are in alignment with the organization's school reform initiative and are directly tied to the mission and vision statements.

One of the limiting factors that keep many schools from engaging in goal setting from a systems approach is limited capacity. The demands placed on schools to work with limited budgets and increased expectations from local, state and federal groups results in a system that is stressed. With limited capacity, schools find it difficult to commit enough time and resources to the creation and effective monitoring of goals and outcomes. With limited resources, goals and outcomes become another ritual that is often detached from the day-to-day work of the learning community and the data becomes part of an annual report with limited impact. What is needed is a systems approach to creating strategic goals and outcomes that is linked to a mission and vision that was created by the stakeholders.

Evers and Heenan (2002) suggested creating a strategic plan based on the mission statement and using the vision statement to create one major goal and several shorter-term strategic goals to help guide development of strategies, this helps to clarify what needs to be done to achieve the goals. To help identify and inform strategies, Evers & Heenan recommend using a process called *Force Field Analysis* developed by Kurt Lewin and the *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threats* SWOT/TOWS analysis as an internal and external assessment. The results of these tools help to inform each major strategy and break it down into two to four major chunks that can be managed as a strategic project. Each project should have clearly written objectives that are created by the members and identify quality standards, resource requirements and measurable outcomes.

Evers and Heenan recommend that objectives be written using SMARTS. Elements of SMARTS include:

- Specific: State exactly what you want done.
- Measurable: Include how you measure success.
- Action-oriented: Exude energy through use of action-tense verbs.
- Realistic: Ensure objective needs are believable and attainable.
- Time-limited: Indicate a date by when the objective will be completed.
- Stretch: Provide a challenge to make the project exciting.

For many schools using an incomplete paradigm of goal setting, shifting to a new model will be a significant change initiative. One major step in the process will be to establish a common understanding and clear definitions of goals, outcomes, objectives and indicators. A second step will be to determine the process and purpose of establishing goals. Lastly, integrate the process with a continuous improvement plan. Engaging the stakeholders to create strategic goals could be a tool to help ground the mission and vision into the daily work of the school and bring value to the process, potentially building capacity that historically was the limiting factor.

Sustainability. Throughout the school reform movement of the last decade thousands of new school were started. Funding through foundations and the federal government created a network of school reform models. The result of this work created a network of outstanding schools. Many of these schools were not sustainable and reverted back to traditional pedagogy. Understanding the issues of sustainability is essential to establishing long-term school reform.

Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) was established in 1985 and was recognized as an exemplary model that influenced many school reform initiatives. Suiter (2009) conducted a qualitative study of CPESS and documented the sustainability issues that resulted in CPESS loosing many of its landmark innovations. CPESS philosophy was rooted in authentic learning and assessment, utilizing project-based learning and graduation by portfolios.

Suiter (2009) noted that the founder, Deborah Meier provided the leadership that helped create the paradigm of a staff-run school and helped staff and students connect their underlying values together with their daily actions. After Meier left, three critical events occurred that challenged the philosophy of the school:

1. The school was asked to grow from 400 to 500 students
2. Major budget cuts, resulting in more students with less money
3. Some of the students did not choose CPESS but were placed there by the district office; traditionally CPESS was a school of choice.

As the increase of new students occurred, four teachers left to start another school. Suiter notes that interviews with staff found that CPESS did not effectively orient new staff into the values of the school and their educational pedagogy. Another significant challenge was the external pressure of standardized testing. In an interview with one of the educators Suitor (2009) documented:

> With no thoughtful attempt to transfer the culture of the school, nor to re-establish the commitment to each other as a community with shared values, people became lost in the muddle of everyday life. The end result was that each piece got whittled away until it's just not the same place (p. 41).

CPESS is just one example of many exemplary schools that struggle with sustainability by internal and external pressures. Increasing the organizations awareness on the essential elements of sustainability and the critical role of visionary leadership could positively influence the potential of long-term success with school reform.

Orientation and exiting members. The concept of orientation and providing a process for exit interviews applies to student, parents, educators, board members, school staff, district staff and community members. The essential questions are: how are new members orientated to the organization; what happens when we do not orient people well to the vision and mission of the school and what critical data are we missing when we do not provide exit interviews for members when they leave the organization?

Suiter (2009) and her qualitative study of CPESS found that the lack of orientation of new members was a significant factor in the sustainability of the progressive model that was originally implemented by the founder Deborah Meier.

> As Meier and her colleagues formed CPESS in its earliest years, they "re-cultured" the school, as described by Michael Fullan (1991). He sees that a re-culturing as a prerequisite of reforming schools and having that reformation sustain. Individually, the stakeholders must form new ways of thinking about both students and learning. Then, collectively, they need to shape those ideas into a set of community beliefs: What do we, as a community , believe about learning and students? This re-culturing then becomes the critical factor in leading all restructuring decisions (p.37).

Providing a well thought out, intentional orientation helps deprogram new members from their traditional mental models of teaching and learning and as Fullan (1991) noted, a form of re-culturing that is essential for all staff.

The other side of the bookend is the importance of providing a structured method for members to exit the organization. Structured exit interviews can provide members the opportunity to *debrief* their experience with the organization and to potentially provide valuable insight into organizational issues.

Themes. Many urban schools and their supporting structures have been struggling since the beginning of public schools to meet the mindset of the nation's democratic promise that *all girls and boys can improve themselves and rise in the world in accordance with their talents and effort.* The literature review found equity and the awareness of equity issues as a consistent challenge throughout the history of public education.

To establish public schools and meet the demands of a rapidly growing population, schools turned to a paradigm based on *Taylorism* and scientific management to create what is widely referred to as *Factory Schools*. The mental models, purpose and

structure of the *Factory Schools* are well established and historically resistant to change. Tucker and Codding (1998) provided a summary perspective:

> American educators are hungry for a way to make their schools work, but they find themselves trapped in a century-old system that routinely defeats and frustrates the most capable and caring of school people (p. 17).

The dominant challenge to *Factory Schools* has been a philosophy based on progressive education, with public support swinging like a pendulum from one to the other; with many advancements devolving back to traditional education based *Taylorism & Factory Schools.* These dynamics have continued and exist today as one of the major dynamic tensions in school reform.

Since the development of public schools members of the business community have published critical reviews of the school system as lacking good business tools and sensibility. The literature review found that the business community has had a strong and steady influence over education since the creation of public schools and with the development of well-funded foundations, is strongly influencing the future direction of public schools.

Lastly, the literature review documents the growing presence of organization development tools and processes in school development. The literature review found that the educational system has been actively looking for systems improvements since the conception of public schools. The limiting factor has been a steady stream of change initiatives and silver bullet strategies that are often implemented without a systems approach or enough resources to fully adopt the concepts. Schools utilizing organization development and critical theory have found increasing levels of success and merits further consideration as essential tools for school reform.

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter explains the methods used to carry out the case study, with special emphasis on a systems aspect of school reform.   This research is a positivistic case study that is single case, longitudinal and explanatory. The ontology is social constructionism, with an epistemology of post-positivism.   Essentially the researcher documented from an organization development perspective, the planning, implementation and sustainability of a new charter high school in an economically depressed urban community.

With a high demand for school reform and very little research available on the processes that makes a new school successful, the researcher synthesized his experiences with new school implementation and began the process of theory building utilizing the work of Dubin (1969). As the theory building process evolved, the researcher reviewed the elements with organization development practitioners working with schools throughout the United States; this was done to increase validity and reliability   The intent of the researcher was to build a theory that could be used to improve the processes and outcomes of any school or organization. The result of this effort was the creation of the Theory of Successful School Development: Process Essentials in School/ Organization Development. The researcher then utilized the work of Yin (2003) and the five components of research design to construct the framework of the case study. As the researcher implemented the study, the fourteen commonly occurring elements in organization development that were identified in the literature were monitored and analyzed to determine their role in the organization development of the system. How the fourteen elements interact is illustrated below.

Experiential Understanding → Transformational Process

New Member Orientation → Mission, Vision & Values ← Personalization ↔ Flow → Separation & Exit Interview

Collaborative Leadership & Instruction

Continuous Review & Improvement ↔ Dynamic Tensions

Change Management ↔ Tipping Point

Outcomes ↔ Sustainability
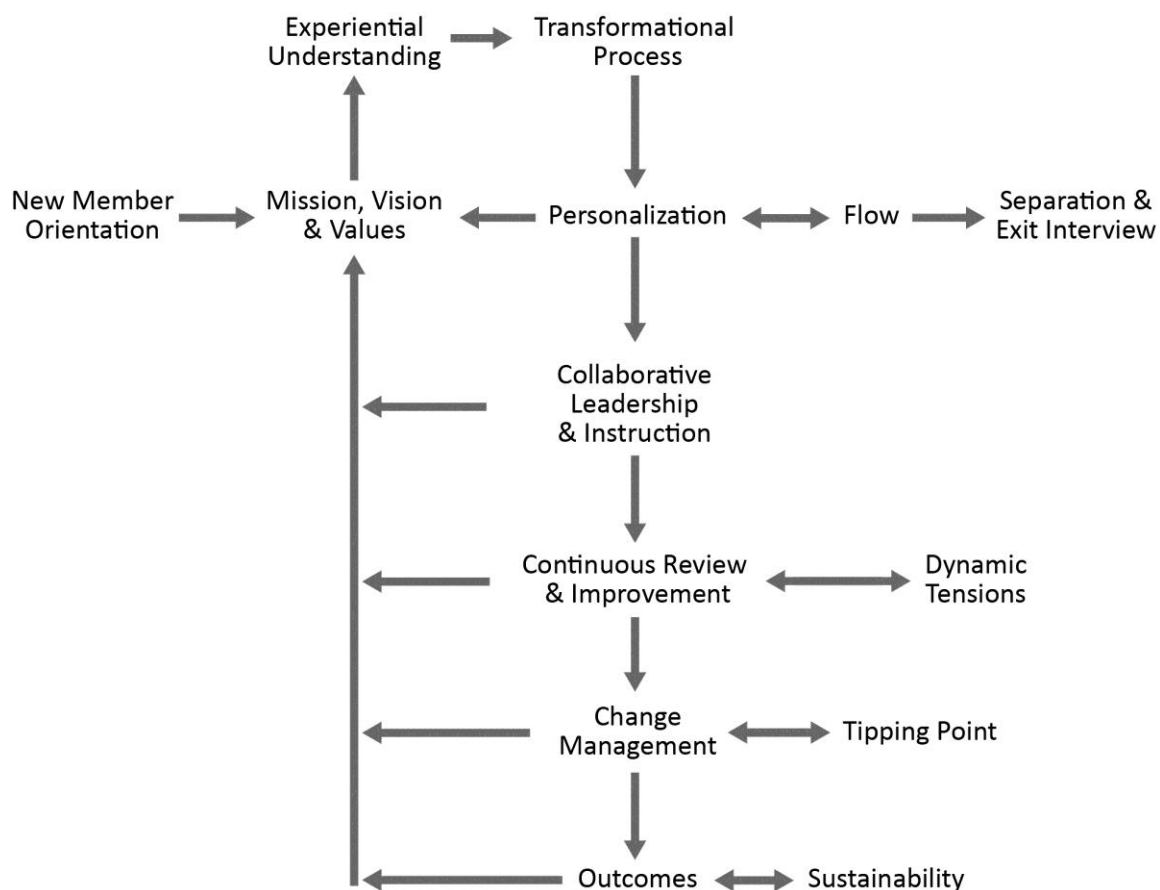
Figure 1: Theory of Successful School Development

It is the theory of the researcher that to implement a school reform model that is fundamentally different than existing school paradigms, an intentional sequence of elements based on organization development and critical theory needs to occur to shift the mental models and step outside the existing hegemony. Historically as schools seek to implement different paradigms of school reform, challenges have been documented in the literature that pulls the organization back to traditional paradigms. Utilizing the tools of organization development within the context of the *Theory of Successful School Development*, practitioners may be able to identify root causes to the challenges and suggest potential interventions that will increase the opportunity for sustained school reform.

The Research Site

The study took place in a charter school during its first three years of operation, concluding after the end of year three. The school district has a ten-year history of creating and sustaining elementary schools that have high parent and student satisfaction and academic outcomes that exceeded local and national benchmarks; this study documented the districts' first attempt at creating a new high school. To maintain anonymity, the school and the school district were referred to with fictitious names. The fictitious names were Brandon High School and Achievement School District. The study was conducted in a large urban city that is located within the United States. The study documented the challenges, opportunities and strategies implemented by a team of educators from the planning stage, implementation year one, year two and three.

The Research Participants

The researcher's intent was to take a systems approach to understanding the facilitating and restraining forces that occurred with the implementation of a new charter school in an urban setting. With a systems perspective the researcher was aware of the different individuals and organizations influencing the organizational dynamics of the development of the school; the primary focus was the actions and perspectives of the educators, students and administrators. A secondary focus will include the perspectives of the parents and support staff of the school. Interviews were conducted with nine staff and six students. The nine educational staff that were interviewed included teachers and administrators. To maintain anonymity all educational staff were combined into one category. Students and staff participated in an informational meeting conducted by the principal who explained the purpose of the research and that it was voluntary. The

researcher then answered any questions and provided sample releases. Students and staff

interested in participating in the research spoke to the researcher independently after the

meeting. The students and staff who were interviewed had to meet the criteria of

attending the school for two or more years. All the students and staff, who met the

criteria and voluntary expressed interest, were selected for the study.

Limitations

Two limitations were identified in this study. First, in a positivistic case study

that is single case, longitudinal and explanatory, the validity and reliability is based on a

specific group of educators and students over a specific period of time. A case study

involves a single site, and findings cannot be generalized to a different population.

Secondly, only five students out of a student population of 130 were interviewed. Four

students wanted to participate in the study but forgot their signed parental consent form at

home. These five students may not be a representative sample of the larger group.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

Several instruments and recording processes were used in the data collection.

First, the researcher utilized existing instruments required by the school district, these

included:

- a yearly satisfaction survey for parents, students, educators and administrators;
- formative assessments through North West Evaluation Assessments (NWEA) in math, reading and science ;
- standardized state testing scores;
- Hope Survey; taken once a year that is designed to measure students sense of hope and overall engagement;
- EdVisions school wide assessment; completed twice a year to determine the degree of implementation of the EdVisions school reform model.

Secondly, the research utilized:
- document analysis;
- observations
- structured, open-ended interviews with staff, students and administrators;
- the fourteen organization development elements within the *Theory of Successful School Development* model.

Procedures Used

In carrying out the research design, several specific procedures were utilized. First permission was obtained by the school district and the high school to participate in the study. Permission was also obtained from EdVisions to be named in the study. Second, participants (educators and students) were asked to voluntarily participate with anonymity maintained throughout the study. Access to existing surveys, assessments, standardized tests and documents were obtained in a similar manner with anonymity.

Throughout the study the researcher conducted observations and engaged in document analysis. At the end of year three, the researcher conducted structured, open-ended interviews with the educational staff and students who voluntarily agreed to the interview. Questions were developed based on the essential research questions and documented developments. An interview protocol was developed and utilized based on the work of Yin (2003). A list of questions used in the interviews can be found in Appendix D. Open-ended responses were categorized and coded, responses that are based on a five-point Likert scale were tallied.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the following strategies:

- The annual satisfaction survey was analyzed based on each years response and utilized a five point Likert scale and open-ended responses. The open-ended responses were analyzed using content analysis.
- The formative assessments NWEA and standardized tests were analyzed using nationally normed comparison data in a pre-post-post format.

- Hope Survey data were analyzed by each year and the results were analyzed school wide, by category. The categories included: autonomy, belongingness, goal orientation, engagement and hope. Data from the research site was compared to other schools using a similar model to strengthen external validity.
- The EdVisions School Wide Assessment; was analyzed in a pre-post-post format. Investigator triangulation was obtained by bringing in another researcher familiar with the school reform model to verify the results of the EdVisions School Wide Assessment.
- The document and observation analysis was based on content and chronology.
- The researcher utilized school coaches throughout the United States who are currently working with the school reform model, to review documents and observations and verify results.
- The structured, open-ended interviews were analyzed using basic statistical analysis on responses based on the five point Likert scale and content analysis on the open-ended responses. Essential issues and themes were reviewed with participants to improve validity.

Summary of the Methodology

Tables 1-13. Provides a summary of the methodology and the model used in the study. Model = interventions + outcomes + empirical indicators. A summary of the elements of the EdVisions school reform model (design essentials) that were used in the case study can be found in Appendix A. The EdVisions school wide assessment rates the degree of implementation of each design essential. The EdVisions school wide assessment is conducted twice a year with input from each of the stakeholders.

Table 1

Essential Element #1: Mission and Vision Development

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
1.1 Mission and vision statement	Creation of mission & vision statement by a representative sample of the stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, administrative).	Document review Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions) Observations (only when relevant)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
1.2 Mission and vision statement allows for autonomy in the following areas. • Budget • Staffing • Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment • Governance and Policies • Teacher leadership • Democratic practices • Schedule	Likert scale 1-5 based on the degree of autonomy in each of the five areas: • Budget • Staffing • Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment • Governance and Policies • Schedule			

Table 2:

Essential Element #2 New Member Orientation and Separation

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
2.1 Implementation of an effective orientation and exit process	Self-assessment and peer assessment Frequency and quality of new member orientation into the community and exiting the community	Document analysis (Review of orientation outline) Observation Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential

Table 3

Essential Element #3: Experiential Understanding

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
3.1 To what degree are students and educators co-creating experiences and learning constructively? 3.2 What elements go into an experiential learning activity? 3.3 What is the understanding of the value and purpose of EL within the team?	Types of experiences Frequency Perceived quality	Document analysis Interviews, semi-structured Example: Describe an experiential learning activity you were involved in that you thought was meaningful.	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential

Table 4

Essential Element #4: Transformational Process

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
4.1 Level of self-reported hope	Changes in hope over each year based on self-assessment.	Hope survey Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
4.2 Level of self-reported engagement	Changes in engagement (behavioral and emotional) based on self-assessment.			

Table 5

Essential Element #5: Personalization, Personalized Learning

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
5.1 Implementation of Personal Learning Plans	Peer and self-assessment data using a co-created rubric for the personal learning plan & the percentage of students completing a plan.	Document analysis Hope survey Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	100% of students will be engaged in a personal learning plan
5.2 Personal autonomy	Self-assessment			
5.3 Goal orientation				

Table 6

Essential Element #6: Flow State

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
6.1 Complexity and skills	Self-assessment and peer assessment With each observation or personal reflection the frequency of each indicator will be recorded: Anxiety, arousal, flow, control, relaxation, boredom, apathy and worry	Observation Document analysis Interviews, semi-structured	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
6.2 How complex is the change initiative and/or interventions				
6.3 Do individuals and the group have the skills needed?				

Table 7

Essential Element #7: Collaborative Leadership & Instruction

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
7.1 Utilization of process consultation and dialogue.	Perception • Staff • Consultant	Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions) School-wide assessment, conducted twice a year Document review	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
7.2 Degree of implementation of the elements of the Small Schools Reform Model through democratic and distributive leadership	Perception • Staff • Consultant Degree of Implementation of the 29 design elements of the EdVisions model			

Table 8

Essential Element #8: Continuous Review & Improvement

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
8.1 Data-driven decision making	What is the frequency and effectiveness of: • Data in making decisions • Action research Self and peer assessments	Document review Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
8.2 Utilization of action research				

Table 9

Essential Element #9: Dynamic Tensions

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
9.1 Identification of dynamic tensions	Self and peer assessments Identification of dynamic tensions: • Topic elements • Situation • Process	Document review and observation Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
9.2 Ability to address dynamic tensions productively				

Table 10

Essential Element #10 Change Management (VISRAP)

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
10.1 Vision	Staff and leadership testimony	Document review Interviews semi-structured (with open-ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
10.2 Skills				
10.3 Incentive				
10.4 Resources				
10.5 Action Plan				

Table 11

Essential Element #11 Tipping Point

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
11.1 Belongingness	Self-assessment and self-reporting	Hope survey Satisfaction survey Interviews, semi-structured	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
11.2 Satisfaction				
11.3 Academic Press				

Table 12

Essential Element #12 Outcomes

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
12.1 Academic Growth	An annual increase of the % of students at or above the 50th percentile in reading and math	Comparison of local MAP (NWEA) percentile rank to national norm reference group. Document Analysis Observation Document Analysis Observation	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential
12.2 Attendance	Average daily student attendance goal of 90%	District end of year state report. Document Analysis Observation		
12.3 Satisfaction • Students • Parents • Faculty	Students: 80% safe & positive learning environment Parents 85% safe and secure learning environment, 80% high academic standards. Faculty: 75% satisfied	Yearly satisfaction survey administered by the school district. Document Analysis Observation		

Table 13:

Essential Element #13: Sustainability Factors

Unit of analysis	Empirical Indicators	Source of Data	Data Analysis	Criteria to support Model
13.3 Environment • Physical space adaptability • Access to multiple learning environments 13.2 Economic • Financial viability • Ability to obtain adequate resources 13.3 Social • Ability to address equity issues	Faculty assessment Student assessment School financial statement Leadership testimony	Observation Document analysis Interviews, semi-structured (with open ended questions)	Descriptive statistics Identification of statements that support and statements that refute each unit of analysis	Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale 90% of respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential

The researcher utilized the methodology in this section to develop a positivistic case study and document from an organization development perspective, the planning and implementation of a new charter school with a focus on processes and outcomes.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Overview

Chapter four presents the results of this study and is organized into three sections based on the four research questions stated in chapter one. Data from year one to the end of year three will be included in each section. The first section presents the data based on the research question: In what ways did the issues and process interrelate with the elements of the Successful School Development Theory? Section two will present the data on the remaining three research questions:

- What adaptations were made from the original EdVisions model and what was the rational?

- What was the experience like for faculty and students?

- What were the outcomes and how effective was the implementation of inner-directed, advisory centered, project-based school reform model?

Section three presents a systems summary of the results.

The sources of data include interviews with educators and students, observations, data from standardized assessments (both formative and summative), end of year surveys for students, parents and educators, document review, annual school wide assessment (based on the EdVisions model), team surveys and an annual measure of hope based on the Hope Survey.

Section One

Essential element one: Mission & Vision Development.

Units of Analysis:

    1.1 Mission and vision statement

    1.2 Mission and vision statement allows for autonomy in five areas: budget,

        staffing, curriculum/instruction and assessment, governance and policies,

        teacher leadership/democratic practices, and schedule.

Essential Questions:

    1. To what degree does the school have an agreed upon mission and vision

        utilized in their daily practice?

    2. Is the mission statement codified and made public?

    3. To what degree is the mission statement embraced by the entire learning

        community-both internal and external stakeholders?

Data results for Unit of Analysis 1.1. Mission and vision statement. Brandon

Street high school is part of a larger charter school district that has a network of

elementary/middle schools. Brandon Street high school is the first high school. The

charter district has a very clear vision that is embraced by all their schools. The vision is

to catalyze the transformation of public education so that all children have access to high

performing schools.

During the second year of the school (2009-2010) the staff worked with a

representative sample of students and parents to create a mission statement over two

meetings that were ninety minutes each. At the end of the two sessions the group

produced the following mission statement:

We are a caring, responsive, personalized learning community that provides meaningful opportunities for students to reach their full potential and positively impact the lives of others by building self-confidence and inspiring achievement through project based learning.

Comments made by participants immediately after creating the mission statement:

- Having students present in this process was the most important part.

- I think if we would have included the first Principal of Brandon Street we would of had more continuity to the process.

- I think it was very important that we met to discuss and establish a common mission statement, staff are divided on what is the pedagogical focus of the school.

- One of the most important experiences we have had as a group is creating this mission statement, it was very affirming.

Table 14

Staff and Mission Statement

How important is it to have a mission statement that staff/students helped create and own?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (9)	5	9

Table 15

Students and Mission Statement

How important is it to have a mission statement that staff/students helped create and own?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)	16.7% (1)	66.7% (4)	4.50	6

Note. The students that provided a three and a four stated that they have never had any experience with this process.

Interview data. In your own words, what is the mission and vision of this school?

- To have a school where students could come and discover and have any door open to them, through real learning, and be relevant to their lives. A place where learning would occur and enable students to accomplish anything they wanted, not bound by others understanding of who they are, where they are from and their previous experience.

- To provide students with opportunities that they would not normally receive in a public school setting, that focuses on more real life experiences in a caring manner.

- To personalize the learning for kids that were not successful in other public high schools and to provide an environment that will motivate them, and prepare them for college or the world.

Document analysis. Several documents help establish the mental model of what Achieve School District was trying to establish as their mission and vision of their first high school. The first document is the language from a marketing flyer developed before the school opened, during the summer of 2008.

Building on the successful momentum of our first four charter schools, Achieve Schools is proud to announce the opening our first high school.

In August, 2008 the ribbon will be cut on the Brandon Street High School, a tuition-free, public charter school open to all student in this community. The Brandon Street High School is a new model for secondary education for our city. As part of the EdVisions Network, the school model is tailored for serious, self-motivated students that are committed to taking a positive, active role in their education. The EdVisions model is built on a successful and fundamentally different curriculum and community structure that includes more than 40 schools across the country all dedicated to optimizing student's learning experience while holding them to high academic and social standards.

The second document is used on the school's website as a framing of the school's mission and vision.

Achieve's Brandon Street High School is a new model of secondary education in (name of the city), tailored for serious, self-motivated students that are committed to taking a positive, active role in their education. The high school offers a small learning community averaging 50 students at each grade level, and full time, multi-age advisories. A focus on active student engagement through personal learning plans, project based learning and workforce development encourages growth and depth of a school community. Students are required to fulfill a number of graduation requirements that include 80 hours of community service, completing one dual enrollment or extended internship and writing an autobiography.

Data Results of Unit of Analysis 1.2. Mission and vision statement allows for

autonomy in five areas.

Table 16

Staff Mission and Budget Autonomy

In the creation and implementation of the mission, how important is having autonomy in budget?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	33.3% (3)	44.4% (4)	4.11	9
In practice	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (2)	2.75	8

Note. One staff member rated "Not very important" and another "Somewhat important" because they were so overwhelmed with teaching and behaviors that they wanted to be able to give input and have someone else to make the final decisions. The average rating for Budget/actual was 2.75 with a complete range of responses. Staff with low ratings felt that in practice much of the budget was being directed by the tacit rules of the Achieve Charter District, the higher ratings indicated the opposite feeling, one of autonomy and voice in budget decisions.

Table 17

Staff Mission and Staffing Autonomy

In the creation and implementation of the mission, how important is having autonomy in staffing?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	44.4% (4)	33.3% (3)	4.11	9
In practice	25.0% (2)	12.5% (1)	25.0% (2)	25.0% (2)	12.5% (1)	2.88	8

Note. Comments from staff: having the right people on the team is essential to our success. The reason for the difference between intention and in practice, during the first year it felt like we had allot of input on staffing, this input change somewhat during the second year and significantly year three to the point of minimal input. Recruiting and retaining high quality staff is our biggest challenge.

Table 18

Staff Autonomy in Curriculum and Instruction

In the creation and implementation of the mission, how important is having autonomy in curriculum and instruction?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)	4.67	9
In Practice	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	37.5% (3)	50.0% (4)	12.5% (1)	3.75	8

Note. Comments from staff: In general I think we have autonomy in most areas of curriculum and instruction. During year three most of this autonomy was lost and we moved into a top-down direction that did not utilize the expertise of the team.

Table 19

Staff Autonomy in Governance and Policies

In the creation and implementation of the mission, how important is having autonomy in governance and policies?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)	4.56	9
In practice	0.0% (0)	14.3% (1)	71.4% (5)	14.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	3	7

Note. Comments from staff: In some areas we have autonomy in governance and polices and in other areas the district comes in and makes the decision or changes what we have done as a team.

Table 20

Staff Mission and Autonomy in Scheduling

In the creation and implementation of the mission, how important is having autonomy in scheduling?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	55.6% (5)	4.22	9
In Practice	0.0% (0)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	57.1% (4)	0.0% (0)	3.43	7

Note. Comments from Staff: Every year we work on a schedule and based on our perception of autonomy created a schedule that we think will be effective and motivating for students, in years two and three these schedules were changed right before the school start without consulting the team.

Data Summary for Essential Process One: Mission and Vision Statement. As the staff for year one were hired and oriented they embraced the vision of Achieve School District. With the opening of the school it was clear from the start that the students that arrived did not match the description of the students within the marketing materials. Over time the staff at Brandon High School had to develop extensive strategies to work with their students

Brandon High School had developed an agreed upon mission and vision, the challenge was that over time new staff were hired that were not oriented to or committed to the school's mission statement. Staff were hired that had no or limited interest in or belief in the established pedagogy of the school. Overtime disagreement on the mission and vision of the school grew into two distinct camps; one group believed strongly in the advisory/ project-based model and the second group believed in traditional education.

The mission statement became codified internally but it is unclear if the district ever embraced the mission. In the finalization meeting district administrative staff could

not attend and hence, their voice was not in the final writing of the mission statement. Brandon High School's mission statement became fragmented because it was not made public, no mention of the mission statement was found on any official Achieve documents or website.

As new staff were recruited and hired for Brandon High School very few were oriented to the mission statement and only a select few had an understanding of Achieve's larger mission. Interviews with staff found that with most new hires in year two and three the primarily focused was on academic skills and teaching ability. The result of this practice was a growing cadre of staff that had limited ownership and accountability to the mission and vision of Brandon High School.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Mission & Vision Development as an essential process.

Essential element two: New Member Orientation and Member Separation.

Units of Analysis:

2.1 Implementation of an effective orientation and exit process.

Essential Question:

1. How effective is the orientation and member separation process for students, staff, parents, community members and substitute teachers?

Data Results for Unit of Analysis 2.1

Table 21

Staff and Orientation

How important is an effective orientation process to the successful implementation of your vision and mission?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	88.9% (8)	4.89	9

- Essential to do it well and to include existing students in the process

- We do an orientation but an essential issue is that some of the staff do not follow-through with expectations. We can have the best orientation, but if people do not buy into the mission, even a well-done orientation will not work.

- We need to go beyond PowerPoint and the basic routine to include a deeper understanding.

- Absolutely critical, I am not aware of an exit process.

- I think it is very important, in the first year our orientation was well done. Last year we had two weeks of orientation. Student orientation is still evolving; we need to get parents and students all onboard, reading and practicing what is in the handbook.

- It would be great to have an orientation that includes engaging with students and the school prior the start of the school year or before they begin. Have people interested in employment have an experience with an actual class. We need to make sure they understand the mission and are

willing to be an agent of change. It is important that we filter out people who don't really want to do it; these folks take too much energy.

Table 22

Students New Member Orientation

How important is an effective orientation process to the successful implementation of your vision and mission?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)	83.3% (5)	4.83	6

- Most new students come for a brief visit and one student takes them around and explains the program, really depends on the student giving the tour.
- Some students did not know what this school was about, they thought it was an alternative school, thinking they did not have to do work, others can't handle it and they start to act out. I think a number of students were blind-sighted by what this school is about.
- I came to visit and that worked for me; I like the methods of this school. One challenge is that this school changes allot.

Interview data, staff: How are new members (students and staff) oriented to the vision & mission and the community as a whole?

- Inconsistent
- Last year we spent a week going over the vision of the school and expectations, the new staff came first and in hindsight this was problematic because we did not do it as a team with a unified message.

- I liked how we did orientation the first year, it seemed much more effective to talk with both students and staff about the mission and vision of the school, that way we were sure we had a mutual understanding.

- We have a cart before the horse, we need to determine who we are and then create an effective orientation.

- Orientation for staff seems almost non-existent. People who currently do the orientation do not really know what we do. I can think of three people who were involved in the orientation (for year three) and each of them has a fundamentally different perspective on what we do.

- I shadowed an experienced advisor for a week

- We do a poor job of the orientation for both students and staff

- Generally we do several weeks of orientation for staff and for new students they do an orientation for a day before school

What would be an ideal process?

- I think if we include authentic experiences that are connect with the mission and vision people would have a much better understanding. We had a very successful orientation Fall 2010, yet it did not seem to work, I am not sure why not.

- Beginning of the year is good but we need to continue once every few weeks to talk about how it is going and follow-up on what we started in the orientation. We need extended dialogue to reach a common understanding.

- We need to make sure we embed into our orientation an understanding of where our students are coming from, ideally we consider that students

coming from an existing Achieve school have adopted routines and practices that we need to be aware of as we transition them into this new model. The same is true for students coming from other schools. We need to better understand that the transition we are asking students and staff to make is quite large and we need to invest more time into this process.

- Identify model, commit to the model then orient. I think we need to develop a dedicated orientation process and people who focus on making sure it is done well.

- Ideally we would introduce new students and staff at the end of the school year, people would see it, and become involved in doing the work, they would have an experience with the model.

Summary for Essential Element Two: New Member Orientation and Member Separation. Brandon High School started in year one with a very focused orientation process for both students and staff. Staff were carefully recruited and well oriented to the EdVisions model with five weeks of planning time dedicated to this process. Students experienced a very different process. In the beginning students and parents were interviewed individually to make sure they understood the mission, vision and unique project-based pedagogy of the school. The process proved time consuming and to meet deadlines and quotas the interview/orientation process was bypassed and a streamlined approach was implemented. The result of this process is that the new students that were interviewed were well prepared to engage in the advisory-led, project-based model, those that were not interviewed and oriented had a very difficult time making the switch from a traditional school to the EdVisions model. Staff documented that a significant number of

students/parents were leaving their prior schools because they were unsuccessful academically and behaviorally, that many were not aware of the unique pedagogy and expectations of Brandon High School.

In year two and three orientation for students changed with an orientation at the start of each school year that significantly improved the start of each school year. Brandon High School accepts students throughout the school year and the orientation process for these students coming mid-year and later was inconsistent, most often occurred after the student was enrolled and did not ensure a good fit between the student's learning style and the pedagogy of the school.

No defined process was identified for members (students or staff) exiting the organization other than the formal administrative paperwork. Exit interviews did occur but did not follow any established protocol and no evidence was found that data was collected and utilized for continuous improvement.

Results and criteria to support the theory. Collective responses from both students and staff indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported new member orientation and member separation as an essential process.

Essential element three: Experiential Understanding.

Units of Analysis:

> 3.1 What is the understanding of the value and purpose of experiential learning within the team?
>
> 3.2 To what degree are students and educators co-creating experiences and learning constructively?

3.3. What elements go into an experiential learning activity?

Essential Questions:

1.   To what degree are staff and students intentional with their use and

design of experiential learning?

2.   How rigorous are the learning experiences?

3.   To what degree are students involved in the planning, design, and

implementation?

Data results for Unit of Analysis 3.1. What is the understanding of the value and

purpose of experiential learning within the team?

Table 23

Staff Experiential Understanding

How important is experiential learning to achieving your vision & mission?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	88.9% (8)	4.89	9

Interview data, staff:

- Experiential learning helps us personalize learning and build self

confidence, learning how to deal with something new, take ownership of

their responsiveness, which encourages them to encourage others. These

experiences also become a conversation with parents and their peers.

- Hugely important, I went with students caving and it was a powerful

teambuilding experience, other experiences include bee keeping, kayaking,

gigi-pan photography and behind the scenes work at the Natural History Museum.

- I rated this a 4 instead of a 5 because there is a difference between what is written and the reality of our mission statement, I am not sure if Achieve District really wants us to fully engage in experiential learning, feels disconnected. More and more of our classes are becoming traditional rather than integrating learning experiences. I find that we don't know enough about how to create experiences to do it consistently in valuable ways. We have a few people who know how to do it, most of us can do it on occasion, and most cannot tie it back to the classroom in meaningful and consistent ways.

- I think that experiential learning is essential to achieving our mission and vision, what we did not realize is that it takes time and practice to realize this process is real and possible. What we did not have was enough time to build the relationships in the community and create the foundations that we needed. It also takes time to break through preconceived ideas of what schooling is, we are taking allot of well thought out theory and trying hard to apply it. Ideally what we need is more practice in designing experiences and perhaps testing them through " experiential scenarios" so we could better anticipate issues and opportunities. This would also include making sure we all on board with this methodology/ pedagogy rather than blindly going along with it because we were told to or because you just needed a job.

Table 24

Students Experiential Understanding

How important is experiential learning to achieving your vision & mission?							
	Not at all important	**Not very important**	**Somewhat important**	**Fairly important**	**Very Important**	**Rating Average**	**Response Count**
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	60.0% (3)	40.0% (2)	4.40	5

Interview data, students:

- Very important, keeps learning real, I learned allot through service learning.

- Without experiential learning we would be book smart rather than diverse and well rounded in working in the community. We could not work together, everyone is from different schools, and neighborhoods that are diverse and historically we did not get along.   Experiential learning helps go beyond basic teambuilding because we are actually doing something.

Interview data, staff: What is the value and purpose of experiential learning?

- Experiential learning helps us be exposed to experiences we may never have done, stretching us beyond our comfort zones. The process helps to get our hands dirty and develop curiosity that could grow into a life-long passion.

- I think it is really important, I think we can teach students things out of a book at school but until they get into the real world and have an actual experience that includes social experience and interacting with others, than they are not really learning as much as they could. During experiential

learning I have seen kids be completely different people. Sometimes if a

student has some behavior problems or social issues and you take them out

in the community and do something they are interested in, they are

wonderful. For many of our students they learn so much more being

engaged in the community than in a typical classroom setting.

- It is the most effective and meaningful way to learn about anything. The

  silo method is good for standardized tests but if you want to live within the

  world that is satisfying, you have to learn through experience. If the end

  goal is performance on a standardized test that is a narrow view. If we

  include agency, self-efficacy and having the skills to do these things,

  experiential learning is a good way to do this.

- I would like to see it become a growing part of what we do at our school.

  All the teachers saw students bouncing off the walls in the school and yet

  when taken into the community doing things, they become engaged, get

  along better and develop relationships.

- Incredibly valuable, one thing I learned this year was how to incorporate

  experiential learning within a seminar, embedding experience as part of the

  learning process. Immersing students in an experience prepares them to

  engage in deeper projects and higher order thinking.

- Highly valuable, the process can be misused or under-utilized if it becomes

  a simple field trip, we need to make sure each experience has a purpose.

  Presents a world that they do not know, and in the process they can find

interests that can lead to a career or hobbies. They can also find out things that they are not interested in which is important.

- My understanding of experiential learning has changed. I thought I understood inner-city kids and I realize that I do not. I really like that we get to design the activities. I don't believe we have ever had a problem with taking the students out into the community, not one problem with 150 students in three years.

Interview data, students: What is the value and purpose of experiential learning?

- I think it is important and I don't think we do it enough; we should be out there way more than we are. Many of the things we do on experiential days are fun; we can go beyond the fun things to include more volunteering options and other challenges.

- Experiential learning is really important, it gives kids a chance to try new things, to do things they never thought they could do. Many less fortunate people would like to actually do something with their lives; these experiences give students a big opportunity to experience something that they might want to do as a career.

- Being able to experience things other than high school and sitting in a classroom, going out into the community, being able to go into the city and learn about internships and get a glimpse of life beyond traditional high school.

- I want to be a nurse and we went out a place with mentally challenged people and I realized that you might say you want to do something but

when you do it and experience it you can make better decisions about what

you want to do or become.

These experiences make us more culturally diverse. Not everyone is able to take

a trip or go somewhere right out to the box, not everyone has that skill. The process

helps us work together as a school by learning to work with one another. Before these

experiences I would have never worked with these people, we may not be best friends but

now we can work together.

Data results for Unit of Analysis 3.2. To what degree are students and educators

co-creating experiences and learning constructively?

Table 25

Staff Experiential Understanding: Co-creating

To what degree are student and educators co-creating experiences and learning constructively?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)	4.78	9
In Practice	0.0% (0)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	28.6% (2)	0.0% (0)	3	7

Interview data, staff:

- In practice when it comes to planning for experiential learning many of the

  students do not come up with much because they do not know what is

  possible. As students gain more experience they have these aha moments

  that helps them realize what might be possible.

- In practice the staff that are into project-based learning are into co-creating

  experiences with their students, the challenge is not everyone is bought into

the process, it also hard because that is not a skill or a thought process everyone has.

- It is important to co-create experiences with students, first we need to be clear of the purpose of experiential learning and then commit to working together as a team.

- I would like to think the level of co-created experiences is high, I find that I am able to have a high level of co-creation with my students in seminars, I am learning interesting material right with my students.

- Allot of students give input along with the advisors, on the most part it is co-created. The Day of Remembrance was a powerful, co-created experience centered on the grieving process.

- I am actively involved in helping plan the experiential learning events and I would like to see it a five, over the last two years this has been reduced to about a three, with that said we always have student choice in selecting experiences.

- In this first phase staff are designing most of the experiences with some student voice. Once we have a graduating class and they have experienced some things, their eyes have not been opened to know what is possible. Once the culture gets built students will know better what is possible.

Table 26

Students Experiential Understanding: Co-creating

To what degree are student and educators co-creating experiences and learning constructively?							
	Not at all important	**Not very important**	**Somewhat important**	**Fairly important**	**Very Important**	**Rating Average**	**Response Count**
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (1)	80.0% (4)	4.80	5

Interview data, students:

- I think it could be way better, we were much better at co-creating
  experiences and having choice in the first and second year, by the third
  year we had much less input and were often assigned to our classes.

- It gives the students a chance to think about what they want to do instead of
  the teachers telling them how to think and feel. When I joined the bee
  project I did not know anything about bees, I overcame my fear and
  learned allot about them.

- Some events are teacher created and students create others, I see great
  potential for us in this process. We successfully created our first prom, a
  student created a process for doing a Project Fair, we practiced it in our
  advisory and then did it as a whole school.

   Data results for Unit of Analysis 3.3. What elements go into an experiential
learning activity? Based on the work of Rippe (2004), eight traits are common in
designing experiential learning experiences. These traits include: Commitment to
process, reflection and evaluation, integration of subjects, isomorphic (connects with the
lives of the participants), authentic, student driven/empowerment, physical and emotional

safety, preparation/organization. Brandon High School was conscious of each of these elements and when time allowed, designed their experiences to include these elements.

The two weakest areas within the eight traits were integration (this would include different subject areas and state standards) and a more purposeful use of reflection and evaluation. The teams understanding of how to design an experiential learning experience increased each of the three years.

Types of experiences and frequency. Team building: utilized randomly mostly in advisories and in some seminars, year two held a school-wide teambuilding event. Most staff and students found these experiences useful and under-utilized. The picture below is a group of staff learning a new team-building activity to do with their students.

Figure 3: Staff at Brandon High School learning a new team building activity. Staff were encourage to learn and share team-building activities as part of their on-going meetings and staff development.

An example of an advanced experiential learning experience would be the development of an urban bee-keeping seminar. Students in the seminar developed and sustained a colony of bees producing and selling high quality honey.

Figure 4.   Students from Brandon High School working with an urban bee colony they helped to establish and maintain. The students study all aspects of the bees and the honey production process as an interdisciplinary study. Each year students sell their honey with the proceeds supporting the cost of the project.

Brandon High School also engaged students twice a week in the creative arts and offered an on-going seminar in service learning. The local historical preservation group worked with a group of students and their social studies advisor to conduct research on the people and building in the community. Students took their field research and produced book that was published in year two and was recognized by the historical society and the community as valuable work.

Summary for essential process number three: Experiential Understanding. Both the students and the staff stated that they felt that experiential learning was an essential process to achieving their vision and mission, providing a rating of 4.89/5.00 for staff and 4.40/5.00 for students. In practice staff found that the ability to design an experience to match student needs and state standards varied greatly within the team.

Two staff found the process of integrating learning experiences to be a natural and synergizing experience, the rest of the staff struggled with the concept and needed significant investment in both time and coaching to learn the process. The interviews and document review found that the Achieve district under-invested resources in the experiential process and overstated their skill in creating meaningful experiences for the population of students they serve. Staff as a whole indicated that through practice they were gaining the skills necessary to design intentional learning experiences. Staff also indicated that they feared that this vital process was occurring less often with each year rather than increasing.

In the area of rigor, staff indicated that they found that the learning experiences continued to improve over time. Experiential learning became a routine for several seminars, engaging students in experiences before engaging them in the academic process were found to be very productive and engaging for both students and staff. The limiting factor was the low degree of staff retention that required new staff to learn the process of designing meaningful learning experiences. The second limiting factor was the influence of low-test scores that triggered a top-down approach to lesson planning that focused on basic skills and made experiential learning the exception rather than a primary intervention. This approach proved counter productive, reducing engagement in both students and staff and it did not improve test scores. By year three the mental model within the internal coaching was focused on traditional approaches which dominated the planning time, created stress within the staffing team and attenuated the success staff were experiencing in creating rigorous learning experiences.

Brandon High School was successful in co-creating learning experiences. Both students and staff recognized the importance of experiential learning in building self-confidence, learning to work together as a community, a method to gain knowledge and awareness and to understand the process of project-based learning. All of the students and most of the staff interviewed valued the opportunity to co-create learning experiences.

The unanticipated resources needed in transportation, financing and planning time, limited the success in co-creating experiences. It will take several years for Brandon High School to develop cost effective and efficient learning resources.   It is important to note that staff also realized the importance in developing community partners and identifying place-based learning opportunities. An example of leveraging community partners is in year two select Brandon High School staff participated in an Immersion Experience, which was an advanced experiential learning activity where individuals spent time in another project-based school working with students and staff. In the photo below staff are interviewing students about a high mileage car they are building as a project.

Figure 5. Select staff from Brandon High School visiting a high performing EdVisions project-based school. Staff were able to spend time working with students to experience basic and advanced interdisciplinary projects.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Experiential Understanding as an essential process.

Essential element four: Transformational Process.

Units of Analysis:

11. 4.1. Level of self reported Hope (whole school).

12. 4.2. Level of self-reported Engagement (whole school).

Essential Questions:

1. What is the role of critical theory and reflection in personal and community growth?

2. How are mental models/beliefs clarified, tested, challenged and expanded upon?

3. How is personal growth monitored, evaluated, validated and celebrated?

4. How do members encourage significant personal growth?

Data Results for Unit of Analysis 4.1. Level of self-reported Hope (whole

school).

Table *27:*

Level of self-reported Hope.
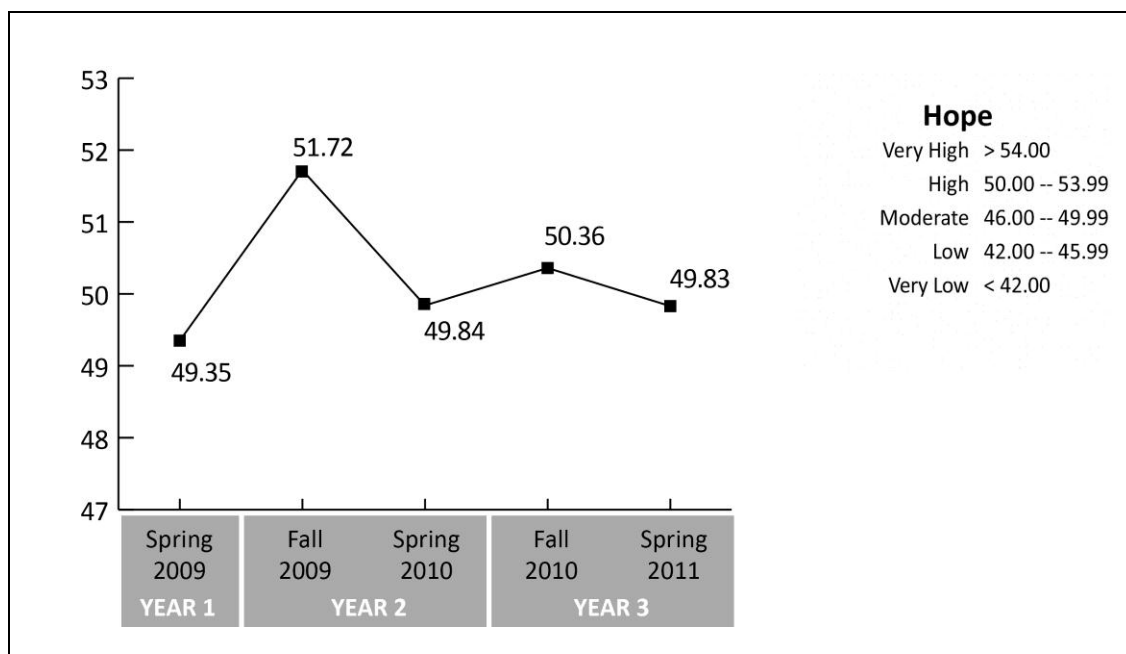
Note. Longitudinal data on the Hope Survey often finds students entering a small school like Brandon High School having low hope scores when they first arrive, this is what the data found in year one with the lowest score of 49.35. In year two hope takes a significant jump to the three year high of 51.72. As Brandon High School unplugs the design elements of the EdVisions model in the end of year two and in year three, we see the hope score drop to a moderate score of 49.83.

Table 28

Level of self-reported Engagement (behavioral and emotional)
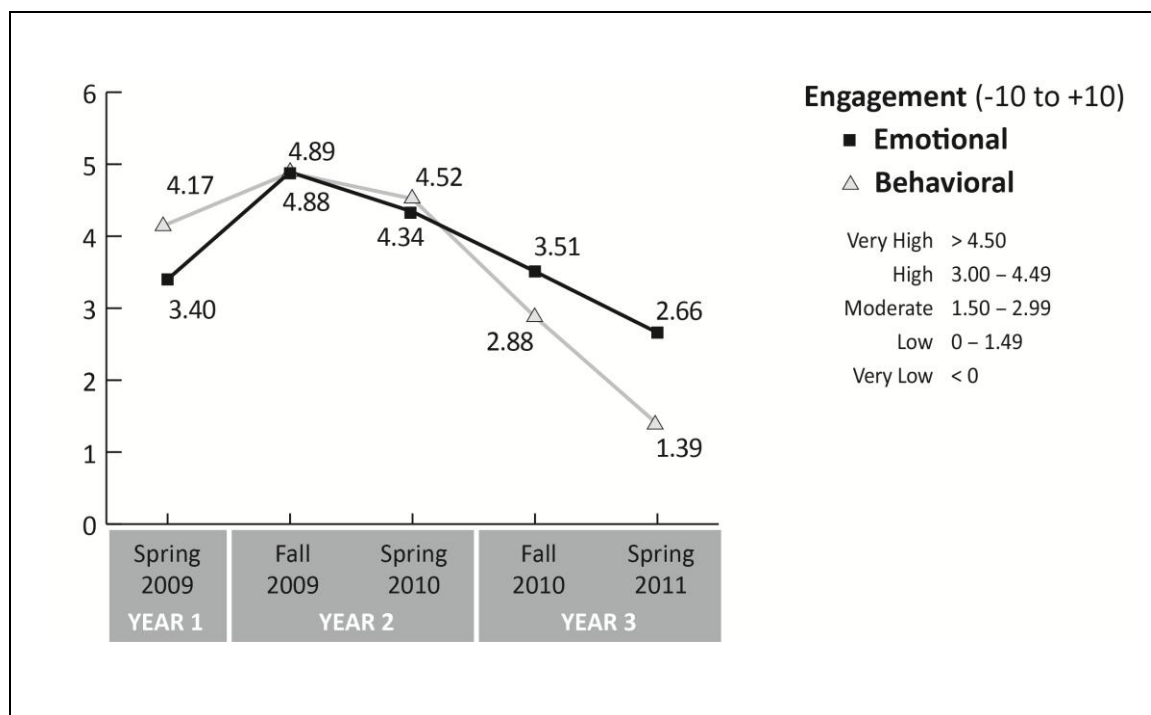
Note. Engagement in this context refers to the students' behavior and attitudes of Brandon High School. In year one students had a high degree of emotional and behavioral engagement. In the fall of 2009 the student degree of engagement had grown to a very high rating. The interventions that Brandon High School was implementing caused a significant loss of both behavioral and emotional engagement. At the end of year three students had a moderate level of emotional engagement and a low level of behavioral engagement.

Interview data, students: Have you observed and can you describe significant changes in yourself or transformation in other students?

- I changed quite a bit, I developed more discipline, I stopped getting in trouble in class and I started being more responsible and more sociable with people. I realized that people here really want to help; at my old school I didn't think my teachers really cared. I now get along with others and I am doing well in sports, that's a pretty big change.

- I have always cared about my schoolwork but when I started I was too goofy and unfocused and now I have matured into someone who can handle things on my own.

- At first I was bad, I came out of (local high school) and that was a loud and crazy school. Because of the help I got here I learned how to teach myself, how to do research and I am actually working so I can learn.

- I don't fail my classes anymore and my grammar is better. I know what I want to do as a career. Some of the students became lazier because they took advantage of the system and produced the bare minimum.

- I saw transformation in both myself and the other students. We have experienced allot changes over the last three years, one consistent thing is that teachers treat us like college students, giving us the benefit of the doubt unless we show them we are not ready and then we loose privileges.

- I am graduating and I received a scholarship to a local university, I really got a lot out of my experience at Brandon High School. I think the best year was the first year when we were committed to projects and advisory time, now it is different and I hope other kids who want that type of school can have the same opportunity.

Interview data, staff: Have you observed and can you describe significant changes or transformation in students?

- I definitely saw a significant change with students reinventing themselves, developing a future focus is one example. Many of these kids were coming from poor performing schools where people did not really care if they

learned or not, when they first came they mimicked these behaviors, huge transformation.

- I have seen significant transformation in students. One student is in Special Education and he has been removed from mainstream his whole life (self contained-resources room), here it is full inclusion, I have seen him grow so much, his focus got better, his independence got better and I could just see that the project based process helped him because he was able to choose what he was interested in. Advisory model has helped especially with social issues, I had this girl in my advisory last year and she did not talk at all for months, would not talk with other kids, I saw here at Prom and she was dancing and talking with her friends. The advisory models help the students get closer and have a better relationship with each other.

- I have absolutely seen transformation in students. I have seen many students that started with their hood up, disaffected, with a negative school attitude and after a while they realize that they have the capacity to take charge of their learning.

- I will give you an example, I had a tenth grader who would come in high, lay on the ground, watch videos and work against everything. Now he is part of the bee project and he has found an identity, he does his schoolwork and his work ethic has changed. He was behind at the end of the school year so I gave him a ton of work over the summer and he did it. Most

schools he would just get passed along, I also thing the Personal Learning

Plan has helped allot in this process.

- I have seen student make big leaps in maturity and smaller leaps in writing

    ability. I have also seen some kids take a step backwards.

- I have definitely seen positive changes in most students. Several students

    are completely different, when they first came they were in constant fights,

    now they avoid fighting, have less conflict and they focus on their studies.

- I have seen very aggressive students mature into having friends and

    become productive, this is a significant transformation. Many students had

    difficulty in their previous school; the advisory and the environment had a

    very positive effect.

- Yes, two girls that are now seniors started as sophomores that were

    disengaged and non-academic, now they are very serious about becoming

    professionals. I think it is difficult for new teachers to see this

    transformation because it does not happen right away or even in one year.

Data Summary for essential process number four: Transformation. Reviewing

the essential questions for transformation, the first question centers on the role of critical

theory and reflection in personal and community growth. Brandon High School

intentionally organizes between 15-18 students in groups that are called advisories. The

primary role of an advisory is to provide a platform to engage students in the discourse

theory of democracy as described by the work of Habermas. This foundation of

democracy encourages the advisory to engage in dialogue, with everyone contributing in

a non-coercive environment. These discussions help bring different perspectives on a

wide range of topics that are relevant to both the students and staff. It is through the structure of advisories and the process of dialogue that individuals are challenged in their mental models and when appropriate expand their thinking to include new positions or outcomes. When each advisory is being formed the advisory co-creates community agreements that often include being open to outcome as a foundational element. During year one and at the start of year two a significant amount of time was dedicated for advisories, during the second half of year two and three, advisory time was reduced to allow for more academic time. The shifting of priorities away from advisory time may have contributed to an overall reduction in engagement and hope. The photo below is one example of how a small group of students engage in dialogue utilizing a circle structure.

Figure 6. Students and staff at Brandon High School utilize advisories where small groups of students work together to support each other. A common practice is to utilize a circle structure to promote dialogue and equity of voice.

The photo below is an example of how the school comes together as a whole to discuss community issues in a democratic learning community utilizing the same circle process as in their advisories.

Figure 7. Students, staff and community members in a whole school community meeting at Brandon High School discussing current issues, community meetings were often held monthly and as needed.

The second essential question asks how mental models/ beliefs are clarified, tested, challenged and expanded upon. The advisory has a central role in publically stating ones assumptions; this process is personalized by encouraging each student to develop a personal learning plan or PLP. The PLP is both a reflective tool and a method to engage students in setting goals that include challenges that take them out of their current mental models/assumptions. This personal growth is monitored, validated and celebrated through bi-weekly meetings with an Advisor and publicly presenting their PLP through a student-led conference at least twice a year. The advisory and the PLP serve as the foundation for developing and testing mental models. Brandon High School also

utilizes small group seminars to engage students in critical thinking. The photo below

captures a discussion around the role of advertising in shaping our thinking and buying

habits.

Figure 8. Seminar at Brandon High School engaging students in critical thinking and challenging students to create a rigorous project that demonstrates their thinking and application.

Both students and staff at Brandon High School are encouraged to experience

significant personal growth by engaging in performance assessments or demonstrating

publicly their thinking and learning. Ideally students and staff present their learning two

or three times a year through a Celebration of Learning or through what is called a

Project Fair. Staff and students report significant learning and personal growth as a result

of these events. During the second half of year two and during year three these events were reduced significantly with student led conferences being cancelled completely in year three. The photo below is an example of students presenting their ideas publicly at a Project Fair:

Figure 9. Students presenting at a Brandon High School Project Fair, an authentic assessment is an essential component of the project-based learning process.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Transformation as an essential process.

Essential element five: Personalization.

Units of Analysis:

     5.1 Implementation of personal learning plans

     5.2 Personal autonomy

     5.3 Goal orientation

Essential Questions:

1. To what degree are the personal learning plans owned by both students and staff?

2. How do students and staff take ownership of their learning and their need to develop specific skills?

3. What evidence is there that the learning culture at the school is personalized?

     Data results for Unit of Analysis 5.1. Implementation of personal learning plans.

Table 29

Staff Personal Learning Plan

How important is it that students become engaged in a personalized plan?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	88.9% (8)	4.89	9

Interview data, staff:

- The personal learning plan needs to be linked to a student led conference.

- During year three we were not given the time or made it a priority to do it, the result was reduced personalization; I think we should make it a priority.

- The personal learning plan has to be personalized, making sure it is tuned into each persons interests and it is kept meaningful.

- We barely touch it anymore, it is sad because it is essential, a key element

  to who we are as a school.

- Crucial, gives them direction

- They need ownership of it

- It is essential but we do not do it very well

Table 30

Students Personal Learning Plan

How important is it that students become engaged in a personalized plan?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	83.3% (5)	16.7% (1)	4.17	6

Interview data, students:

- Should be really important, thinking about it is the important thing, writing

  helps you keep it in your back of your mind.

- I think the personal learning plan is very important; I never did a student

  led conference over the three years.

Data results for Unit of Analysis 5.2 Personal autonomy.

Table 31

Autonomy
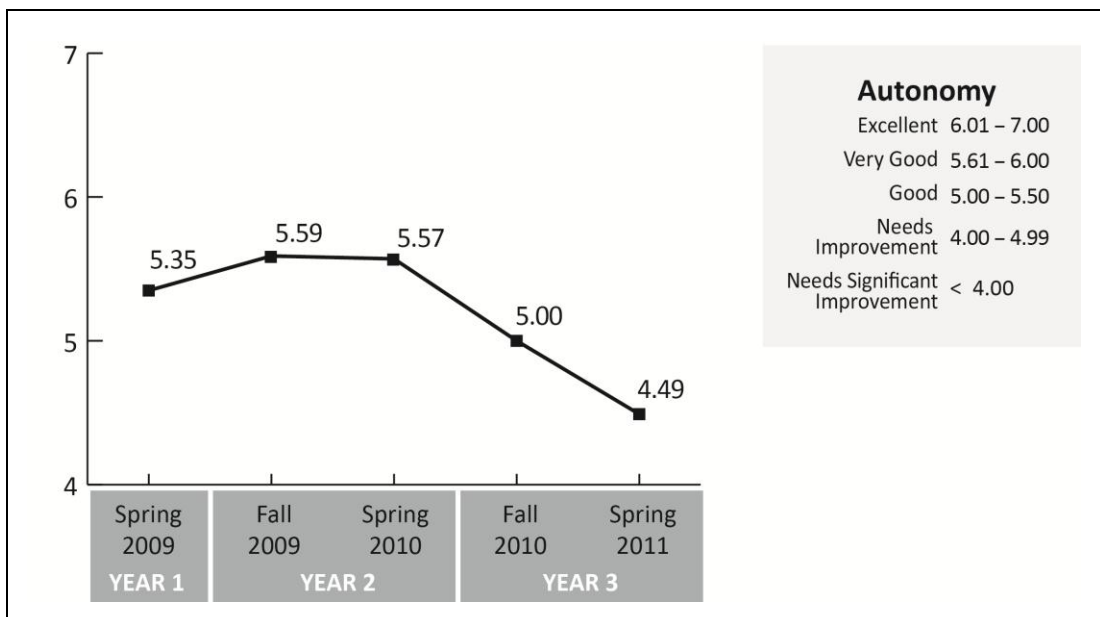
Note. Autonomy in the Hope Survey refers to the opportunity for self-management and choice. High autonomy is associated with student motivation and engagement, often leading to higher levels of achievement. In year one Autonomy was 5.35, which is rated as good, in year two Autonomy was at the three year high of 5.59, which is rated as very good. In year three as the design elements of the EdVisions model were attenuated and more control measures implemented, Autonomy dropped to the three year low of 4.49 with a rating of needs improvement.

Data results for Unit of Analysis 5.3 Goal orientation.

Table 32

Goal Orientation
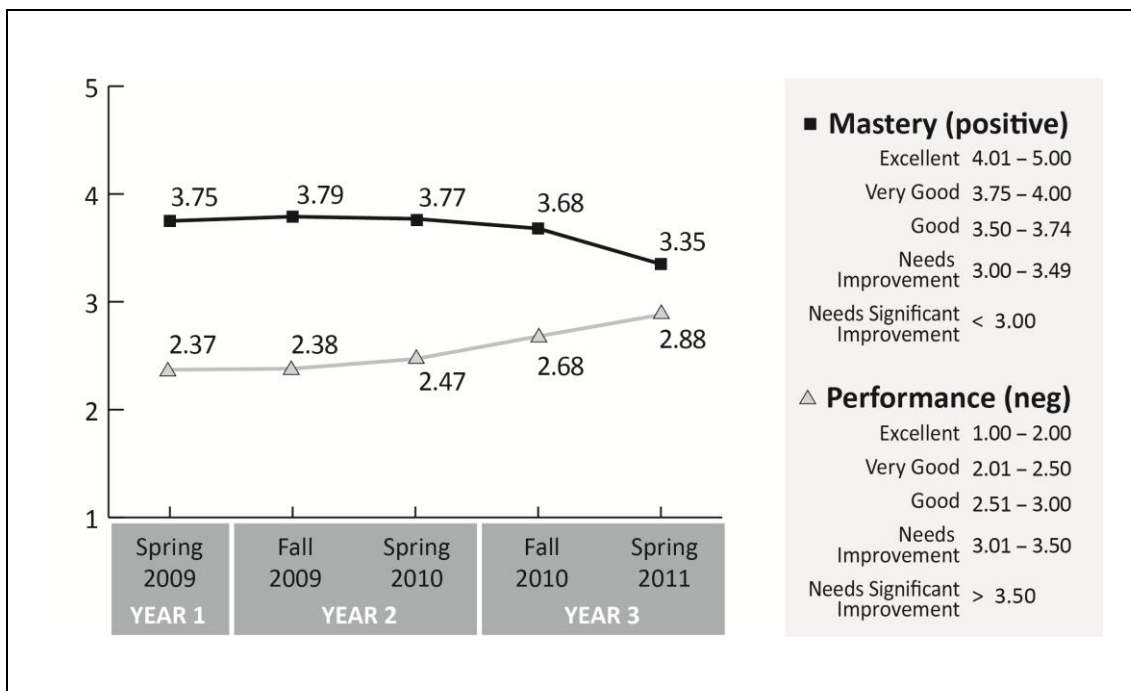
Note. Goal Orientation in the Hope Survey refers to a student's reason to achieve. Mastery in goal orientation is the desire to achieve for the purpose of obtaining knowledge and increasing skills. The Performance in goal orientation is the desire to succeed in comparison to others. Mastery in year one was 3.75 with a rating of very good, in year two the rating of very good continued with a fall rating of 3.79 and a spring rating of 3.77. In year three Mastery fell to 3.68 with a rating of good for the fall and in the spring the rating fell to needs improvement with a three year low of 3.35.

Data summary for essential element five: Personalization. Both the staff and the

students reported that they valued personalization and believed that the personal learning

plan was an essential element. It was clear in the interviews with staff that the team

struggled with the competing priorities that resulted in providing extended time on

remedial issues and test preparation. As Brandon High School moved to a more

aggressive test preparation/ remedial schedule in year three, Goal Orientation and Mastery dropped to a three-year low.

As staff were working hard to build skills in students, student motivation and engagement dropped to significantly low levels.

In theory staff and students are committed to a personal learning plan and the Student Led Conference where they present their plan to a select group of peers two or three times a year. Staff intended on doing a personal learning plan but indicated that they became so overwhelmed with work that this became one of the areas that they had to put on the back burner. With the reduction in advisory time students and staff had limited ability to meet and discuss goals and create a meaningful plan. For many Advisors the PLP became more of an assignment rather than a process and the fidelity of the work was compromised. To compound the challenge the Student Led Conferences in year three were cancelled and the accountability and satisfaction of presenting a PLP to a focus group was lost. In summary, staff and students valued the idea of a PLP but in practice found too many competing interest to engage in the process in a systematic and meaningful manner.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Personalization as an essential process.

Essential element six: Flow State.

Units of Analysis:

6.1. Complexity and skills

6.2 How complex is the change initiative and/or interventions?

6.3 Do individuals and the group have the skills needed?

Essential Question:

1. To what degree are students and staff currently challenged at appropriate

levels?

Data results for Unit of Analysis 6.1-6.2. Complexity and skills.

Table 33

Staff and Flow

How important is it that staff & students work towards flow?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)	4.78	9

Interview data, staff: Can you identify where you spend most of your time on the

flow diagram? How has this placement changed over time?

- I spend time in flow and just above flow, at times the issues are very

complex and I am personally motivated to figure it out.

- I think that I am higher than flow, I have too many complex issues that

send me way over the top, students huffing, nervous breakdowns and the

families in crisis are all elements that take me out of flow.

- I have brought my skills and understanding to a higher level and that has helped me work closer to flow.

- I am stressed and I work at developing my skills, the issues are very complex and this has not changed over-time.

- I don't know if I am making it complex or more complex than it needs to be, I am off the chart, my job stresses me out.

- I find that my job is very challenging and it makes me anxious, I think my skills are good but I this is very complex work.

- When we started we did not have allot of structure; this structure had everyone teaching reading, that was not one of my skills. Overtime I was able to adapt and work within flow.

- I find this work to be pretty intuitive; I am also experienced in working in special education so I am pretty close to working in flow.

- The complexity is high and my skill set was high so as a project manager I am able to maintain a healthy balance, especially by the end of the school year.

Interview data, students: Can you identify where you spend most of your time on this flow diagram? How has this placement changed over time?

- I most likely started in flow during year one, and then the constant change and movement away from self-directed learning challenged me. I am confused and disappointed that I was not given the opportunity to do more self-directed learning.

- When I started I was almost at a zero, I did very little and spent allot of time just lying on the floor. I left and went to another school; it was then I realized the opportunity I had at Brandon High School. When I came back the second time I realized this learning environment works for me and I started to work within flow and became very confident as a student.

- I experience low motivation and I am taken out of flow because of technology; I can't rely on taking a computer home to do my work and I am not allowed to use a jump-drive to store-transfer files, this takes me out of flow.

- I spent most of my time below the line of flow, low motivation

Data results for Unit of Analysis 6.3. Do individuals and the group have the skills needed?

- We have a number of new staff that lacked basic teaching skills and commitment, because this work is so complex they started making mistakes that created a cycle of stress and fear. This became a huge challenge for our team.

- It is not just about having hard skills it is about problem solving and figuring out how to work towards flow, students struggle with this also. I think the Special Education people could be a resource for skills.

- In year three several of our core teachers lacked essential teaching skills and some of our really competent staff were mined out for the other school and the central office; we did not have the skills we needed as a team.

- We have hired staff that do not have a high degree of skill in working with students in an Advisory or in project-based learning.

Data Summary for Essential Element Six: Flow State. Students and staff at Brandon High School are challenged in finding a balance between complexity and skill. The majority of staff consistently find the work complex and are challenged to develop the skills necessary to maintain a constant state of flow. A small group of staff work within flow and are successful in building the skills they need to be successful. The complexity that was documented does not seem to be rooted in the EdVisions model as much as meeting the remedial, behavioral and mental health needs of the student population. The challenge of recruiting and maintaining skilled staff is resulting in a team that is stressed.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Flow as an essential process.

Essential element seven: Collaborative Leadership & Instruction.

Units of Analysis:

  7.1. Degree of implementation of the elements of the EdVisions Small Schools

   Reform Model through democratic and distributive leadership.

  7.2. Utilization of Process Consultation and dialogue.

Essential Questions:

  1. To what degree are the adults collaborating effectively?

  2. What autonomies exist for collaboration and decision-making?

3. To what degree is the democratic process balanced by a strong sense of individual and collective accountability?

4. How is diversity of voice present in all problem-solving and decision-making processes?

Table 34

Staff and Collaboration

How important is the ability to work collaboratively as a team?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	88.9% (8)	4.89	9

Table 35

Staff and Distributive Leadership

How important is it to utilize distributive leadership to be successful with your vision and mission?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	22.2% (2)	77.8% (7)	4.78	9

Data Results for Unit of Analysis 7.1. Degree of implementation of the elements of the EdVisions Small Schools Reform Model.

Table 36:

Self-directed Project-based Learning: How do we facilitate the work of youth as self-directed producers and learners?

Self-directed Project-based Learning (PBL) Design Essentials #1-#8 Emerging 1-3, Sustaining 4-6, Exemplary 7-9	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
1. Self –directed project –based learning primary focus; driven by constructivist pedagogy	4	4	2
2. Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) for all student emphasizing student needs and interests	4	5	3
3. Personalized work space for each student; Internet access	5.5	5	3
4. Technology-infused environment; technology used as a tool	5	5.5	4
5. Individual/group projects complemented by multiple teaching and learning approaches	5	5	3
6. Achievement demonstrated publicly; highest work place standards are the goal	5	5.5	3
7. All students prepared for post-secondary education, workplace and active citizenship	4	6	5
8. All students and staff engage in quiet reading every day.	3	6	5

Note. Table 36 summarizes the degree of implementation of the elements that support the development of self-directed project based learning. In year one and two the ratings moved into the sustaining range with year one having some difficulty with quiet reading every day with a rating of three or emerging. In the 2010-2011 school year the ratings dropped in four areas to emerging and the school experienced reduced implementation in technology, quiet reading and being prepared for post-secondary education, workplace and active citizenship; even with these reductions levels remained in the sustaining range. The expected implementation trend would be a general increase in each area over time.

Table 37

Small Learning Community: How do we connect with young people in a democratic learning community?

Small Learning Community #9- #17 Emerging 1-3, Sustaining 4-6, Exemplary 7-9	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
9. Small learning communities of 150 students	5	5	5
10. Highly personalized setting; every student treated as an individual	5	5	3
11. Positive, caring relationships; respect and responsibility modeled and practiced	5	6	3
12. Multiage advisories in place; meet twice daily; advisors responsible for no more than 20 students	5	5	3
13. Mentoring available to all students	3	3	3
14. Restorative justice practiced	2	3	2
15. Parents and community at large actively engage with students to support learning	4	5	4.5
16. Students experience value of citizenship as they contribute to the greater community	5	6	5

Note. Table 37 summarizes the degree of implementation of the elements that support the development of the small learning community, with a focus on connecting young people in a democratic learning environment. In year one and two the school was able to reach a sustaining level in six areas, in the areas of mentoring and restorative justice the ratings remained in the emerging level. In the 2010-2011 school year five of the areas dropped with a total of five areas in the emerging level. Mentoring did not increase and restorative justice dropped to a three year low of two which is an emerging level. The expected implementation trend would be a general increase in each area over time.

Table 38

Authentic Assessment: How do we know we are achieving our intended results?

Authentic Assessment Emerging 1-3, Sustaining 4-6, Exemplary 7-9	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
1. Plan for how projects will be assessed by more than one adult, with opportunities for students to improve products to meet quality standards	4	5	3
2. Demonstrated achievement, with plan for public presentations including community involvement	4	5	3
3. Electronic standards tracking/reporting system and electronic student portfolios	4	5	1
4. Standardized testing; results inform Personalized Learning Plans and continuous improvement	4	5	4
5. Value-added measures including assessment of life skills and results from Hope Study enhance Personal Learning Plans and continuous improvement	4	5	2
6. Post-secondary plans for all students beginning at ninth grade	3	5	5
7. Graduation includes standards met as well as project credits, life skills gained, and a senior project	N/A	N/A	3

Note. Table 38 summarizes the degree of implementation of the elements that support the development of authentic assessment, these elements help inform the learning community that they are achieving their intended results. During the first year of implementation Brandon High School was able to reach a basic level of sustaining in all categories with the exception of post-secondary plans for all students, which was rated at emerging. In year two all the categories improved with post-secondary plans going up to a level five. In year three all the areas dropped to an emerging level with the expectation of post-secondary plans which remained at a level five and standardized testing results informing personal learning plans, which dropped one point but remained at sustaining. The expected implementation trend would be a general increase in each area over time.

Table 39

*Teacher-Ownership/Democratic Governance: How do we engage "Teachers as Owners"
of a democratic learning community?*

Teacher-Ownership/Democratic Governance Emerging 1-3, Sustaining 4-6, Exemplary 7-9	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
1. Autonomous school management with control over budget and staffing; individual responsibility and accountability for school finance and educational success	5	4	2
2. Teachers model ownership and demonstrate democratic leadership; inspire students, parents and community to take ownership and actively engage in decision making; incorporate consensus model	5	4	2
3. Teacher evaluations by peers, students, and parents; performance-based pay, at-will employment (if applicable)	2	2	2
4. Evaluations inform individual Professional Development Plans; focus on self and school improvement	3	3	3
5. Coaching/mentoring plan for incorporation of new members and continuous improvement	3	3	3

Note. Table 39 summarizes the degree of implementation of the elements that support the
development of teacher ownership and democratic governance. It is important to
document that Achieve School District from the start of planning phase did not intend to
reach exemplary levels in this category of the EdVisions model. Achieve was willing to
implement the basic levels and then assess the added value of this democratic leadership
paradigm. In year one and two the school was able to reach a sustaining level in two
areas, autonomous school management and in teachers modeling ownership and
demonstrating democratic leadership. In the areas of teacher evaluation by peers,
professional development plans and coaching/mentoring plan for new members the levels
remained at emerging. In the 2010-2011 school year two of ratings dropped resulting in
all areas of teacher ownership and democratic governance being rated within the
emerging level. The expected implementation trend would be a general increase to an
agreed upon level and then sustainability in each area over time.

Data Summary for Essential Element Seven: Collaborative Leadership and

Instruction. Since the start of Brandon High School the team has developed select times

when they were exemplar in their collaboration and teaming. Difficulties developed in

effective collaboration when new hires were not oriented to and invested in the mission

and vision. At first this issue was isolated to one or two individuals, over time this

number grew to a point where effective collaboration was reported to be very difficult. A common practice at Brandon High School is to meet in a circle to facilitate dialogue. The photo below is an example of a team meeting.

Figure 10. Brandon High School staff utilizing the circle process during staff meetings.

Brandon High School had a high degree of collaboration and decision-making as part of the vision of Achieve School District. In practice the actual autonomy was situational and at times, staff experienced strong outside control on select issues that were the influence of the overall culture of Achieve Schools.

In all three years the internal academic coach was different and in all three cases problematic. In each case the individuals hired showed strong initial skills but over time

they each developed role confusion and disrupted the collaborative and democratic process within the team. The role of these internal coaches was to support the students and staff by working collaboratively to improve academic rigor and engagement. In each case the internal coach switched from a process consultation/collaborative mode to an expert mode with a command and control paradigm. The result of this role confusion and coaching style was to disrupt the democratic and collaborative process and to create a disconnect between the mission and vision of Brandon High School and the actual practice.

A contributing factor in the disruption of the democratic and collaborative process was the lack of individual and collective accountability tools. Within the EdVisions design staff are to complete personal learning plans, which includes input from peers and to present the plan with updates several times a year. In year one this plan was in place but was eliminated each year as an internal leadership decision.

In year one and in most of year two staff indicated that problem solving and decision-making was often a team effort that honored the different voices within the team by utilizing dialogue and consensus. By year three a shift in decision-making occurred and for most staff they were unsure how decisions were being made and the rational behind the decisions. Staff expressed significant concern that the internal academic coach and the Achieve central office were making decisions without being vetted through the group. The result of this shift in decision-making put the staff in isolation and developed a culture of mistrust because there was no feedback loops for continuous improvement. In year three, twenty-one of the twenty-eight design essentials were reduced, with twenty of the design elements rated at the emerging level. One year earlier,

during the 2009-2010 school year twenty-two of the design elements were rated at sustaining. The data indicates a significant attenuation of the EdVisions design elements in year three.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Collaborative Leadership and Instruction as an essential process.

Essential element eight: Continuous Review & Improvement.

Units of Analysis:

8.1. Data driven decision-making

8.2. Utilization of action-research

Essential Questions:

1. How is continuous review and improvement envisioned and practiced?

2. To what degree is continuous review and improvement utilized system wide or is the process used only in specific areas?

3. How productive is the process currently in use?

Data Analysis for Unit of Analysis 8.1. Data driven decision-making.

Table 40

Staff and Continuous Improvement

How important is continuous improvement based in data and action-research?							
	Not at all important	**Not very important**	**Somewhat important**	**Fairly important**	**Very Important**	**Rating Average**	**Response Count**
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	44.4% (4)	55.6% (5)	4.56	9

Interview data, staff:

- Only reason I don't give it a five is that I think there are other qualitative ways to see students that are very important as well that we are not utilizing.

- Most of our continuous improvement efforts are focused on improving state test scores; I am not sure how important it is to do these state tests, the process seems more tied to business than real learning.

- I wonder how realistic it is to really do this well as a whole school, I do it in my focused area but we do not really do it as a school.

Describe how your team engages in continuous improvement?

- We use the student information system to look at test scores, attendance, behavior; we discuss the data in staff meetings and then work in groups or individually. It is part of our culture.

- We do this through dialogue, taking the time to discuss student's needs using formative data.

- I think we primarily utilize formative data to determine interventions

- The best time was when we were given printed out data, categorized for students; that was really helpful. The rest of the time we are told here is the link for the data go figure it out. I utilize the links and it takes ninety minutes just to pull the data out the way you want it, then you have to come up with strategies from scratch to deal with it. An added problem is that

many students did not take the test seriously. Until we get everyone to value it and students to value it, I don't know how purposeful it can be. I despised being given a link and having to figure out all the strategies, I don't have time. When the Director of Curriculum and Assessment sat down with us and helped with the data and strategies, I found that really helpful.

- Our weekly meetings we were doing action-research with the school as a whole and then with students.

- I see us developing plans for interventions, but we are not effective in implement. The issue is that we do not have enough training, experience and practice.

- We look at formative assessments and when I meet with students they are often surprised that I know how well they did on their tests, this personalization of data really helps with student engagement.

In your teacher preparation what was your exposure to action-research and utilizing data to make decisions?

- Zero, I had some exposure to using data in my graduate work

- I learned to use data while at a large inner-city public school. I also learned how to use data in an action research context in graduate school.

- Not in any regular classes, I was first exposed to using data during my student teaching; writing reflections, seeing how kids reacted and changes to lessons.

- I attended a University that really valued formative assessments; it was an important part of my program. We also studied the danger of overemphasizing standardized testing. In my masters program I did a large-scale action-research project.

- Not really. When I was student teaching I had my first exposure.

- None in action-research or continuous improvement, I did some work in using data

- No, I learned it as part of my business/manufacturing experience

- My training was focused on nuts & bolts I did not get any training on using data

Data Summary for Essential Element Eight: Continuous Review and

Improvement. Brandon High School and Achieve School District have a culture of data driven decision-making. These efforts are primarily focused on data and continuous improvement for state testing and the federally mandated No Child Left Behind (NCLB). All of the mature schools within the Achieve network have developed sophisticated data collecting tools that are embedded into an action-research/continuous improvement context. Administrators at the other Achieve schools indicate that these tools have taken years to develop and refine. Brandon High School is still developing these tools so they are both efficient and embedded in their daily practice. The limiting factor stated by most staff in the interviews is dedicated time and lack of support in preparing the data for practical use. A second limiting factor is that most staff have limited training in the use of data, action-research and continuous improvement; staff with some experience in this area received this experience in graduate school or as part of a certificate program.

The essential framework is in place for continuous improvement with solid formative and summative assessments given throughout each school year. Assessments in life skills or school graduation attributes were not found. The leadership of Brandon High School and Achieve School District both articulate a clear vision on where they want to go in this area, what is missing is the ownership of the staff, assistance in developing skills and increased support in making the process feasible.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Continuous Review and Improvement as an essential process.

Essential element nine: Dynamic Tensions.

Units of Analysis:

9.1. Ability to address dynamic tensions productively

9.2 Identification of dynamic tensions

Essential Questions:

1. How does the school address issues and challenges?

2. Is there a process to surface issues?

Data results for Unit of Analysis 9.1. Ability to address dynamic tensions productively.

Table 41

Staff and Dynamic Tensions

Rate the importance of your team being able to address dynamic tensions?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (3)	66.7% (6)	4.67	9

Interview data staff who responded less than a five:

- Sometimes it seems appropriate to address them and other times it seems right to just let it happen and have a blind eye because it is a good boundary.

- We have such limited time and if issues are not addressed fully they can become even bigger. Our skill at it is horrible.

- Critical to have a safe environment to be able to discuss dynamic tensions

What process(es) were used to deal with dynamic tensions?

- At times we ignoring them, we try to resolve them through discussion but we often stay safe about it and not all the voices are not being heard.

- In staff meetings we try to work it out, our principal has an open door policy, yet not everyone is willing to talk it out. We have tried to build a culture where staff are encouraged to talk and work things out.

- I think the Initial staff really got dialogue and we were committed to working through dynamic tensions. I think what we found was that the Achieve district staff did not have the time to really work directly with us on complex issues that developed. We no longer have a team committed to dialogue and solving issues openly, many issues are discussed privately.

- We do not deal with it, when we try it seems to get worse. Gossip and tensions are increasing.

- Sometimes best to let some issues die, sometimes leadership needs to step in because compromise can't always be reached.

- I see a number of staff stepping away from dynamic tensions, they let the clock run out in our staff meetings and then discuss the issues within sub-groups that serve as a sort of support group.

- I think we find it hard to be on the same page and so we find it hard to discuss issues openly.

Data results for Unit of Analysis 9.2. Identification of dynamic tensions.

Interview data, staff: All teams have dynamic tensions that exist as a result of implementing their vision/mission. Can you identify existing dynamic tensions?

- I think we had trouble following through on simple rules that were identified at the beginning like uniforms, behavior, and technology. I also know that we have a great set-up for K-8 and it works well and the expectation was that we would do the same with our high schools, yet the students and process was fundamentally different and somehow we were not able to put that on the table and discuss it with everyone. We needed significantly more resources to deal with the challenges our students brought with them to school, without these resources we stumbled and it felt like we became the black sheep. Helping our students become successful is a messy processes and it feels like the district did not want to embrace these dynamics.

- We have significant tensions between the internal coach and the team; we have trouble giving and receiving feedback; feels like a number of people are holding onto grudges because of disagreements; the central office is not working with us to discuss our building space and proposed changes; we

are divided on how much to use the project-based model and traditional approaches; staff want to be invested but are unclear if they will be invited back next year and that has created a stressful dynamic tension; we want to empower our students and yet we have laptops and materials missing so we end up limiting access.

- With special education we always seem to have dynamic tensions, some teachers are hesitant with modifications, a feeling that the student is getting out of something or avoiding consequences for behavior. Another significant tension is around discipline, people handle it differently, some want to sit down and talk with students and others will want to yell at the students and refer them for discipline. A major tension is around project-based learning vs. traditional teaching; some people are really into the traditional model and they do not understand project-based learning and the role of an advisory, other people really believe in the project/advisory process.

- I have been here from the start and I think a major dynamic tension is the difference between our vision and reality. Our vision did not match or continuously adapt to the reality of the student population that arrived or the skills of the teachers we were able to hire. We had a great interview process during year one for both staff and students that we abandoned for a more efficient, centralized processes, I think that started a dynamic tension of students and staff arriving to our school without fully understanding our vision and unique pedagogy.

- I see a tension of new students vs. students who have been here, new students bring with them behaviors they have learned in other schools and the students who have been here respond by saying it is different here, you have voice and choice in this school. I believe that our strength is in how we personalize the learning for students and I feel an emerging dynamic tension that is coming from the need to maximize performance on standardized tests, I think this goal will undermine our ability to truly personalize the learning for students.

- Traditional instruction vs. inquiry based instruction. I see project proposals on one wall and on another wall test scores. I have a hard time looking at one wall and saying we have to do test-driven strategies and then turning to another wall that is 100% student driven, this is a dynamic tension that is hard to look, it hurts my eyes. The internal coaching we are getting is a dynamic tension for many staff, does not feel like coaching as much as administrative supervision, hard for most to deal with it.

- Philosophy, will project-based learning work or should we be more traditional? Should we manage discipline as Advisors or should we refer students to administration?

- I have seen people that are uncomfortable with the Principal is the lead and the rest of us as equal, we have people who want to scratch their way to a position of second in command, this creates a dynamic tension because there is no role or place within a democratic team, hence these individuals

become ostracized and often counterproductive to working collaboratively
as a team.

Data Summary for Essential Element Nine: Dynamic Tensions. Brandon High
School has several on-going dynamic tensions they are struggling to resolve. The
common themes revolve around a need for clarity and agreement on the mission and
vision. Currently Brandon High School is a project-based school that engages students
through personalized learning that is supported by an Advisor while working within small
advisories. The challenge is that a growing number of staff have been hired that are not
aligned to the mission and vision. This lack of alignment is creating dynamic tensions
around the pedagogy, discipline, collaborative leadership and how scare resources are
allocated. A secondary source of dynamic tensions is the need to achieve on standardized
tests with a population of students that have significant remedial and behavioral issues.

Staff at Brandon High School utilize staff meetings and professional development
days to attempt to address dynamic tensions. At times an external coach assists the team
with facilitation to help create a safe and democratic environment. These interventions
have been productive in the moment but staff report that the as soon as the external coach
leaves the process stops and both the leadership and team members struggle in facilitating
further discussions and reaching resolution on most dynamic tensions.

The Superintendent of Achieve School District has consistently empowered the
team to resolve their issues internally and routinely offers assistance in a timely and open
manner. The interviews with staff indicated that one of the most productive processes to
deal with dynamic tensions is to meet with the Superintendent and discuss issues. This
process has resulted in a common understanding that staff can meet with the

Superintendent at anytime and discuss dynamic tensions in a safe and productive manner,
a similar environment and process does not currently exist within Brandon High School.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4
or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews
supported Dynamic Tensions as an essential process.

Essential element ten: Change Management

Units of Analysis:

> 10.1. Elements of change: Vision
>
> 10.2. Elements of change: Skills
>
> 10.3. Elements of change: Incentive
>
> 10.4. Elements of change: Resources
>
> 10.5. Elements of change: Action Plan

Essential Question:

1. To what degree does the school have an effective plan in each of the essential
   areas of change management?

2. To what degree are individuals and the organization as a whole committed to
   individual and organizational change?

3. Can restraining and facilitating forces be identified?

Table 42

Staff and the Elements of Change

How important are these elements (vision, skills, incentive, resources, and action plan) to collectively create change?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	88.9% (8)	4.89	9

Note. One staff member explained their rating: I gave it a four instead of a five because I think you need to take dissatisfaction into the formula, if you really buy into the work you will find the resources and develop the skills.

Interview data, staff: Within this change formula (Vision + Skills + Incentive + Resources + Action Plan = Change), which element is weakest when trying to achieve your vision & mission?

Weakest:

- The weakest element was resources, starting a school from the beginning we did not have the bigger resources, it is not so much about money it is about the people needed to create community connections, we also needed to adjust the staffing so we could deal with all the students social, behavioral and mental health needs. I think we overlooked this in the beginning.

- Skills are the weakest, we have too many staff that lack skills, and it is a developmental issue. We put allot of effort into building skills and yet for a number of staff they did not assimilate the knowledge, even with good coaching. It is as if these folks are frozen in their skill development.

- Action Plan is the weakest. It feels like we always have one but in the process something falls through or as a team we are not consistent. I guess it is about accountability and follow-through.

- Vision was the weakest. We put allot of time into creating a vision and it seemed that everyone was ready for change, when we went into doing it we were not really on the same page.

- Vision: we had a vision and feels like we don't have one anymore, we have all these things that contradict it, We have outside forces that do not fit our vision, people responding in ways that do not fit with the vision, when this happens our vision becomes hollow.

- Vision is the weakest. I feel like we do a very good job with action planning and developing resources.

- Vision connected to Action Plan. We are doing things but without a good focus, we work allot and are accomplishing things but it feels like we are on a treadmill.

- I think the weakest element is around skills and training.

What is the second weakest?

- Skills. Having the right people in the right position, being able to guide students in the right way, not being afraid of them. I see confusion with some staff not being able to respond effectively with students who swear at them everyday, perhaps it is just a lack of experience.

- Action Plan. It always seems like we are on a treadmill, so we are repetitive in continuing to work on issues we have already agreed to. I went to another Achieve school after we did our mission statement and saw how their team embraced their mission; they were not on a treadmill.

- Resources. When I think of resources I think of the little things like pencils and supplies for doing projects, we have enough human resources it is dedicating enough time to do the work. We need more resources like

community experts coming in and utilizing their knowledge and time to help mold their ideas into meaningful project work.

- Skills. I see allot of teachers coming from teacher training programs where most things are scripted, when they come here they look for the script but that is not what we are about. They are missing this fundamental skill/thinking, almost a foreign concept.

- Skills and then having the incentive to build skills, we have allot of fear here with some of our staff because they know that they do not have the right skills to implement the mission or the model.

- Incentive. I think everyone is skilled but not experienced. If you come to this school and you cannot motivate yourself from within, I do not know if you can survive here.

- Resources. Specifically money to take students on experiential learning events, resources for projects and basic supplies.

- Clear Vision and then action planning.

Data Summary for Essential Element 10: Change Management. Data from the staff interviews indicated that the perceived weakest element was mission and vision and the perceived second weakest, was skills. With mission and vision the issues were around a lack of commitment to the established mission and vision statement, contradictions in practice that were not in alignment with the established mission and difficulties around implementing and following through with action plans. Staff were clear that Brandon High School has significant issues with skills, both in hiring staff with adequate skills and in developing skills. It is noteworthy to point out that one staff member noted that the issues with skill development might be connected with individuals openness (or not) to learning the required skills.

The staff of Brandon High School and Achieve School District strive to develop effective plans for each of the essential areas of change; Vision, Skills, Incentive, Resources and Action Plan. The challenge is that each of these factors is in a new context for them as an organization and as a learning community. They are working with a new group of students that are far more challenging than the average student population. The recruitment of high quality staff to work in a new charter school without the traditional benefits of working within a union structure was an element that was not fully anticipated. Historically Achieve School District recruits outstanding teachers for their K-8 schools and their reputation in the elementary community plays a significant role in their ability to hire quality teachers, this reputation and benefit has yet to be established at Brandon High School. With all these factors in consideration, the commitment to solve these change elements is present and consistent throughout Achieve School District and Brandon High School.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Change Management as an essential process.

Essential element eleven: Tipping Point.

Units of Analysis:

11.1 Belongingness

11.2 Satisfaction

11.3 Academic Press

Essential Question:

1. Are tipping points targeted, collectively achieved and celebrated?

2. What are the facilitating and the restraining forces on the tipping points that have been identified?

Table 43

Staff and Significance of Tipping Point

How significant are "tipping points" in meeting your mission and vision?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (9)	5	9

Interview data, staff:

- I see a number of essential components and if we can see these tip, then we will see the mission and vision going forward.

- The notion of tipping point is a five, I see the leadership having to get it ready, load it.

- I feel like we have never experienced a tipping point we keep wobbling back and forth. I do not have an experiential understanding of what that experience would be like.

- My question with tipping point, we can regress in a day and then have to rebuild, I see it with our mission statement.

- You cannot achieve a tipping point or positive change unless you get enough like mined people working together.

Interview data, staff: What would it take for Brandon High School to reach a Tipping Point?

- A revolution, a culture shift, a belief, confidence that someone is going to take the reins.

- All staff on board, consistency, believing in the model, believing in kids, reiterating expectations, this does not happen overnight.

- Allot more communication and more education for whatever there is not buy-in for. We all need to sit down and discuss why it important and how it works, all sitting together.

- Some of the problem is staff turnover, you have new staff coming and they do not know why we do certain things and where we have been in the last three years. Consistent staff would help create a tipping point.

- It would take leadership but not authoritative, more of a servant leader, someone who would come in and guide the community to what we could become; some of the external forces would need to back off more and give

us autonomy. If we were a stand-alone school it would be easier to make it work.

- To really utilize personal learning plans and student led conferences and self-directed learning. I think we need to consider rolling matriculation, topic based seminars and embracing student choice. It feels like we have reached a tipping point where next year we are going to take the easier route to short-term gain and implement more power and control focused on test centered rigor rather than much larger long term benefits of personalized learning and student ownership.

- To reach a tipping point all the staff need to believe in the value of what we are doing, currently I don't think we all believe in the same thing.

- If we got buy in from everyone on our mission

- In some areas, mission statement, caring, personalized learning; we reached caring, we still need to work on being responsive, meaningful experiences for students still challenged, building self confidence-that is a tipping point we have not reached

- We have not reached a tipping point yet. New teachers spend so much time preparing content that they do not have much time to work on projects. We recognize that this school is not for every student, perhaps we should also say this school is not for every teacher, I think being clear about this would help reach a tipping point.

What other tipping points have you experienced (or not)?

- Experiential learning and specifically experiential learning days reached a tipping point. Now staff and students buy into the process and everyone loves it, they are part of every trimester, people really believe in it. A second tipping point is the understanding of advisory time, last year we had just one advisory/project time and this year advisory is really throughout the whole day.

- I have seen tipping points with student and parent buy in, with managing advisory circles, Silent Sustained Reading reached a tipping point and we now have school-wide reading.

- With staff turnover we have experienced a tipping point in our responsibility for social justice and the belief that all students have a chance, that all kids can do it, we need to buy into social justice, restorative justice.

- I don't think we have reached a tipping point in reaching the culture we want, part of that is because not everyone understands the amount of work that needs to done and commitment needed to achieve this tipping point, they just want it to happen.

- I think we had several tipping points, when we first started everyone bought into the model and we had a tipping point, then when we opened the doors and the students arrived and they were not a cross-section of urban students, these children had many significant issues, this created

another tipping point, we experienced another one with a new principal and external demands.

- We reached a tipping point with student buy in, this success is difficult to maintain with the way we bring new students into the school.

- I think we are at a tipping point between traditional skill, content-based instruction and experiential inquiry-based instruction. I observed a tipping point of students valuing the testing we do and then it tipped back again and the value collapsed after the testing was completed.

- We have not yet reached a tipping point with the mission, more of a teetering. After the experiential learning events and project fairs we would often experience a tipping point, then later it would wobble and then tip back again.

- We are close to a tipping point in parental participation, creating a personalized learning environment, owning our Community Principles and agreement on discipline.

- I see that our school has made huge gains, when we first opened we had students who were really challenged, now we have minimal fights. As the years go by our reputation has grown and we are establishing ourselves, as a place for academic minded, independent learners.

Data results for Unit of Analysis 11.1. Belongingness.

Table 43

Belongingness, Teacher Academic and Personal

■ **Teacher Academic**	
Excellent	4.75 – 5.00
Very Good	4.50 – 4.74
Good	4.00 – 4.49
Needs Improvement	3.50 – 3.99
Needs Significant Improvement	< 3.50

△ **Teacher Personal**	
Excellent	4.01 – 5.00
Very Good	3.75 – 4.00
Good	3.50 – 3.74
Needs Improvement	3.00 – 3.49
Needs Significant Improvement	< 3.00

Chart data:

	Spring 2009 (YEAR 1)	Fall 2009 (YEAR 2)	Spring 2010 (YEAR 2)	Fall 2010 (YEAR 3)	Spring 2011 (YEAR 3)
Teacher Academic	4.50	4.34	4.34	3.96	3.78
Teacher Personal	3.78	3.95	3.80	3.32	3.11

Table 44

Belongingness, Peer Academic and Personal
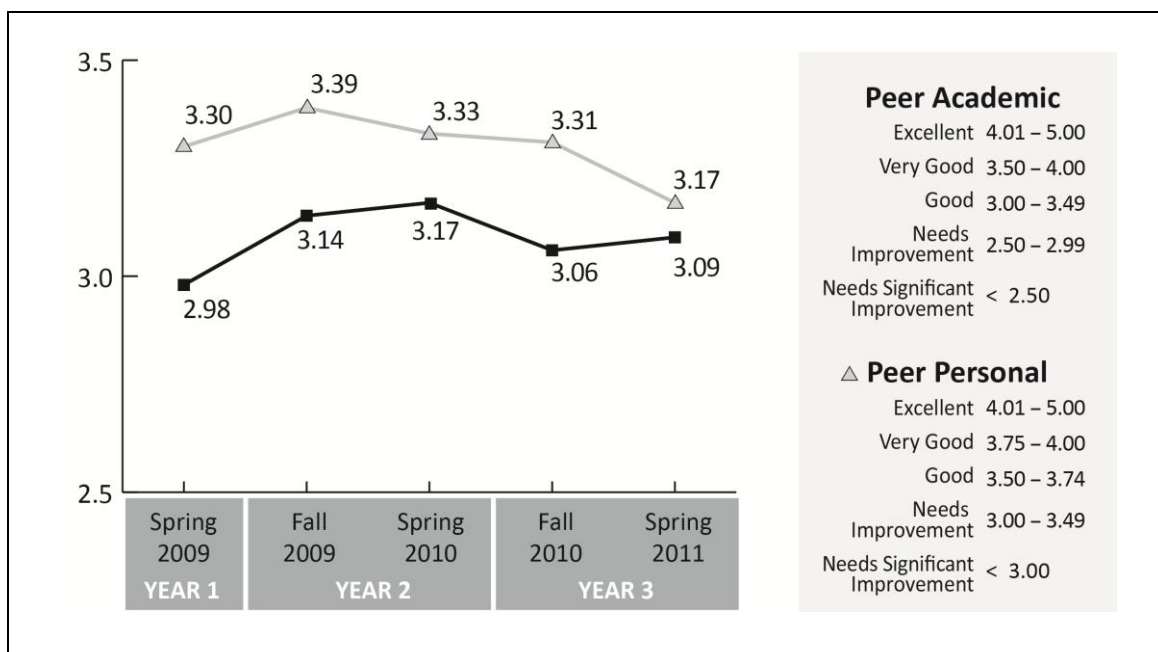
Note. The EdVisions Hope Survey defines belongingness as the student's perception of the depth and quality of his/her personal relationships with teachers and peers. The benefits of developing belongingness include supportive relationships that can serve to buffer the impact of stressful life events, resulting in lower levels of anxiety and depression. Positive relationships can serve as a vehicle for positive role modeling and socialization, and can improve self-image and self-esteem. Teacher/Advisory academic peaked in year one at 4.50 with a very good rating with the lowest rating at the end of year three at 3.11 with a rating of needs improvement. Peer academic peaked in the fall of year two at 3.39 with a good rating and the lowest rating was in year three with a 3.17 as a good rating. Peer Personal peaked in the spring of year two with a rating of 3.17 as a rating of needs improvement with the lowest rating in year one with 2.98 and a rating of needs improvement, the lowest rating in year one is an expected rating. Peer Personal remained within the area of needs improvement for all three years; an expected rating would show growth into the good and very good rating.

Unit of Analysis: 11.2. Satisfaction.

Table 45*:*

Student satisfaction: I am getting a quality education at school (Likert scale)

Stakeholder	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Students	3.8	3.7	3.6

Unit of Analysis: 11.3. Academic Press.

Table 46

Academic Press
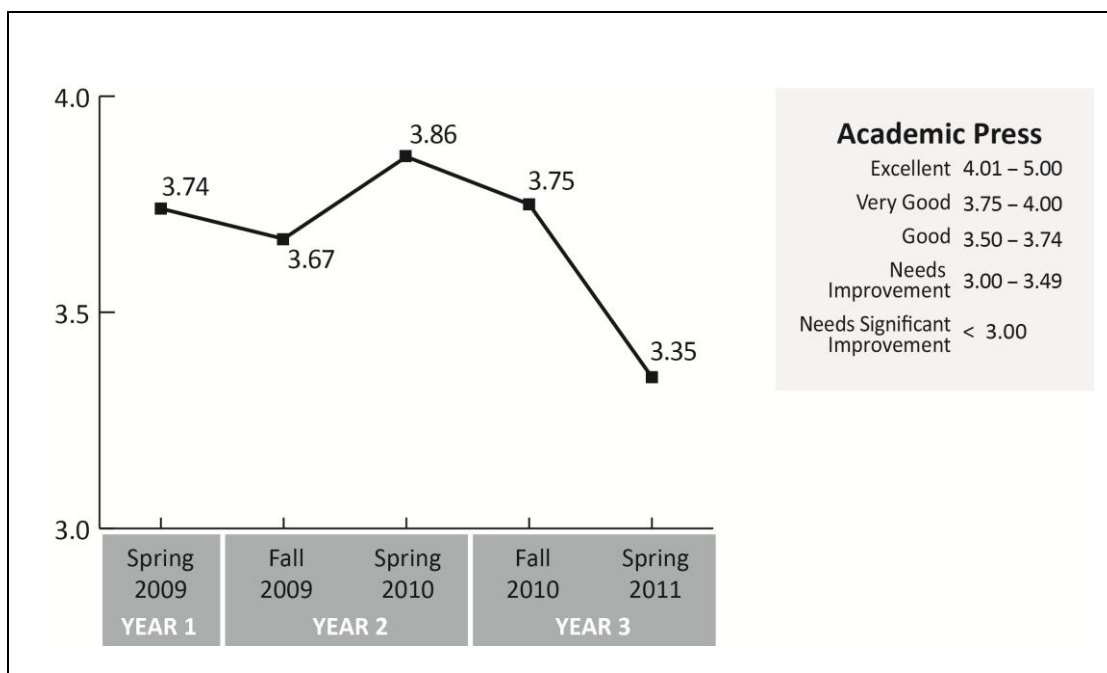
ote. EdVisions Hope Survey defines Academic Press as consistently high expectations on the part of teachers/advisors that their students will do their best work. Academic Press is about press for understanding rather than a press for performance, which can limit student achievement. Academic Press peaked at the start of year two with 3.86 which is a rating of very good. The lowest point was at the end of year three at 3.35 which is a rating of needs improvement.

Data Summary for Essential Element Eleven: Tipping Point. The staff at

Brandon High School were able to describe in detail a variety of tipping points and are

conscious of the challenges of achieving and maintaining a tipping point. An ongoing

challenge for Brandon High School is in the area of achieving and maintaining tipping

points in the areas of buy-in with the mission statement which is linked to the ability to

hire and retain staff that have both the buy-in and the skills to work the model. In year

three the internal coaching unplugged a significant number of design features of the EdVisions model and increased expectations for lesson plans and more evidence of rigor. The data would suggest that this approach had an unfortunate result of reducing Academic Press significantly and creating a tipping point where both teachers and students academic and peer relationships fell to a level indicating a need for improvement. One area of concern is in the area of Peer Personal; in all three years the rating remained at a low level or needs improvement. Students arriving at Brandon High School may have a higher than average need to build relationships and learn to manage stressful events in their lives like bullying, violence, family crisis and mental health issues. Brandon High School was not able to achieve and sustain a tipping point in the area of Belongingness and Peer Personal. Limited time in advisories, experiential learning and cooperative projects may have been a factor in this result.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Tipping Point as an essential process.

Essential element twelve: Outcomes.

Units of Analysis:

  12.1. Academic growth

  12.2. Attendance

  12.3. Satisfaction

Essential Questions:

  1. How were the outcomes developed? Did they include staff and student voice?

  2. How accountable is the learning community to outcomes?

3. Do the outcomes recognize formative and summative growth?

4. How are the data results presented to the community?

Table 47

Staff and Outcomes

How important is meeting these benchmark outcomes?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	22.2% (2)	66.7% (6)	4.56	9

Interview data, staff:

- Outcomes are becoming increasing important; you don't have a choice, in the narrative of school reform and charter schools are supposed to get achievement. Want to say 1 but I will say 3.

- That is the thing, if every student loves it here and we don't make Adequate Yearly Progress (as defined by No Child Left Behind) we can be closed, has a big effect on us.

- The public will judge you based on these scores and the government may not fund us.

Unit of Analysis 12.1. Academic Growth.

Table 48

Annual Measurable Goals

Performance Construct	Annual Measurable Goal	Performance Indicators	Results 2008-2009	Results 2009-2010	Results 2010-2011
Growth in Math skills	Annual increase in the % of students at or above 50th percentile	Comparison of local MAP percentile rank to national norm (reference) group	32% of the students performed at or above the 50th percentile in the spring a decrease from 37% in the fall	37% of the students performed at or above the 50th percentile an increase from 36% in the fall	Student population demonstrated 15% of the growth target
Growth in Reading skills	Annual increase in the % of students at or above 50th percentile	Comparison of local MAP percentile rank to national norm (reference) group	47% of students performed at or above the 50th percentile in the spring a decrease from 53% in the fall	47% of students performed at or above the 50th percentile in the spring an increase from 45% in the fall.	Student Population Demonstrated 29% of the growth target

Unit of Analysis: 12.2. Attendance.

Table 49

Student Attendance

School Year	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Student Attendance	82%	93%	86%

Unit of Analysis 12.3 Satisfaction.

Table 50

Satisfaction: Safe and Secure Learning Environment (Likert Scale 1-5)

Stakeholder	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Parents	4.54	4.31	4.00
Students	3.84	3.81	3.80
Staff	3.75	3.53	4.10

Table 51

Satisfaction: High Academic Standards (Likert Scale 1-5)

Stakeholder	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Parents	4.10	4.20	4.00

Table 52:

Satisfaction: Faculty satisfaction with profession development (Likert Scale)

Stakeholder	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Faculty	3.25	3.69	2.80

Table 53

Satisfaction: Faculty satisfied with the school culture (Likert Scale 1-5)

Stakeholder	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Faculty	3.25	3.50	2.60

Table 54

Satisfaction: Faculty satisfied with the approach to learning/overall rating of school (Likert Scale 1-5)

Stakeholder	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Faculty	3.50	3.33	3.0

Data Summary for Essential Element Twelve: Outcomes. Brandon High School and the Achieve School District are very good at including the students, parents and staff input when determining their outcomes. Each year an extensive survey is administered to each stakeholder and their input is carefully considered. The outcomes include both formative and summative data as well as staff and student interviews, which are conducted throughout the year both formally and informally. The data is presented publicly to the community and is reviewed by the Achieve School Board; this data is used to make quality improvements as well as financial benefits to staff.

In the area of academic growth, unit of analysis 12.1, the measurement is focused on the annual increase of the percentage of students at above the 50th percentile in reading and math. In 2008-2009 37% of the students were at above the 50th percentile in math and in spring 32% of the students were at or above the 50th percentile, this represented an overall decrease of 5% and indicates that students were not keeping pace with the nationally normed average. In 2009-2010 the staff disrupted the decrease with a slight increase with 36% in the fall and 37% in the spring. In 2010-2011 Brandon High School changed the indicator and reported 15% met the growth target in math overall.

The outcomes for reading followed a similar pattern with math. In 2008-2009 the fall rating was 53% and the spring rating was 47%, students were not keeping pace with other students nationally. In 2009-2010 students went from 45% in the fall to 47% in the spring, disrupting the decreasing trend with an increase of 2%. In 2010-2011 Brandon High School changed the indicator and reported 29% of students met the growth target overall.

In the area of attendance, unit of analysis 12.2, Brandon High School started with a significant number of students who reported having chronic issues with attendance and engagement and obtained the following outcomes. In 2008-2009 the average yearly attendance was 82%. In 209-2010 attendance peaked at 93%. In year three attendance was reported at 86%.

In the area of satisfaction, unit of analysis 12.3, the first outcome is on creating a safe and secure learning environment. The highest rating for both students and parents was in year one with a rating of 3.84 for students and 4.54 for parents based on a 1-5 rating with 5 being the high score. The lowest rating for both parents and students was in year three with a rating of 3.80 for students and 4.00 for parents. Staff rated year three the highest with 4.10 and year two the lowest with 3.53.

In the area of high academic standards, parents rated year two the highest with a rating of 4.20 and year three the lowest with a rating of 4.00. The ability to deliver high academic standards is related to the quality of staff development. Brandon High School staff rated year two the highest at 3.69 and year three the lowest at 2.80. Staff rated the school culture and provided year two the highest rating of 3.50 and year three the lowest rating of 2.60. In the area of staff satisfaction with the approach to learning and the overall rating of school, staff rated year one as the highest with a rating of 3.5 and year three the lowest rating of 3.0.

The outcomes of Brandon High School were reviewed over a three-year timeframe. The results of individual outcomes varied but a patterned emerged with a significant trend of year two with the overall highest rating and year three the lowest ratings overall. This data is significant because the expected trend would be to have

increasing outcomes starting from year one as the lowest and year three as the highest overall outcomes.

Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Outcomes as an essential process.

Essential element thirteen: Sustainability.

Units of Analysis:

13.1. Environment (physical and learning)

A. Physical space adaptability

B. Access to multiple learning environments

13.2 Economic

A. Financial viability

B. Ability to obtain adequate resources

13.3 Social

A. Ability to address equity issues

Essential Questions:

1. What are the essential sustainability issues to this organization?

2. What areas need to be strengthened to increase sustainability?

Table 55

Staff and Sustainability

How important are these issues to your schools sustainability?							
	Not at all important	Not very important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Intention	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	11.1% (1)	11.1% (1)	77.8% (7)	4.67	9

Units of Analysis 13.1. Environment (physical and learning).

- I wonder if it is sustainable to have a project-based school in a traditional school setting? I am not sure if we have enough resources in the building and a willingness to let us utilize the space the way we need to? To be successful we need to keep rethinking how we are using our space and space in the community.

- I see people physically and mentally exhausted trying to meet the expectations of high stake testing while trying to give students the benefits of the EdVisions model. I am not sure how we sustain achievement in the existing structure.

- Teacher sustainability, feels like we will have high staff turnover again, for some people this was not a good fit and to leave is best for everyone. We have a sustainability issue when we lose really good educators that understand how to implement the model and work with kids.

- Our physical environment does not allow for an additional 25 kids planned for next year, we can't do an Advisory well with 22 kids. It makes me think to meet these numbers we will have to totally redesign our learning environment

- Engaging students in projects and authentic assessment is a sustainability issue. We have evolved from self-directed learning to doing projects in seminars that are more like assignments, with only a few students doing authentic assessments or facilitating their own Student Led Conference.

Units of Analysis 13.2. Economic.

- With a high degree of staff turnover we have to take the time and money to keep retraining staff and reinventing the work, this level of investment is hard to sustain.

- Our state just reduced funding to schools by 7%, with less money it will be harder for us to meet all the needs of our students in an authentic manner.

- Financially we have to make sure we are meeting the expectations of our corporate sponsors, I believe this is tied mostly to standardized test scores.

- We were not able to sustain the level of experiential learning that our students need because we need more time for planning, experience/practice doing it and district support, without these resources sustainability is an issue.

Unit of Analysis. 13.3 Social.

- With so many families of poverty and broken family structures it is so hard to get students to the level we want them to be, for many of our students they are not ready to learn because so many of their other needs are not being met. As students come from challenging family structures we have more work to do on how their feeling and what they are going through, we have to do that before we teach them and get them to their grade level.

- Student comes in late they have issues at home, has not eaten breakfast, without structures in place to deal with this kind of need it is difficult to sustain educational growth.

- What I see is that many staff and to some degree within the district administration do not understand that allot of our students have depression, bipolar disorder, or some serious mental heath issue and some teachers may not understand that and they expect the students to be doing the same thing as everyone else, not causing any problems, meanwhile the student is not getting the therapy they need, therefore they cannot focus on the work or achieve well on standardized tests.

- Building a sense of team/teamwork-sense of team, breaking down silos (being on the same page) is our greatest challenge to achieve sustainability. House divided against itself cannot stand.

- To achieve sustainability we need to build a sense of team and working together, currently we have broken down into like-minded groups/silos because we are not on the same page.

Data Summary for Essential Element Thirteen: Sustainability. The sustainability issues at Brandon High School were rooted in several main themes, sustainability of the EdVisions model, the economics and effectiveness of confronting equity issues and the sustainability around the resources needed.

The sustainability of the EdVisions model was in question as there was a growing number of staff that have not been oriented to, or committed to the mission and vision of Brandon High School. Over time staff were hired that lack basic teaching skills and hence struggle with generative teaching and learning which is central to the EdVisions model; many of these low skilled staff required scripted curriculum, which is common in traditional teaching methods. The lack of skills was creating stress for a number of

individuals and the team as a whole. Managing both the stress and lack of skills of staff was a sustainability issue and relates directly to staff retention.

When Brandon Street opened in year one it received a disproportionate number of students with behavioral, academic and mental health issues. For many of the students these issues were rooted in equity issues and are multi-generational. The EdVisions model combined with the resources of Achieve School District were inadequate to confront the equity issues of the existing student body. In each subsequent year the student body at Brandon High School has become less extreme and closer to the normal mix of students found in adjacent public schools. The ongoing challenge remains on how to create a sustainable teaching and learning environment that is both effective and economical in dealing with equity issues. A fully implemented EdVisions model is designed to address equity issues in both an economical and effective manner, the issue with Brandon High School was that a significant number of the EdVisions design essentials were unplugged from the model in year three without providing alternative interventions that addressed equity issues. In year three community experts helped create several engaging experiential learning events and they were offered to a limited number of students, which was in alignment with the EdVisions model but not recognized as such.

One area that needed to be strengthened was the maintenance and adaptability of the physical space at Brandon High School. The high school itself was clean and kept professional looking at all times. During year three the maintenance of the building dramatically dropped off with most requests left unanswered or delayed. Based on the mixed messages staff received from facilities management they were under the

impression that the building was closing next year. The lack of feedback loops within facilities management appeared to compound the stress within the team, making it a sustainability issue.

   Results and the criteria to support the theory. Collective responses indicated a 4 or more on the Likert Scale and over 90% of respondents in the structured interviews supported Sustainability as an essential process.

Summary of the results in section one.

Table 56

Summary results of Essential Elements

Essential Element	Unit Of Analysis	Criteria met to support model?		Summary
		Collective responses indicate a 4 or more on the Likert Scale (A is staff, B Students)	90% or respondents in structured interviews support each element as essential	
Mission & Vision	1.1 1.2	Yes: A. 5.00 B. 4.50	Yes 100% Yes	Met criteria
New Member Orientation & member separation	2.1	Yes: 4.89	Yes	Met Criteria
Experiential Understanding	3.1 3.2 3.3	Yes: A. 4.89 B. 4.40	Yes Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Transformational Process	4.1 4.2	N/A	Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Personalization	5.1 5.2 5.3	Yes: A. 4.89 B. 4.17	Yes Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Flow	6.1 6.2 6.3	Yes: A: 4.78	Yes Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Collaborative Leadership & Instruction	7.1 7.2	Yes: A. 4.89 B. 4.78	Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Continuous Review & Improvement	8.1 8.2	Yes: A. 4.56	Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Dynamic Tensions	9.1 9.2	Yes: A. 4.67	Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Change Management	10.1	Yes: A. 4.87	Yes	Met Criteria
Tipping Point	11.1 11.2 11.3	Yes: A. 5.00	Yes Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Outcomes	12.1 12.2 12.3	Yes: A. 4.56	Yes Yes Yes	Met Criteria
Sustainability	13.1 13.2 13.3	Yes: A. 4.67	Yes	Met Criteria

Note. Based on the pre-established criteria the data supports the elements of the Successful School Development Theory.

Section Two

Section two will address the adaptations made from the original EdVisions model and the rational, what the experience was like for faculty and students and the outcomes/effectiveness of implementation of the inner-directed, advisory centered, project-based model. As the staff was hired in year one they were oriented to the EdVisions model and reported a high degree of ownership of the original vision and mission of Achieve School District. When the first day of school arrived, the staff were unprepared for the students that arrived. Both student and staff reported that many of the students that enrolled for Brandon High School were not coming to engage in the unique project-based, advisory centered pedagogy but they were escaping an unsuccessful school environment. A small group of students were well oriented and came specifically for the proposed pedagogy. The fact that Brandon High School did not receive an average cross-section of students was a harsh reality for staff to deal with. Student records and staff interviews indicate that more than half of the student population had significant histories of behavioral and academic challenges. The staff at Brandon High School worked long hours to adapt the program and to work with the students to embrace the open space environment, the self-directed project-based learning and the advisory model. Even with significant adaptations many of the students with long established behavioral issues could not function effectively in the open-space environment and in a self-directed manner. After several months of working to adapt the model the founding principal was exhausted and was replaced with a new principal that had been a successful principal in a large inner-city public school district within the same area. The new principal worked quickly to restore order and focus by implementing many of the rules and policies common to

many traditional schools. This adaption was welcomed by many of the staff as a
necessary step, with the understanding or hope that once the school was stabilized the
team would work steadily towards full implementation of the EdVisions model. At this
time staff were tired and worn from the verbal abuse and the overwhelming needs of their
students. They recognized that student outcomes and overall performance was low and
an intervention was required to meet students' needs. Even with all the challenges
presented staff were still excited and engaged to implement the model, they documented
seeing significant gains in both student behavior and engagement. Staff worked diligently
throughout year one to build a positive culture and prepared to make significant
transitions back to the EdVisions model. The internal school coach was replaced mid-
year and a new coach was hired in the spring of 2009.

To better orient the new staff an advanced experiential learning training was
arranged to have the principal, coach and one teacher travel to several successful
EdVisions schools for several days. This allowed the participants to experience the
model first hand and to meet with both students and staff to discuss successful strategies
and to problem solve challenges. When the participants returned to Brandon High School
the team worked aggressively to begin the preparation for planning the 2009-2010 school
year.

During the summer of 2009 staff committed a significant amount of time in
reviewing the needs of students and methods to adapt the EdVisions model while still
maintaining fidelity to the EdVisions design elements. Seminars were created that
embedded projects, providing students a high degree of both remediation and structure
while still allowing for voice and choice in the final project design. Students that were

capable of self-directed learning were able to continue being self-directed within their

own advisory. The goal at this time was to work with students on building their skills to

a point where they could become productive, self-directed students within the context of

the EdVisions model. Staff worked collaboratively and democratically to produce over

thirty versions of a daily and weekly schedule that met the criteria of an adapted

EdVisions model with fidelity to the EdVisions design. Staff finished the summer

planning session confident that they had created a strong design and expressed both

excitement and sense of team as they took two weeks off before the start of the school

year.

As staff returned they had a week before school was to begin and they met as a

team to discuss details. The staff had handed off the daily and weekly schedule to the

principal and internal coach to work out a plan for scheduling students into seminars. It

was at this time that the internal coach announced that he had revised the schedule and

presented a schedule that looked much like a traditional high school schedule. Staff

stated that the rationale provided was that the proposed schedule was too difficult to

figure out scheduling and it did not meet traditional seat-time. Rather than team on these

issues, a plan was created and then presented as the final plan. Within the EdVisions

model, democratic decision-making and teacher leadership are essential processes, by

imposing a traditional schedule, after months of discussion and hard work, most staff

were at a loss for words. Staff expressed anger and frustration that their work had been

hijacked and their plan to take the school to the next level thwarted by a traditional

schedule without even a discussion. An external coach worked with the team, including

the internal coach to establish a school schedule that included most of the features of the

original schedule. In the process staff reported a significant loss of trust in the leadership of Brandon High School.

As the school year started it also became apparent that the internal coach was not fully oriented to the vision and mission of Achieve High School or the EdVisions model. The role of an internal coach in an EdVisions school is to work directly with students and staff to help them be successful in engaging, rigorous projects.   The current internal coach had the mindset of an assistant principal with an evaluative role, which conflicted with the EdVisions teacher leadership paradigm.
The lack of teacher support and role confusion resulted in moving the internal coach to another school. Realizing the impact of role confusion, the staff of Brandon High made the commitment to create and formalize a vision and mission statement for their school.

During the 2009-2010 school year the staff and students were able to engage in a moderate degree of success in the EdVisions model. They were successful in engaging the students in personal learning plans and student led conferences, the process they used was significantly adapted from the original EdVisions process to allow more student voice and ownership. They successfully adapted the EdVisions model to create seminars that were both engaging and rigorous. Overall the outcomes for year two were the highest of the three years. Students began to be successful in performance assessments and rituals were being established to create as positive school culture.

Some students struggled to meet the dress code and staff had to work hard to monitor language, positive behaviors and productivity. One compromise that was made in the originally proposed staff schedule was to allow the self-directed students to work without being assigned an Advisor. This was an adaption from the EdVisions model that

was unique to Brandon High School, this group of self-directed students worked independently on project-based learning. The outcomes and student interviews indicate that this adaption was not successful for most of the students and was discontinued after year two. With the conclusion of year two several of the original staff resigned due to the issues described and two other staff were transferred to a new high school being developed by Achieve High School.

The remaining staff that were interviewed indicated that the work was hard but they believed in the newly created vision and mission of Brandon High School and they were prepared to beginning the process of planning for the 2010-2011 school year. One of the priorities established by Achieve School District was that students needed to achieve higher outcomes on standardized tests and that projects as whole needed to be more rigorous.

With the start of the planning process a new internal coach was hired and oriented by visiting several high performing EdVisions schools. Achieve School District was also careful to make sure the new job description was tuned to avoid the role confusion that happened the year before. The new job description of the coach was to assign the coach an advisory, manage internships and help students on projects so they are both rigorous and engaging.

The staff worked hard to once again to create a schedule and adaptations to the EdVisions model that worked for their students and culture. In preparation for the school year Achieve School District work collaboratively with EdVisions to provide an extensive three day training to all staff. The EdVisions staff who provided the training were committed to self-directed learning and did not agree with the all the staff

adaptations, the EdVisions staff actively worked to convince the Brandon High School

Staff to return the core design essentials of the EdVisions model.   The Brandon High

School staff met and extensively prepared an updated project-process, a more extensive

student handbook, an updated orientation process for new students and a new dynamic

schedule that embraced many of the EdVisions design elements. With the start of the

school year Brandon High School indicated that they were ready to take the school to a

new level

 With the start of the school year several significant events came together to create

significant stress on the EdVisions design. First, Achieve School District found it

difficult to recruit highly qualified teachers and many of the new hires were not oriented

well enough to the Brandon High school mission statement, lacking both commitment

and necessary skills. Secondly, the internal coach shifted away from managing

internships to overseeing lesson plans. Inadvertently the role of the internal coach shifted

back to a supervisory role that created a stressful dynamic for the team. A decision was

made by the internal coach and administration to stop using the following essential

processes:

- Project management software designed to track and support projects;

- Personal learning plans and student led conferences;

- Dedicated advisory time to meet with students individually and
  consistently;

- Project fairs/performance assessments;

- Seminar planning process that required integrated subjects, experiential
  learning and a form of project-based learning;

- Internships.

By unplugging these essential design elements Brandon High School had essentially become a project-based, advisory centered school that no longer had dedicated time to create, manage and demonstrate quality projects. Many students lost the rational and the incentive to create rigorous projects. As the school year progressed, the focus shifted to on achieving standardized tests. The outcomes collected found that consistently year three had the lowest outcomes of the three years. The staff reported that year three was very stressful, with most of the decisions being made top-down, without staff input. Miscommunication was commonplace and was reported by both students and staff. At the end of the school year with the outcomes of state testing reported, it was clear to Achieve School District that Brandon High School needed a new strategy and that year three was not successful for both staff and students. With all the challenges year three brought, staff and Achieve School District remained committed to working together to find the right mix of design elements for the 2011-2012 school year and a more effective method to recruit and hire qualified staff.

Summary. The analysis of data for this chapter found several findings about the process and outcomes of implementing a project-based, advisory centered model in a new charter school located in an urban setting. The evolution of Brandon High School from conception to implementation, to year three helped reveal the context and processes utilized throughout the history of the school's development. The review of the methodology utilized for this study demonstrated how data was collected and the section on the analysis of data was organized around the thirteen essential processes and subsequently around each research question.

Research question one focused on the outcomes and effectiveness and research question two focused on adaptations from the original EdVisons model and the rational. From the analysis of the EdVisions school wide assessment conducted each year, the evolution of Brandon High School was challenged with implementation dips that occurred at the start of each school year.

In years one and two the students and staff found successful adaptations that resulted in favorable outcomes that demonstrated consistent growth. In year three the students and staff were not able to recover from the implementation dip because of the added challenge of low staff skills and an intentional move away from collaborative leadership to top-down decision making. The data from year three indicates that the strategies utilized in year three resulted in the highest degree of adaptations and the lowest outcomes of each of the three years.

Research question three focused on what the experience was like for students and staff. The data found that each year was unique and was dependent on how invested each individual was on the mission and vision of Brandon High School. Individuals committed to the mission and vision found the work hard, at times stressful but also fulfilling, with some individuals reporting a transformational experience in how they learn and/or teach. Individuals who were not invested in the mission and vision of Brandon High School struggled with the pedagogy, collaborative leadership and the concept of giving students voice and choice. The data found a continuum of experiences for both students and staff that was dependent on each individuals mental model of what education is or could be. The data also found that individuals who were not skilled

teachers struggled to be successful in this learning environment, reporting a high degree of stress and uncertainty.

Research question four looked at how the issues and processes at Brandon High School interrelated with The Theory of Successful School Development. The Theory of Successful School Development proved to be a useful tool in analyzing the data, helping to understand how Brandon High School operated as a system and to identify root issues that were effecting successful implementation and positive outcomes. The essential elements within the Theory of Successful School Development was reported as being helpful in providing the staff and students language and processes to identify and discuss root issues. Over the three years contained in this study, staff and students struggled to maintain an open and safe environment to allow for successful dialogue and problem solving. The challenge of maintaining an open and safe environment was compounded by the difficulty of disrupting the existing hegemony around equity issues, traditional teaching pedagogy, the role of democracy and democratic schools and the influence and control high stakes testing had on the whole Brandon High School system. Data from staff interviews indicate that although the team has not yet found the right mix of design and process, they have significantly increased their awareness of the issues that are supporting the existing hegemony and they remain committed to learning from their mistakes. Chapter five will provide an overview and interpretation of the findings from this three-year study and discuss implications and recommendations.

Chapter V

Overview

Chapter five is organized by first providing a summary of the problem, restating

the four research questions and a summary of the methodology used in the study. The

first section includes a summary of the Theory of Successful School Development;

Process Essentials in School/ Organization Development and Renewal. The second

section will include conclusions and interpretations based on the findings presented in

Chapter four, from the perspective of each research question and will conclude with

limitations of the study and literature. Section three will provide recommendations,

implications for theory, practice, policy and organization development practitioners and

conclude with new research questions, conceptual frameworks and methodologies.

Section four will be the researchers final thoughts and conclusion.

Section One

Restatement of the problem. The literature review traced the development of

American schools from colonial times to the establishment of the first public schools or

Common Schools. From the beginning, public schools have been strongly influenced by

business models to be efficient and cost effective. To meet the demands of a rapidly

rising population of emigrants, the United States developed a factory model of schools

based on the work of Fredrick W. Taylor. Between 1890 and 1920 businessman came to

have a far greater impact on public education than any other occupational group (Tyack

& Hansot, 1981). A school system based on efficiency and a strong influence from the

business community has become a mental model that has become the foundation of

traditional schools in the United States. With the development of factory schools came

the development of alternative models that have established successful schools built on a fundamentally different mental model, most notably Progressive Education based on the work of John Dewey. These two paradigms of education have been in conflict for over a century as documented in the literature review.

Currently the United States is faced with a dropout epidemic, with some urban centers reporting 50% and more. The National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine (2004), reviewed studies finding 40-60 percent of high school students are chronically disengaged; they are inattentive, exert little effort, do not complete tasks, and claim to be bored. This figure does not include those that have already have dropped out. Equity issues and the growing rate of children in poverty are creating challenges most urban schools are unprepared to face. Berlner and Biddle (1995) found that the larger the proportion of citizens who live in poverty, the greater the challenge for public schools. The fundamental problems in American education are nested around equity and the lack of awareness of most Americans around the hegemony that perpetuates this educational paradigm. The traditional mental models of education in the United States is not meeting the needs of a large number of students and is driving the need for school reform.

The strong influence of the business sector continues with The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as one of the largest foundations in the United States, investing about two billion dollars in the development of small schools from 2000-2008, establishing substantial power and influence over educational policy, Ravitch (2010).

One of the initiatives of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was to create a network of small schools that would be fundamentally different than traditional schools based on the factory model. One model that was supported by the foundation was

EdVisions, a significant departure from traditional learning, a school design with a mental model based on Progressive Education. This study explores the process and outcomes of an urban charter school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model (EdVisions).

Restating the four research questions.

1. In what ways did the issues and process interrelate with the elements of the School Reform Logic Model?

2. What were the outcomes and how effective was the implementation of an advisory centered, project-based school reform model?

3. What adaptations were made from the original model and what was the rational and process used?

4. What was the experience like for faculty and students?

Methodology. The research is a positivistic case study that is single case, longitudinal and explanatory. The ontology is social constructionism, with an epistemology of post-positivism. Essentially the researcher documented from an organization development perspective, the planning and implementation over a three year time period, of a new charter high school in an economically challenged urban community.

Several instruments and recording processes were utilized in the data collection. First, the researcher utilized existing instruments required by the school district, these include:

- a yearly satisfaction survey for parents, students, educators and administrators;

- formative assessments through North West Evaluation Assessments (NWEA) in

    math, reading and science;

- standardized state testing;

- Hope Survey; taken once a year that is designed to measure students sense of

    hope and overall engagement;

- School wide assessment; completed twice a year to determine the degree of

    implementation of the school reform model.

Secondly, the researcher utilized:

- Document analysis

- Observations

- Structured, open-ended interviews with staff, students and administrators

    Summary of the results. The researcher was successful in utilizing all of the

proposed data collection tools. Nine staff were interviewed in the structured, open-ended

interviews and five students were interviewed. Data were collected from the planning

and implementation with data from three full school years, ending in June of 2011. The

degree of implementation of the EdVisions model was documented each year with the

highest degree of implementation in year two and the lowest degree of implementation

being year three. The largest challenges to successful implementation and outcomes

came from a disproportionately large number of students with behavioral, academic and

mental health issues. Secondary factors include significant pressure to perform better

than regional public schools on high stakes tests implemented by the state and the ability

to hire and retain skilled staff that were aligned with the mission and vision of Brandon

High School. At the end of year three Brandon High School had attenuated many of the

EdVisions design essentials and the data found that year three had the lowest outcomes and lowest degree of student and staff engagement.

Section Two

  Interpretation of the findings; Research Question #1. In what ways did the issues and process interrelate with the elements of the Theory of Successful School Development? Interpretations of research question #1 are based on the findings in Chapter four on the collective experience of staff and students from the planning phase to the end of year three, as interpreted by the researcher. The Theory of Successful School Development: Process Essentials in School/Organization Development and Renewal explored fourteen processes that were found to have met the criteria established by the study as being essential processes. Interviews conducted with staff and students found that the processes essentials interrelated with the EdVisions design essentials to help provide a framework and a language to describe the challenges the team faced as they worked to implement the EdVisions model. The EdVisions model provided the technical aspects of the model but did not provide a clear process to which the design elements were to be implemented and continuously improved. During the interviews four of the staff were explicit in stating that the process essentials provided a language and validation of issues the team was facing and helped them as individuals to step out of problems and look at issues more constructively. Staff also indicated that to utilize the process essentials fully would require the team to learn the essential processes in tandem with the EdVisions design essentials and commit to using both elements from conception to implementation.

Staff also reported using the fourteen processes to better understand challenges in teaming and with individuals. Three of the staff expressed in detail during the interviews that the team would work on specific issues, discussing them and then develop a plan of action only to find these issues resistant to change or resolution. The feeling of being on a treadmill and realizing that only some of the staff were committed to following through on an action plan, was an ongoing challenge for Brandon High School. Utilizing the process essentials, staff were able to identify that one root issue was the lack of agreement around the mission and vision of Brandon High School. Once this root issue was identified staff were able to better understand the lack of consensus and how recruiting and consistently orienting students and new staff to their school was such a challenge. In year two the staff worked with a focus group of students to create and establish a codified mission statement. Although this proved to be a vital step, the research found that the mission statement was not validated by the Achieve District. Instead of empowering the team with an unified mission statement, Brandon High School was left with a significant mixed message about the mission and vision of their school.

The second root issue that was identified through the process essentials was the lack of skilled staff. Over time Brandon High School found it increasingly more difficult to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Educators with demonstrated skills and passion for the intended mission and vision of Brandon High School left after year two, stating that it was primarily based on the mixed messages they received around implementing the mission and vision. Based on the findings in Chapter four, new staff were not oriented in a consistent manner, with several staff reporting that their orientation did not include a discussion and commitment to Brandon High Schools' mission

statement or the commitment to professional development needed to gain the necessary

skills.   Three of the new staff hired in 2010-2011 were new teachers that also had

significant commitments outside of their teaching contracts (coaching a basketball team,

required college classes to finish a degree and commuting from another region) that did

not allow enough time to invest in the skill development needed to implement the

EdVisions model.   These factors resulted in a team that was stressed to meet the skills

needed to implement the EdVisions model.

The staff and students supported each of the fourteen processes as essential to the

organization development of Brandon High School. Staff reported that ideally we would

have developed fluency in each essential process as we were learning the EdVisions

design essentials as a primary tool towards successful implementation. Providing on-

going professional development in both areas would have provided the team the skills to

address dynamic tensions in a manner that would encourage us to identify root issues

rather than symptoms.

While documenting how the team utilized the fourteen process essentials two

distinct features emerged and were added to Figure 1. A reflexive loop was identified

around Collaborative Leadership & Instruction, Continuous Review & Improvement and

Dynamic Tensions. Several complex issues were found to continuously circle within the

reflexive loop. The team was successful disrupting the reflexive loop by linking the

dialogue to the mission and vision, experiential understanding, personalization and then

back down to collaborative leadership and instruction.

A second element was added when documenting that the team would reach

agreement on the importance of a task but sometimes would reserve taking action on the

issue until later; this process was termed, Parking Lot. It was also documented that some

tasks remained parked and never reached an action plan.
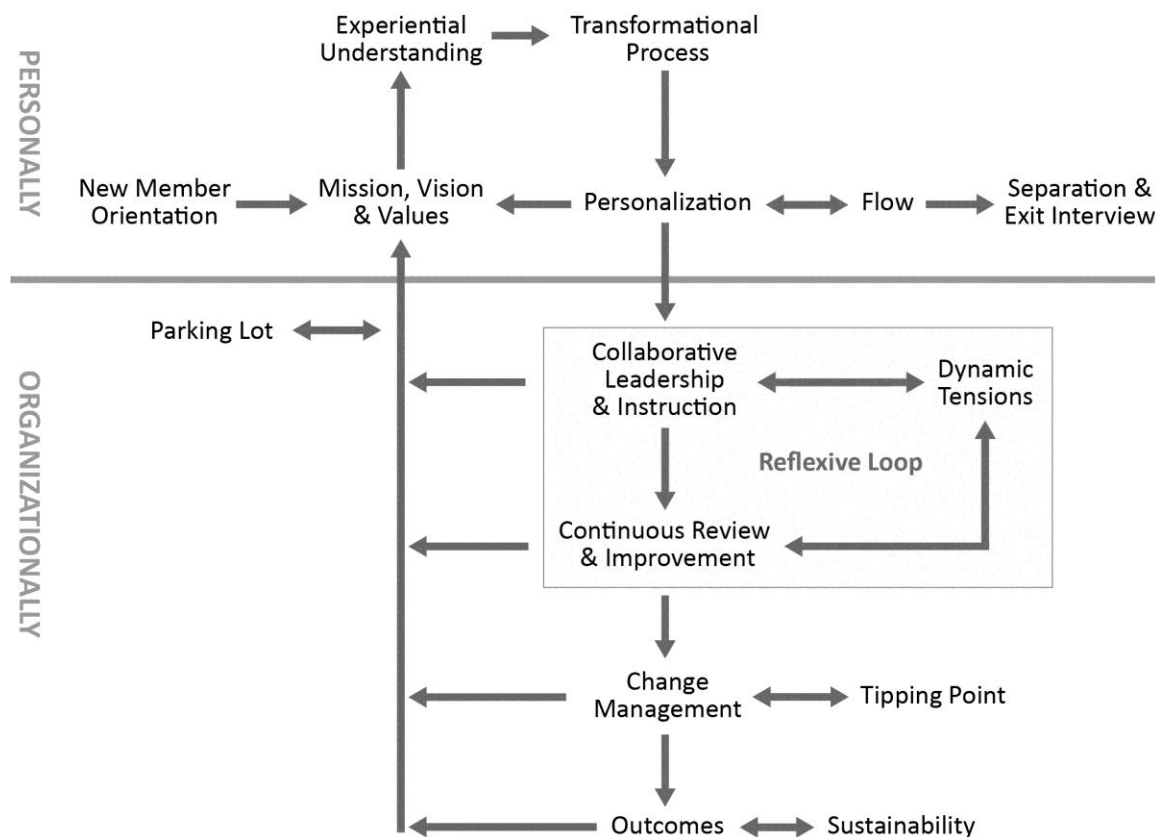
Figure 11. Updated Theory of Successful School Development: Process Essentials.

Summary. The staff and to some degree students at Brandon High School learned

how to utilize each of the fourteen processes essentials at a basic level but did not reach a

level of fluency. The process essentials were practiced in isolation rather than being part

of cyclic process and used as a system. The process essentials all flow through the

mission and vision and work together as an interrelated system. Without a validated

mission and vision the cycle is disrupted and the team only benefits from each process working independently rather than as a system.

Interpretation of the findings; RQ #2 what were the outcomes and how effective was the implementation of an inner-directed, advisory centered, project-based school reform mode? Interpretations of research question #2 are based on the findings in Chapter four and the collective experience of staff and students from the planning phase to the end of year three as interpreted by the researcher. Expectations within EdVisions and Achieve School district were based on the understanding that the higher the degree of implementation of the EdVisions design essentials, the better the overall outcomes. Based on the findings in Chapter four, the highest degree of implementation and the highest overall outcomes was year two. The lowest degree of implementation and the lowest overall outcomes was year three. The staff at Brandon High School prepared to open the school in year one with a high degree of implementation, reported as a 6.8 (sustaining) on a scale of 1 (low/emerging) to 9 (exemplary). When the students arrived, it was clear that a high percentage of students were not oriented to the mission and vision of the school, their primary concern was escaping or fleeing from an educational environment that was not working for them. This resulted in more than half of the student population unprepared for the unique pedagogy and culture of Brandon High School. Many of these students also had significant histories of remedial and behavioral issues that were compounded by the challenges of living in an economically depressed community, with 78% of the students on free/reduced lunch. An added stress to implementation was the unforeseen challenge of recruiting students from over eight different communities. Living in a large urban

center, it is common for students to see people from other neighborhoods as rivals, which is often fueled by gang ideology. These factors made up some of the mental models that students carried with them on as they began attending Brandon High School. As stated in Chapter four the staff experienced a significant implementation dip that went from a 6.8 to a 2 as a collective summary of the EdVisions design essentials during the first two months of programming.   The staff, EdVisions and Achieve School District were all taken by surprise by the high degree of students and parents looking for any option out of the traditional schools within their home district and the large percentage of students with significant challenges. Achieve School District had established itself as an exemplar elementary/ middle school district that easily recruited students and parents ready to engage in their pedagogy and mission. It was a mistake to believe that the same culture in the elementary schools would transfer directly to the high school. Schein (1999) described a methodology that that could assist Achieve School District in identifying and integrating the established elementary culture with the unique and emerging culture of Brandon High School. Ideally determining if the elementary schools and high school are separate cultures, a blended culture or if the high school is part of the dominant culture of the elementary schools, is the first step in this process.   Identifying and establishing the desired intent of Brandon High School's relationship to the other elementary schools, would be a facilitating force in implementation.

The physical space Achieve School District prepared for Brandon High School was exceptional. The minute one walked into the building, one sensed that this school was different, it seemed to be an intentional effort to disrupt equity issues by providing a clear statement that this is a high quality school that is clean, well maintained and safe. The

remodel was expensive, converting an abandoned Catholic school into a 21st century school required meeting the requirements of accessibility, combined with the cost of creating the unique structure required for a project-based, advisory centered pedagogy. Meeting all the budget needs of implementation required a multi-year scale-up plan, requiring staff to work with limited financial resources and infrastructure in the short-term. To meet enrollment goals, advisories were five students larger than recommended and were not constructed utilizing the EdVisions designs for personal workspaces. The workstations that were purchased were small, lacked storage and looked like something you would find in a library or a behavior intervention room. The EdVisions design requires a student workspace that encourages professional workspace standards. Both students and staff reported that the student workstations were a barrier to implementation and were a root source for lower productivity and behavior issues.

The EdVisions design requires that students have access to technology, specifically the Internet and a computer they can use at their personal workspace. Achieve School District is a strong advocate of technology and arranged to have the school hard-wired and wireless for the Internet. A barrier to implementation and outcomes resulted when the Internet system was unstable and the advisories could not manage all the power needed to run the students' computers. Chargers for computers burned out as they were strained from an old electrical system designed for a teaching pedagogy from the 1950's. Two of the students interviewed named technology as a barrier to their success as a student, citing access and lack of flexibility (could not use their own jump drives or bring in their own computer).

The analysis of the essential processes (research question #1) identified staff skills and the lack of a validated mission and vision statement as two of the root issues preventing the staff at Brandon High School from achieving full implementation. Utilizing a systems diagram technique develop by Senge (1995), the limits of growth/full implementation were identified. The factors that facilitated full implementation were represented in one circle labeled *Reinforcing/Amplifying Feedback* and factors that limited full implementation were labeled *Balancing Feedback*.
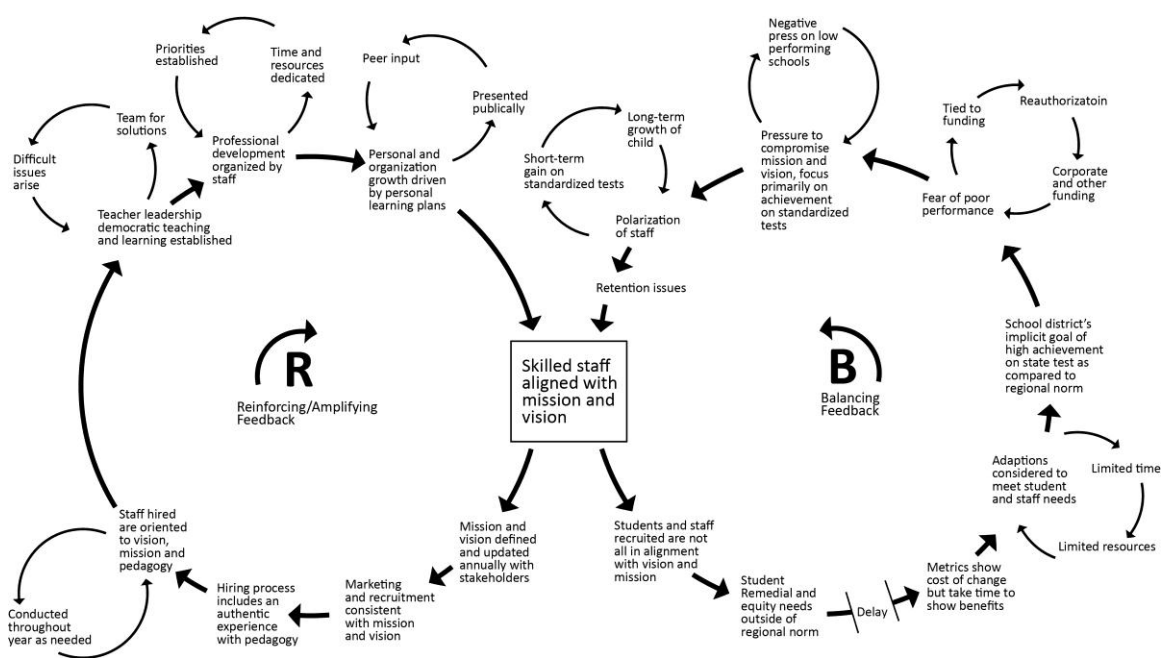
Figure 12. Limits of Growth/Full Implementation of the EdVisions Model at Brandon High School. To assist the reader a larger version is provided in Appendix C.

The systems diagram Figure 12. Limits of Growth/Full Implementation of the EdVisions model at Brandon High School is a tool to see how the different factors interrelate as a system. The staff at Brandon High School were trained in all of the areas listed in the Reinforcing/Amplifying Feedback cycle. Staff had ownership and actively pursued each element, challenges were described in Chapter four. The Balancing

Feedback cycle presents the elements that worked together to limit effective

implementation and outcomes.

As the percentage of students and staff who were not in alignment with the

mission and vision of Brandon High School increased, along with the percentage of

students with remedial and behavioral issues, a critical tipping point was reached, as

defined by Gladwell (2002) and the system experienced a delay in implementation.   The

metrics in place (formative and summative assessments) showed progress in outcomes

but also indicated that students needed more time to show full benefits. With an

overloaded system the staff were thrown into a crisis mode and worked with limited time

and resources to develop adaptations to the EdVisions model. In year two the results of

standardized testing clarified Achieve School District's implicit goal of high achievement

on state tests compared to regional norms. The fear of poor performance on standardized

tests became a major concern of Achieve School District. Success on standardized

testing was tied to state funding, reauthorization and corporate/grant funding. The fear of

poor performance on standardized testing and any resulting negative press created

pressure on Brandon High School to compromise their mission and vision and focus

efforts primarily on standardized tests.   Staff began to feel this pressure in year two and

in year three the pressure reached a tipping point that resulted in unplugging core design

elements, resulting in a low degree of implementation of the EdVisions model. Outcome

data in Chapter four reported that year three also had the lowest outcomes within the

three-year study. The pressure to compromise the original mission and vision of Brandon

High School resulted in a polarization of staff. With a growing number of staff that were

not in alignment with the mission and vision, a dynamic tension was created between

competing philosophies with fundamentally different epistemologies.   The pressure to compromise the mission and vision and the dynamic tension of competing philosophies resulted in several high quality staff leaving and the development of retention issues.

From a critical theory perspective the importance of meeting NCLB targets became an accepted reality, a non-negotiable that everyone needed to work towards. Brookfield (2005), citing the work of Horkehimer and Adorno, described this mindset as Instrumentialized Reasoning; the way in which thought and reasoning becomes disconnected from pondering universal questions such as how we should be living (or in this case, teaching and learning) and how we should treat each other (as we work through the difficult challenges of implementing a school reform model). Harrison-Jones (2007) noted that research conducted by the Campaign for Educational Equity found that the NCLB goal for all students achieving proficiency by 2014, or any subsequent date, is not achievable. In practice, Brandon High School and Achieve School District accepted the NCLB ideology knowing that the targeted goals would become increasing impossible and at the same time because of instrumentialized reasoning, limited the ability of staff to openly debate alternatives. This mindset left the staff at Brandon High School to focus on short-term gains (meeting NCLB targets) rather than embracing their original mission and vision which was focused on disrupting equity issues through personalized learning and inspiring achievement through project-based learning.

The desire to fully implement the EdVisions model was present with both the Brandon High School staff and Achieve School District, the challenge is that the system was not able to respond effectively to the issues within the Balancing Feedback cycle. At

the end of the three-year study Brandon High School had a low degree of implementation of the EdVisions model and overall lower than expected outcomes.

Interpretation of the findings; RQ #3. What adaptations were made from the original model and what was the rational and process used? Interpretations of research question #3 are based on the findings in Chapter four and the collective experience of staff and students from the planning phase to the end of year three as interpreted by the researcher. This section will be organized into two parts; the first will summarize the issues, processes and considerations that the stakeholders experienced. Part two will look at specific adaptations, rational and process used in each example.

Throughout the three-year history of Brandon High School the staff and Achieve School District have been committed to quality and continuous improvement. Every design essential element in the EdVisions model was carefully considered and implemented to a level that matched the needs of both students and staff. Figure X. Limits of Growth/Full Implementation of the EdVisions Model outlined the reinforcing/amplifying feedback that encouraged implementation and the balancing feedback documented the challenges, which resulted in reduced implementation and/or adaptations. The stakeholders identified skilled staff that are aligned with the mission and vision as the primary root issues challenging full implementation. The need for adaptations was also driven by external forces (Achieve School District and funders) to achieve higher scores than the public schools in that region.

Interviews with staff and documents over the three years of implementation indicate a staff perception that in each year Brandon High School experienced an implementation dip. At the end of each school year and during the summer, staff were

actively engaged at developing strategies that would result in an increase in the

implementation of the EdVisions model. Subsequently with the start of each school year,

staff were challenged to adapt their plans due to unmet student needs, lack of skills in

staff or interventions from the internal coach and leadership that prevented the

implementation of the proposed strategies. This implementation dip was a pattern for

each of the three years of the study. Thoughtful planning, followed by an implementation

dip and a flurry of substitute adaptations that were documented as less than optimal.

Another important factor to consider was that the EdVisions organization was not

favorable to adaptations, stating that they had seen schools implement their model with

too many adaptations, often resulting in a compromise in the integrity of the system to

produce engaged, life-long learners. The dynamic tension within EdVisions was the

fundamental belief that learning had to be personalized for students but how stakeholders

personalized the EdVisions design essentials to their local culture and resources needed

more research and clarification. Achieve School District and staff had established by

year two, that they needed to adapt the EdVisions model significantly to meet the needs

of their students and to match the skills of their staff.

Specific Interventions and Rational. A common occurrence in school reform is

for educators to take a given concept or design essential, deconstruct the element and take

only the components they find useful in their context. The benefit of this approach is that

educators often develop an experiential understanding of the element and develop

ownership of the design and implementation. The challenge with this mindset is that the

EdVisions model is meant to work as a system and if too many design elements are

adapted or unplugged the system does not operate effectively. Brandon High School

developed many adaptations during the first three years, most adaptations were driven by students' remedial, behavioral and mental health needs, in year two and three adaptations were also the result of limited skills in staff and the lack of alignment in the mission and vision. In year three adaptations were strongly influenced by performance goals on standardized tests.

  Shift from Self-Directed Learning to Projects embedded within Seminars. One of major adaptations occurred within the first half of year one, this was the result of students struggling to make the shift from traditional learning to self-directed learning. Many of the students (and parents) found this shift too large and did not have the basic skills to work effectively within their advisories on projects based on their interests and passions. Many of these students came from economically challenged homes and were experientially deprived of essential experiences that would help them identify passions that would lead to projects connected to state standards and life-long careers. Project proposals from year one often included themes in gangs, fighting, weapons, sex, athletes, recording artists and notorious criminals. During project time students were frequently observed using their Internet access to stream videos of fighting or to download music. Staff worked hard to inspire, redirect and to provide experiential learning opportunities to help shift students thinking into new possibilities, these initiatives were not enough to shift the culture that would result in engaged, self-directed learners. Staff came together and through extensive dialogue and a democratic process moved to create a more structured environment that would help students learn the project process through seminars.

Staff developed seminars based on core academic areas and engaging themes based on the big ideas and central concepts embedded in the state standards. Staff would provide content and ideally, experiential learning experiences that would help the students identify projects that were both engaging and rigorous. This strategy proved successful for Brandon High School but also required skilled educators that were proficient in content, adaptive in co-creating the learning with students and willing to engage the whole community in the learning process. In year three the percentage of staff hired that were not aligned with the mission and vision reached a tipping point, this lack of clarity of mission and vision, combined with the reality that most of the new hires lacked the necessary skills to deliver seminars in the manner described, resulted in seminars that did not match the intended design or outcome. In the spring of year three the researcher observed four teachers utilizing the seminar design developed in year one and expanded upon in year two; four teachers struggled to deliver basic content even with significant coaching and scripted curriculum. The educators that were not successful in delivering seminars reported that they were not aware of the time and the professional development required and did not receive the basic training/exposure of this pedagogy within their teacher training programs.

During the first half of year one Brandon High School also re-evaluated how math was delivered within the EdVisions model. Students started the school year with everyone doing math at the same time, utilizing an on-line math program with all the staff working together to support the students. This approach worked for some students but based on their learning styles, most students needed a more structured approach. Staff trained in math developed a series of seminars offered throughout the day that embedded

projects, experiential learning and community experts. This approach to math was reported by both students and teachers to be a successful adaptation to the EdVisions model.

Adaptation in Advisory. As Brandon High School shifted from self-directed learning to seminars dominating the schedule, most advisors had limited time to work with students within their own advisory, because they were teaching a seminar. The structure and purpose of advisories shifted from being the center of the school, where most of the learning and interpersonal skills were developed to an hour or two a day when students would work on assignments that may include projects. The reduced advisory time limited the personalization that results from meeting with students individually to identify and resolve behavior issues, develop and manage rigorous, engaging projects and to create and continuously update a personal learning plan. By year three the adaptations in advisory resulted in many students stating that the purpose of advisory was like a study hall and if I had my homework done I can just relax and socialize.

As a strategy to support the Advisors and advisories, Brandon High School developed the role of a Project Manger and a designated place that students could work on projects with the support of a project manager. This strategy proved to be a highly successful adaptation to the EdVisions model. The Project Managers became highly skilled staff that were able to help students create and manage rigorous projects. In year two this model of project time with project managers peaked with the staff being promoted to teaching and administrative positions for the following school year. An unexpected outcome of this Project Manager paradigm was how effective it was in

developing staff skills as a professional development model. This successful adaptation was not replicated in year three.

Adaptation in the Personal Learning Plan. As soon as students arrived in year one, staff realized that they needed a plan to significantly inspire and transform students into individuals willing to take ownership of their learning and their future. With a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, equity issues and the existing hegemony that challenges people of color dominated the conversation and resulting action plans. The existing Personal Learning Plan for EdVisions was primarily student informed and Advisor managed, Brandon High School needed a Personal Learning Plan that took the original EdVisions paradigm to a higher level. The staff developed an extensive Personal Learning Plan that was co-created with students and tested with several focus groups of students and their parents during year two. The design of the Personal Learning Plan required students to create and document who they are as individuals and their vision of where they wanted to go as students. Students were given several templates to use as examples and encouraged to adapt the templates to meet their learning style and preference. The personal learning plan creation and development was established as a continuous process, to be updated as needed throughout their high school experience. The bookend to the Personal Learning Plan was the requirement of presenting their plan to their Advisor, parent and focus group of individuals they could select in a Student Led Conference. Student Led Conferences were scheduled twice a year, at the end of the first semester and at the end of the school year. Students and parents who participated in the Personal Learning Plan and Student Led Conferences reported that the experience was transformational and one of the most valuable teacher

conferences they had ever participated in. Parents reported that it was one of the first times they witnessed their child owning their educational process, taking responsibility for their work and recognizing the people who were helping them achieve. A summary of the Personal Learning Plan process is found in Appendix D. As the staff of Brandon High School prepared for year, they fully intended on implementing the Personal Learning Plan and Student Led Conferences school-wide. In practice the Personal Learning Plan and Student Led Conferences were essentially eliminated during year three with the Personal Learning Plan devolving into an assignment to be completed once.

Student Behavior and Discipline. The EdVisions model when fully implemented often results in students engaged in their learning and taking ownership of their behaviors. When behavior issues arise, the Advisor is the primary person to help the student take ownership and make a plan for resolution within the community. At Brandon High School the time dedicated for an Advisor to work with students on behavior was limited as the team switched to seminars. The dynamic tension was that the expectation remained for Advisors to work with their students on behavior issues within a structure that did not allow for immediate/ timely response. Staff frequently would turn to the Principal or the internal coach to manage the intervention with the student. This adaptation was limited in that the Principal remained committed to Advisors working directly with students within their advisory on behavioral issues. One strategy that was effective was the utilization of restorative justice and the development of a restorative justice protocol that could be done by anyone, with any student. A secondary approach was to develop peer mediation that would engage trained students to facilitate dialogue between individuals and groups of students with issues. Although both restorative justice

and peer mediation were found to be effective, they were not adopted school wide and practiced with enough frequency to develop mastery or sustainability. By the end of year three the restorative justice protocol was rarely used and students were not practicing peer mediation. A Behavior Support Specialist was hired who remained committed to developing restorative justice and peer mediation as primary interventions, success is contingent on staff and leadership coming to consensus on how these interventions will be used.

   Authentic Assessments Achieve School District has a well-developed performance assessment in all their elementary schools that has students doing a wide range of presentations in the creative arts. The EdVisions model utilizes project exhibitions at the end of each block/semester as a means of having community members/experts see projects and hear presentations based on the students work. As Brandon High School was created, the original intent was to fuse the creative arts presentation with the project exhibition model. As stated previously year one was a challenge to get the students working projects effectively and the first project fair had mixed results. A secondary challenge was that the staff and process used in the creative arts had yet to be adapted successfully to high school students. The creative arts staff struggled to engage students, unlike the elementary programs where the system worked effectively. Over the entire three years staff were never able to effectively meet and discuss the challenges embedded in the creative arts programming. Continuous improvement of the creative arts program became a non-negotiable and overtime staff at Brandon High School and the creative arts teachers learned to work separately, never benefiting from collaboration. The creative arts programming had some amazing

teachers and presentations but never reached the impact the programming has in the elementary programs.

In year two students developed a process to implement their project exhibitions, they tested the process within their advisory and then with the whole Brandon High School community. The process was reported by both students and staff as an effective method to create engagement and rigor in projects through regularly scheduled performance assessments that were hosted by students of Brandon High School. Within this process was the desire of students to have project exhibitions and a willingness to be a partner in making them a reality. The student developed project fair was an innovative development that was actively utilized in year two, in year three the project fairs were postponed, then canceled with the exception of the end of year project fair, which was reported by both students and staff as a key motivator for completing projects and creating a sense of purpose and excitement.

Data Management. Project management is a central component of a project-based school. EdVisions encourages schools to identify a project management software to track student progress, document state standards and encourage collaboration. Brandon High School provided each student with a computer, Internet access and basic training in the project management software. As students utilized the project management software it became apparent that students with low reading and writing skills struggled to utilize the software in a productive manner. To support remedial learners and to tune the project process for everyone, staff created a series of support materials that were designed to strengthen the project process for seminars and self-

directed projects. This proved to be a successful adaptation until a competing version was created in year three that resulted in a lack of consensus and increased confusion.

A secondary function of the project management software is to record student progress, generate progress reports, report cards and transcripts. Staff attempted to utilize the software to generate reports that were clear and useful to students and parents, with limited results. Many hours went into adapting the software until a decision was made to utilize the same software the elementary schools used for grade reports and state reporting. The teaming and collaboration that went into identifying the root issues, problem solving and decision-making were exemplary. Throughout the process staff, Achieve School District Administrative staff and the software company all worked together to find a workable solution.

Summary. The staff at Brandon High School were very committed individuals who were constantly seeking and testing adaptations that would improve the implementation of the EdVisions model. When issues developed with the EdVisions model, the staff would often come together and utilize dialogue and consensus to develop adaptations. Overall the staff were also open to outcome, if the adaptation did not met expectations, they would meet again and repeat the process until they found the next viable solution. The staff were most successful with developing adaptations in year one and year two. In year three the focus shifted to achievement on state tests, with adaptations developed outside of the team and administered through a top-down process.

Interpretation of the findings; RQ #4. In what was the experience like for faculty and students? Interpretations of research question #4 are based on the findings in Chapter four and the collective experience of staff and students from the planning

phase to the end of year three as interpreted by the researcher. This section will be organized into two parts; the first segment will be an overview, framing the main issues, mental models and considerations that the staff and students experienced. Part two will discuss specific areas within the experience from the student and staff perspective.

   Overview. Establishing a new school with a fundamentally different teaching and learning paradigm is tremendously difficult work. Everyone involved tends to underestimate the amount of work necessary to shift the individual and collective model of what school is and can be away from the long established paradigms of traditional teaching and learning. As you plan and develop a new school you have different stakeholders coming together at different times; the founders along with a design team might create the initial vision and mission of a school, actively working on the development of the new school for two years before the first educators are hired. The educators might be recruited anywhere from a year to three months before the school is opened and students arrive. Students are recruited and experience an orientation and registration before they begin the first day of school. Each of these groups have been involved in the school for different reasons and for different lengths of time and intensity, therefore they will have different mental models/perceptions of the school and culture. The group working the longest on the school reform paradigm is most likely to have the best-developed mental model. This relationship that changes over time is illustrated in following diagram:

The Implementation Effect
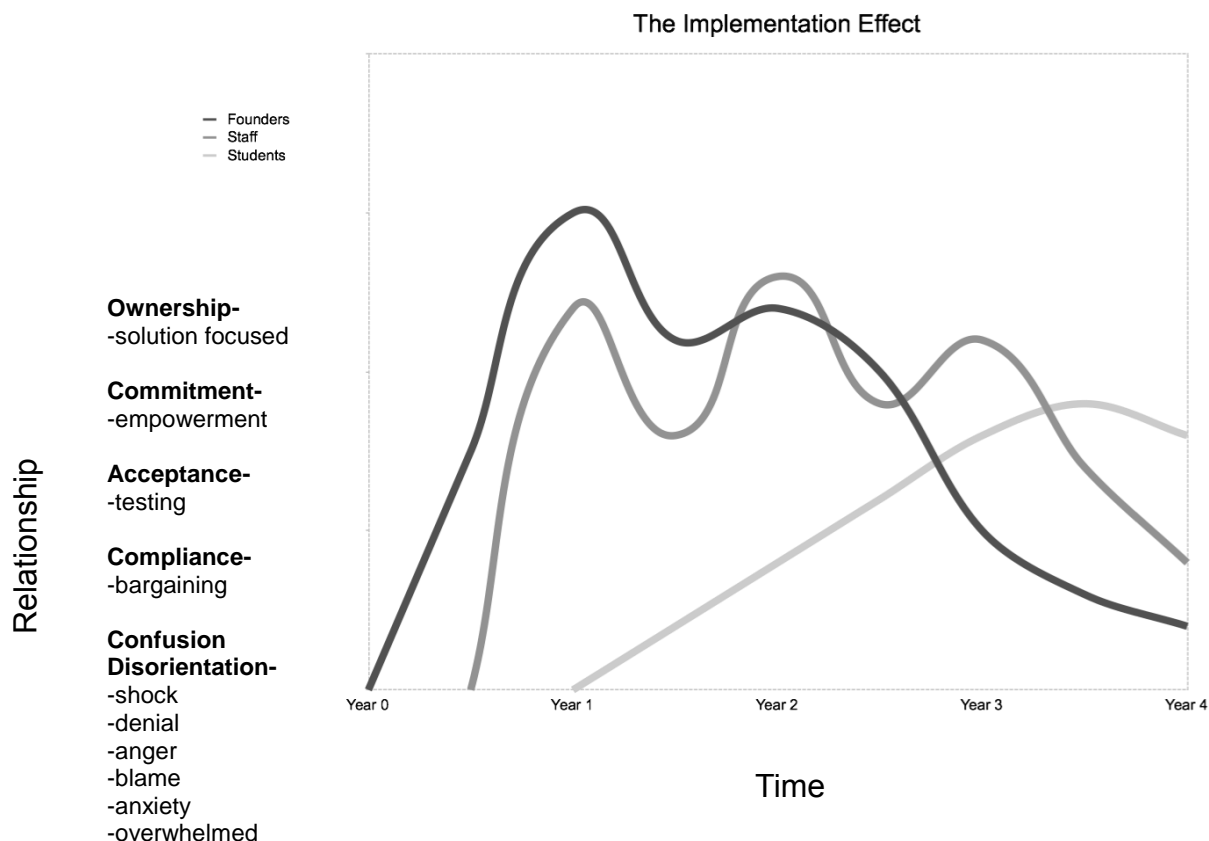
Figure 13. The Implementation Effect represents the differences founders, staff and students experienced in their relationship with the implementation of the EdVisions model over time.

The researcher utilized observations, documentation and interview data to construct the approximate basic data points for the founders, staff and students. The work of Fullan (1991,2001) helped identify and document the implementation dip that was observed in the fall of each school year. The y-axis was influenced by the work of Kuber-Ross (1969) and the grief cycle.

With this framework it is possible to see how the founders had a mental model that was significantly more established than the teachers and how the teachers had developed a significantly more established mental model than the students and parents. Without investing time and resources into a well-developed orientation for new members

(staff, students, parents and community members) it is understandable that on opening day some of the students and parents would be in shock, denial or even angry and demonstrate resistance. It is also worth noting that in year two staff surpassed the founders in their level of commitment and ownership. In year three staff and students were building in their levels of acceptance, commitment and ownership. The imposed changes in pedagogy and democratic teaching and learning were demonstrations of the falling commitment and acceptance of the founders. With these changes in place, staff ownership, commitment and acceptance dropped, as student levels continued to rise. As year three progressed, the founders, staff and students were all in a downward trend.

What was the experience like for faculty and students? As the first staff were recruited for Brandon High School a careful vetting process was in place, each staff member was engaged in extended dialogue to talk through the founders vision and mission for the new school. Each staff member went through an extensive orientation that allowed the individual to voice their concerns and work collaboratively to construct solutions. Interview and survey data found that staff found this experience to be empowering, genuine and effective. Staff expressed a deep appreciation for being part of creating a new paradigm of education for their region.

The orientation and registration process that was established for new students and parents took longer and required more resources than expected. To meet established deadlines an expedited orientation process was developed and this resulted in some students and parents not being oriented well enough to understand the dramatic shift in teaching and learning as they completed the enrollment forms. From this perspective it is easier to understand how many of the students would experience shock and frustration

when they realized that the school they enrolled in was actually harder and required more self-discipline and commitment to learning than anything they had experienced previously.   For a select group of students it was the ideal school and the pedagogy fit their learning style and personality, for others it was so different they worked to get their head around the possibilities. One student expressed it as "I came for the wrong reasons (because my boy-friend enrolled here) but overtime I really found my place here and found that I can be a successful student, now I have a great plan for what I want to do when I graduate."   Both students and staff expressed in the interviews that this school is not for everyone; some people (teachers and students) need more structure to stay focused and be successful. Over time staff began to utilize the language that anyone can be successful at Brandon High School if you are willing to stretch your teaching and learning style, if you are not willing to grow and stretch, it is okay to leave and find a school that better matches your teaching and learning style.

Each year new staff and students experienced an initial time of shock and confusion as they became experientially oriented to the day to day teaching and learning paradigms of Brandon High School. The initial shock and confusion could be one of the root causes of the implementation dips experienced at the start of each school year.

The experience of students and staff from an equity perspective. As documented previously many of the students came from homes challenged by low-income or poverty with 78% of the students on free and reduced lunch. For many of these students they live in communities where it is part of the culture to be in a survival mode. When the students arrived from over eight different communities it was observed that many of the students engaged in posturing, loud and abusive language and wore

clothes and made hand signs as if they were in gangs. For most of the staff this was a

culture shock and they were unprepared for the verbal abuse and the on-going tension

that students might erupt into a fight at any given moment. In hindsight much of this

behavior is what one might expect from individuals in a survival mode, you cannot come

across as weak or allow people to take advantage of you in your neighborhood or at

school.

The work of Abraham Maslow (1943), commonly know as Maslow's Hierarchy

of Needs, illuminates the equity issues that challenge many of the students at Brandon

High School.

Self-actualisation
(Achieving individual potential)

Esteem
(self-esteem and esteem from others)

Belonging
(Love, affection, being a part of groups)

Safety
(Shelter, removal from danger)

Physiological
(Health, food, sleep)
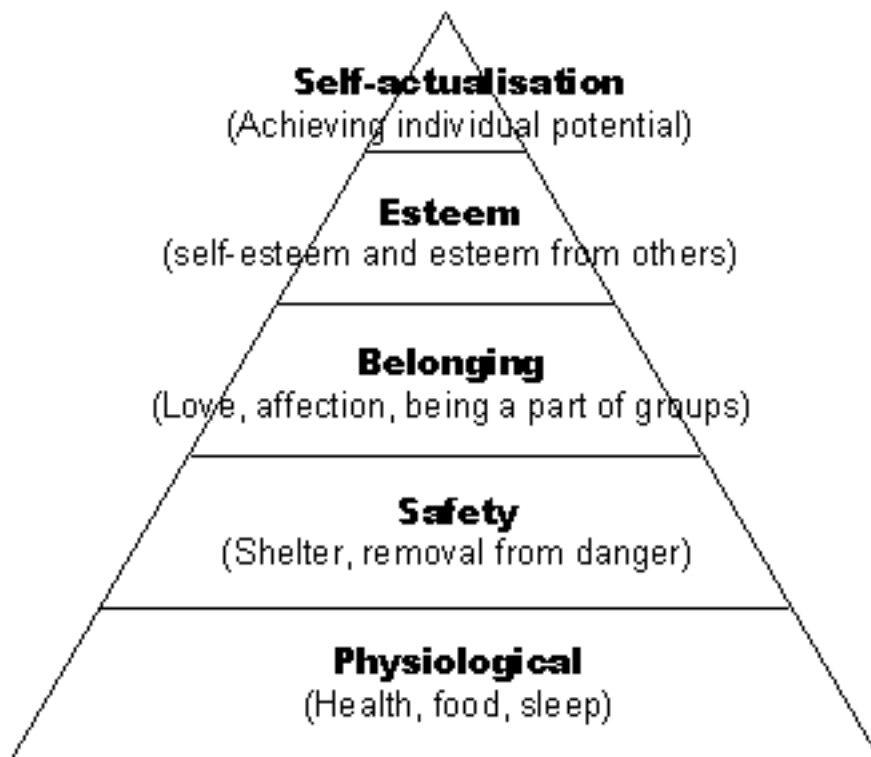
Figure 14. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

As students arrived at Brandon High School the mission and vision is essentially designed to activate the top three levels of the pyramid; belonging, esteem and self-actualization. The challenge is that many of the basic needs of students were not consistently being met; many came from families where they do not have enough to eat or an established place to sleep. Safety is an on-going threat and is the potential root issue for many of the students' abusive language, posturing and fixation on fighting. If one is in survival mode they are always trying to manage their physiological needs and one's safety. You are always ready to fight if you need to. It is from this lens of equity, based on the unmet needs of physiological and safety that Brandon High School staff experienced many of their students. This challenge created tremendous stress on the staff as they worked long hours to try and meet the complex educational needs and the physiological and safety needs of their students. Most of the planning and financial resources were dedicated towards the top three levels of Maslow's pyramid (self-actualization, esteem and belonging) and the greatest need for most students was in the first two levels (physiological and safety).

Upon analysis of the Hope Survey data a pattern developed in the area of belongingness. According to Newel and Van Ryzin (2009) belongingness (as used in the Hope Survey) is a measure of the depth and quality of the interpersonal relationships in an individual's life and is vital to maintaining high levels of motivation and engagement, which influences academic achievement. Over a three-year period the Hope Survey scores in the area of belongingness/peer and personal were recorded at either a low level or needs improvement. These ratings would indicate that students at Brandon High School had a higher than average need to build relationships and learn strategies to

manage stressful events in their lives like bullying, violence, family crisis and personal/mental health issues. Methods to strengthen belongingness/peer and personal include advisories, experiential learning, cooperative projects, personal learning plans, restorative justice and mentoring. Based on the insights from the data, students needed more time and resources in these elements and in practice most of these interventions were attenuated to provide more time for remedial and test preparation. Decreasing the time invested in the identified interventions may have been a contributing factor to the low outcomes recorded in year three. Additional support for this can be found in staff documenting that in all three years of experiential programming they never had a documented behavioral issue with students, perhaps this was because these experiences were building peer and personal relationships.

  Limited feelings of success and recognition. The culture of Achieve School District is one of support and recognition, which is observed simply by walking through any of their elementary schools. This culture has yet to transfer to Brandon High School, in part because of the complex challenges of overcoming the equity issues and educational impediments that many of the students face. The federal government mandate of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) sets and measures targets with harsh penalties for not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Staff and students at Brandon High School knew they had a huge challenge ahead of them to meet the targets established by NCLB and they owned it, working long hours to develop systems that would produce results. The hegemony built into the system is that student growth is measured based on achieving the target, as compared to measuring the students when they first arrive at a school and recognizing growth as they work towards the NCLB

targets. The staff and students were successful in disrupting years of academic failure and detachment from learning for almost all of the students who struggled before coming to Brandon High School. This was a major accomplishment that was not recognized publicly. As staff burnout developed, what was needed was solid recognition on the gains made to date, what staff experienced was guilt and failure for not meeting NCLB targets. It would have been helpful to celebrate each growth step in the progress towards meeting the NCLB targets. Overtime staff reported feelings of lack of support, questioning staff autonomy in curriculum and program design that reached a tipping point in year three that resulted in many of the staff becoming detached and burned out. Without a significant intervention in this area, staff have the potential of becoming detached from their feelings of ownership of Brandon High School and could begin to see their jobs much like many traditional teachers, as described by Gatto (2002), simply a job where they deliver scripted curriculum in a tightly controlled, top-down decision making structure.

Section Three

Section three will provide recommendations specific to Brandon High School, implications for organization development practitioners, discuss emerging problems and provide suggestions for future research. Recommendations are provided through the lens of critical theory and organization development.

Recommendations. The importance of creating a validated mission and vision with all the stakeholders and reviewing annually became a reoccurring theme throughout the study. The common mistake schools make is to believe that a newly formed school has a mission and vision that is good enough and to begin to focus on the details of

implementation rather than focus on true consensus and a shared vision. Peter Senge's

The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization (1990) describes

five disciplines that could help evolve Brandon High School into a learning organization.

The five disciplines are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning

and systems thinking. These elements are interrelated and work together to create a

learning organization. The founders of Brandon High School had a clear vision of what

they wanted Brandon High School to become. Creating a shared vision is described by

Senge:

> Is when there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too familiar "vision statement", people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many leaders have personal visions that never get translated in shared visions that galvanize an organization. (p.9)

By deeply exploring, defining and validating a shared mission and vision

statement, stakeholders at Brandon High School would likely become aware of the

mental models that underlie their beliefs and actions and demonstrate the degree of

ownership needed for successful implementation of whatever model they embrace.

The lack of an agreed upon orientation process for staff, students, parents and

community members was identified during years two and three. The next

recommendation suggests that once a clear mission and vision is established the team

develops orientation protocols for all new members (including substitute teachers). It is

essential to utilize the orientation protocols with fidelity and consistently throughout the

school year with any new member. The orientation process and protocols should be

reviewed as needed for continuous improvement.

The influence of equity issues and the long established mental models that both

students and staff bring with them, is the cumulating effect of many years of personal

experience. The personal learning plan and student led conference could become a powerful tool for transformation and growth. The researcher recommends that each member of the school (students and staff) develop and share their personal learning plan in a scheduled student led conference (with adults it would be an educator led conference) at least twice a year. It is through this process that each member of the learning community learns to identify their own passion and areas for growth while developing skills in advocating for themselves and asking for help. Kegan and Lahey (2009), described how many people have an immunity to change in their personal growth because they have unconsciously developed self-talk scripts and behaviors that undermine the goals and growth they want to accomplish. By encouraging each member of the community to engage in a personal learning plan and to share the plan publicly (or within a focus group) helps identify unconscious assumptions and allow the individual to consciously take action in a more productive and supportive environment. The ability of a personal learning plan to be transformative and to become a tool to assist in the disruption of equity issues requires the organization to make a commitment to the process. It is important to realize that some educators are resistant to personal learning plans because they have been influenced by the existing educational hegemony, causing them to believe as a teacher, they have to be perfect and all knowing. The process of a personal learning plan may threaten this notion and expose their weaknesses.

The most frequent misstep in personal learning plans is to see the process as an assignment to be completed. One consideration is to change the name to a continuous learning plan to emphasize the continuous review inherent in the process. Utilizing a personal learning plan as a long-term strategy for growth may assist in the development

of personal mastery as described by Senge (1990). When individuals become conscious of their own growth, we are also more likely to celebrate and reinforce each other, which contributes to a positive and productive workplace. Brookfield (2005), citing the work of Marcuse, suggests that some adult educators who might be stuck in one-dimensional thinking (or relate well to art) may benefit from the transformative power of art by helping them discover new critical perspectives.

Related to the personal learning plan is the need to develop an effective professional development program within Brandon High School. In chapter four, data were collected indicating that most staff were not prepared in their teacher preparation programs to implement a project-based, advisory centered model. Chapter four also found that the Project Manager position and process was highly effective in developing these skills. One consideration is to expand the Project Manager role to encourage student teachers and even established teachers interested in becoming an advisor, to experience being a Project Manager. This professional development paradigm becomes an experientially based process that builds the capacity of individuals to engage fully in the pedagogy within an authentic and cost effective structure. The process also encourages student teachers to work with their professors to improve the pedagogy and supporting research.

The next recommendation focuses on how Brandon High School defines, implements and creates accountability for collaborative leadership and instruction. Defining collaborative leadership and instruction requires clarity on democratic teaching and learning and the intended level of autonomy within the framework of a self-directed team. To experience the benefits of collaborative leadership and instruction, staff need to

experience authentic autonomy in the areas of: budget, staffing, curriculum and

instruction, assessment, governance and policies and scheduling, as recommended by the

Center for Collaborative Education (2007). Ideally Brandon High School staff would

work with Achieve School District to define autonomy in each of these areas and develop

a system of accountability to quality assure performance, including results on

standardized tests. When issues arise the expectation of the team (including Achieve

School District) is that they will engage in problem solving in a democratic process as

defined by Habermas (1975) and summarized by Brookfield (2005):

> ….good discussion and therefore good democratic process, depends on
> everyone contributing, on everyone having the fullest possible knowledge of
> different perspectives, and on everyone being ready to give up their position if
> a better argument is presented to them (pg. 265-266).

Working collaboratively with the staff at Brandon High School to solve issues in

a democratic manner that maintains autonomy will create a high degree of ownership and

motivation. To create motivated and successful self-directed teams, Pink (2009)

establishes autonomy, mastery and purpose as essential elements.

Implications for OD practitioners. The Process Essentials in

School/Organization Development and Renewal could be a useful tool for organization

development practitioners seeking practical methods to increase the success and

sustainability of new schools. The Process Essentials were found to be useful in

identifying root causes to issues. Once root issues have been identified, the practitioner

can then target the intervention (individual, staff, students, parents, board….). With this

information in mind the practitioner can then design the intervention with the appropriate

delivery method (training, process consultation, data feedback…). The application of the

Process Essentials can also be integrated into The OD Cube: A Scheme for classifying

OD interventions as described by Miles and Schmuck (1971). Utilizing the Process

Essentials in this manner provides the organization development practitioner a language

and a methodology that seems to be applicable to any organization. The initial intent of

the Process Essentials was to design as an organization development process that would

support the development of democratic, self-directed work teams and applied critical

theory.

       The systems analysis of Brandon High School was informed by the work of

Senge (1990), (1997) and resulted in the Figure 12, Limits of Growth/Full

Implementation of the EdVisions Model. As this systems map was created it was

reviewed by organization development practitioners and school coaches from around the

United States. Feedback from the reviewers indicated that many of the issues limiting

implementation might be common issues. If this is true**,** Figure 12. may be a useful tool

for organization development practitioners working with schools throughout the United

States. The systems map could be a starting diagram that could be adapted to the unique

cultural, regional and political environments for any school.

       The Personal Learning Plan developed at Brandon High School (appendix D) is a

template that could be useful for the organization development professional.

This unique process attempts to activate the ten phases of perspective transformation as

described by Mezirow (1991).   Helping individuals recreate themselves and activate

their passions, with the potential towards self-actualization is one of joys of being an

organization development practitioner. Disrupting the long established ritual of self-

defeating professional development plans and personal growth plans is difficult work.

Utilizing the insights of Kegan and Lahey (2009) could help inform practical

methodology in helping people uncover their self-created and reinforced immunity to change. The Personal Learning Plan described in appendix B is one example that has been successful, the organization development practitioner is encourage to utilize this template and develop the work further.

        Emerging problems and issues. An emerging challenge for organization development practitioners engaged in school reform that surfaced within the study, is the challenge to maintain the role of process consultation as described by Schein (1999). Brandon High School, like many schools striving to engage in school reform did not have enough skilled staff or enough capacity to fully implement and sustain the EdVisions model. As staff move towards implementation, the team had a tremendous need for skilled people in the areas of training, coaching/mentoring and leadership. With limited capacity in leadership the organization development practitioner may sense the vacuum of leadership and can easily be drawn into that role unless due diligence is practiced. The work of Hersey & Blanchard (1988) describes situational leadership and a process to identify what kind of leadership individuals need to be successful (directing, coaching, supporting or delegating).
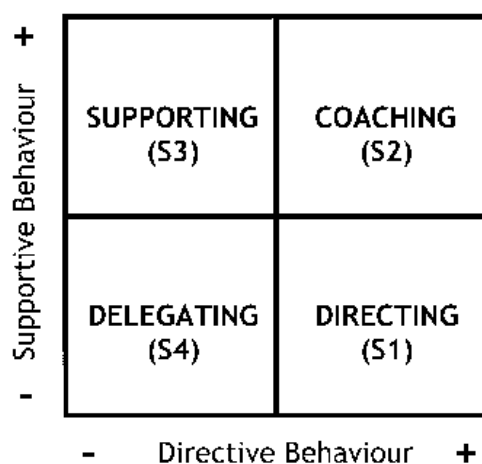
Figure 15. Situational Leadership

Helping the organization develop the leadership capacity to successfully support each of the areas described in Situational Leadership can potentially eliminate the threat of role confusion and maintain the integrity of the organization development practitioner. This intervention may require the organization development practitioner to invest more resources in executive coaching.

Suggestions for additional research. Throughout year two and year three, staff documented the tremendous impact the federally imposed No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has had on the ability of Brandon High School to design and implement methods to disrupt equity issues and create a transformative learning environment for their students. The pre-established achievement targets of NCLB do not take into account the pre-existing ability and family/community dynamics in which the student spends the majority of their time. As a result staff were forced to make significant changes in their mission and vision and to shift to a test-preparation, test taking, test-burnout culture. The control imposed by the No Child Left Behind Act was described by Kohl (2009) as an educational panopticon:

> When I talk about an educational panopticon I mean a system in which teachers and students are under constant scrutiny, allowed no choice over what is learned or taught, evaluated continuously, and punished for what is considered inadequate performance. In this context students and teachers are forced to live in a constant state of anxiety, self-doubt, wariness, anomie, and even suppressed rage". (pg.2)

The results of the study indicate that the staff at Brandon High School and perhaps many schools throughout the United States are adversely effected by the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act and merits further research to better understand the impact. A secondary question is whether the impact of No Child Left Behind is an

intentional impact; did the creators of the legislation know of these effects or is the

impact is an unintended result? Kohl (2009) stated:

> When I bring up these moral issues to educators who consider themselves reformers in the spirit of No Child Left Behind, they usually acknowledge these "unfortunate" things can happen but that they are unintended consequences of a program designed to get every child performing to high standards. That is not the case. These alienating immoral practices are intended consequences. People who make and administer high stakes tests know the moral and personal costs of subjecting all students to them. People who insult and denigrate teachers by forcing scripted curriculum on them are perfectly aware that they are forcing teachers to act against their conscience and students to close down their minds. What must be raised and answered for is the moral cost of creating joyless schools that resemble panopticons. (pg. 3)

With these concerns stated the following research questions are proposed for

future research and study, each research question should be conducted through the lens of

critical theory:

1. What is the intended and unintentional impact of NCLB on both students and

   staff in the short-term and in the long-term?

2. How might a growth model that recognizes students ability and environmental

   factors be more effective than establishing high stake benchmarks?

3. To what degree and in what ways, are privately held foundations influencing

   traditional and progressive educational models success and sustainability?

4. What role does critical theory and longitudinal studies have in better

   understanding the existing educational systems?

Section Four

Final Thoughts. With the development of Charter Schools and the realization of

the American people that the existing educational system is not meeting the needs of all

children, a wide range of educators and community members are working together to

create new schools that is essentially driving school reform. The intent of many of these

school reformers is to disrupt the status quo and to create new learning environments and new opportunities for students, parents and educators. The challenge with innovation as described by Christensen & Raynor (2003) is identifying disrupting innovation verses innovation that sustains the status quo. One trend in school reform is essentially a leaner traditional model, independent of labor unions, utilizing tightly controlled curriculum and management. This type of school meets the needs of some students and teachers but the literature demonstrates a need for fundamentally different schools. The financial support for these new, leaner, traditionally based schools is well documented with a wide range of private foundations offering large grants with the expectation that the innovation meets their pre-established criteria. With these elements in mind, the potential for disruptive school reform is at risk. It is important that school reformers throughout the United States do not allow the innovative school reform models based on progressive education to be used as a pawn or as a token, while much greater forces are at work sustaining the status quo. Brookfield (2005) summarizes the concept of repressive tolerance as originally defined by Marcuse:

> By allowing a certain amount of social criticism in the name of free speech, the dominant group convinces the rest of the people that they live in a democracy. This reassuring conviction then blunts people's desire to pursue revolution and ensures that basic economic and political structures remain intact.

This awareness of repressive tolerance and the larger framework of critical theory can support organization development practitioners, students, staff and community members in preparing for the challenging work of innovative school reform. Becoming skilled in double-loop learning as defined by Argyris (2000) can help identify and overcome the defensive routines that keep traditional education as the status quo. Lastly,

it is essential that innovative schools based in progressive education clarify and share publicly their processes and outcomes, contributing to the overall research and a greater understanding of the diversity of school reform being created throughout the United States.

As I consider my own areas of significant learning and insight, I would like to share the following points. First, I value the gains NCLB has made in raising the awareness around the large differences in achievement based on income and race. I also appreciate the new expectations on data collection and utilization of the data; this work is making a difference in school reform. What offsets these gains is the shocking reality of how NCLB has created oppressive teaching and learning environments within our schools. What is hidden is the important teaching and learning that has been left behind so educators have enough time to focus on standardized tests. What also is hidden is the fear teachers and administrators carry if their school does not meet the narrow definitions of what makes a good school, as defined by NCLB. I have witnessed firsthand how a school with a powerful mission and vision embraced students from a historically underachieving urban neighborhood; only to find that expectations for success in NCLB did not recognize growth, only predetermined levels of achievement. I wonder how many innovative schools, with breakthrough pedagogy have had to surrender their mission and vision and focus on test skills and test taking just to survive. I also wonder what major advances in teaching and learning have been attenuated as a result of not being able to break through the instrumentialized reasoning that keeps politicians from seeing the damaging effects of NCLB. These issues will require further research and

significant public discourse before a meaningful resolution is found. I remain hopeful

that we can evolve beyond NCLB and standardized testing.

It is my hope that this study has contributed to the literature on school reform and

has provided an additional framework and practical tools to support organization

development practitioners and for anyone interested in improving schools or their own

organization.

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Appendix A

Subject Interview Questions

Staff Survey and Open-Ended Questions

At the start of the interview the research will provide a standard Likert Scale with ratings 1-5 listed with the number and descriptive summary word(s).

1. How many years have you been formally teaching?
2. Prior to teaching at this school, did you have any formal training in project-based learning and the use of fulltime, multi-aged advisories?
3. In your own words, what is the mission and vision of this school?
4. How important is it to have a mission statement that staff/students helped create and own?
   a. Likert Scale 1-5.
5. In the area of Collaborative Leadership & Instruction how important is having autonomy or voice in the following areas:
   a. Budget
   b. Staffing
   c. Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
   d. Governance and Policies
   e. Schedule

6. Rate your current level of autonomy & voice in each of the listed areas
   a. Likert Scale 1-5 in areas a-e.
7. How important is the ability to work collaboratively as a team?
   a. Likert Scale 1-5
8. How important is it to utilize distributive leadership to be successful with your vision and mission?
   a. Likert Scale 1-5
9. Have you observed and can you describe significant changes or transformations in students?
10. What is your understanding of the value and purpose of experiential learning?
11. To what degree are students and educators co-creating experiences and learning constructively?
12. How important is experiential learning to achieving your vision & mission?
    a. Likert Scale 1-5
13. Researcher defines for this study: "Tipping Point"
    a. If you actualized your vision and mission what would the culture of the school look and feel like?
    b. What did (or would) it take to reach a tipping point?

    c. What other tipping points have you experienced (or not)?

    d. How significant are "tipping points" in meeting your vision & mission?

        i. Likert Scale 1-5

14. Researcher presents Blanchard's change formula

    a. Within this change formula, which element is weakest when trying to achieve your vision & mission?

        i. What is the second weakest?

    b. How important are these elements collectively to create change?

        i. Likert Scale 1-5.

15. Researcher reads definition of "action research"

    a. In your teacher preparation what was your exposure to action-research and utilizing data to make decisions?

    b. Describe how your team engages in continuous improvement?

    c. How important is continuous improvement based in data and action-research?

        i. Likert Scale 1-5

16. Researcher defines dynamic tensions

    a. All teams have dynamic tensions that exist as a result of implementing their vision/mission

        i. Can you identify existing dynamic tensions?

        ii. What process (es) are used to deal with dynamic tensions?

        iii. Rate the importance of your team being able to address dynamic tensions

            1. Likert Scale 1-5

17. Researcher provides a copy of the current mission statement.

    a. How do Personal Learning Plans fit into your mission & vision?

    b. How important is it that students become engaged in a personalized plan?

18. Researcher provides a copy of the Flow diagram

    a. Can you identify where you spend most of your time on this flow diagram? How has this placement changed over time?

    b. How important is it that staff & students work towards "flow"?

        i. Likert Scale 1-5

19. It is my understanding that each year the school and the district work collaboratively to establish target outcomes that include state tests.

    a. How did these outcomes influence the team and pedagogy?

    b. How important is meeting these benchmark outcomes?

20. When you think about sustainability and your school what are some of the issues that come to mind?

    a. How important are these issues to your schools sustainability?

21. How are new members (students and staff) oriented to the vision & mission and the community as a whole?

    a. What would be an ideal process?

      b. How important is an effective orientation process to the successful implementation of your vision and mission?
          i. Likert Scale 1-5.

Student survey and open-ended questions

At the start of the interview the researcher will provide a standard Likert Scale with ratings 1-5 listed with the number and descriptive summary word(s).

1. When did you start at this high school as a student?
2. Prior to attending this school, did you ever attend a school centered on project-based learning and the use of fulltime, multi-aged advisories?
3. Researcher supplies a current copy of the mission statement.
    a. In your own words, what is the mission or the purpose of this school? What does this school strive to be?
    b. How important is it to have a mission statement that staff/students helped create and own?
        i. Likert Scale 1-5.
4. What was it like for you as a student in a new project-based, advisory centered school? For example, what did you find challenging or what did you find success in?
5. Have you observed and can you describe significant changes or transformations in yourself or other students?
6. What do you think it was like for staff to implement this new high school based on the mission statement, what did you think was challenging and what do you think they were successful with?
7.   What is your understanding of the value and purpose of experiential learning at this school?
8.   To what degree are students and educators co-creating experiences and learning constructively through projects? Can you give me an example?
9.   How important is experiential learning to achieving your vision & mission?
    a. Likert Scale 1-5
10. How do Personal Learning Plans and student led conferences fit into your mission & vision?
    a. How important is it that students become engaged in a personalized plan?
11. What do you think is the value & purpose of doing projects and then presenting them at a Project Fair or Celebration of Learning?
12. From your perspective, what is the best way to increase productivity and quality of projects?
13.   How are new members (students and staff) oriented to the vision & mission and the community as a whole?

       a. What would be an ideal process?

       b. How important is an effective orientation process to the successful implementation of your vision and mission?

          i. Likert Scale 1-5.

14. What advice would you give new students and staff who are want to attend your school?

15. Has your perception of what school is, or can be, changed since coming here?

16. Would you like to add anything else to these questions? Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

EdVisions school reform model: Design Essentials

Small Learning Community: How do we connect with young people in a democratic learning community?

1. Small learning communities of 150 students
2. Highly personalized setting; every student treated as an individual – *No Child Left Unknown*
3. Positive, caring relationships; respect and responsibility modeled and practiced
4. Multiage advisories in place; meet twice daily; advisors fully responsible for no more than 20 students
5. Mentoring available to all students
6. Restorative justice practiced
7. Parents and community at large actively engage with students to support learning
8. Democratic student government supports active engagement in decision making process
9. Students experience value of citizenship as they contribute to greater community

Self-directed Project-based Learning: How do we facilitate the work of youth as self-directed producers and learners?

1. Self-directed, project-based learning primary focus; driven by constructivist pedagogy
2. Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) for all students emphasizing student needs and interests
3. Personalized work space for each student; Internet access
4. Technology-infused environment; technology used as tool
5. Individual/group projects complemented by multiple teaching and learning approaches
6. Achievement demonstrated publicly; highest work place standards are quality goal
7. All students prepared for post-secondary education, workplace, and active citizenship
8. All students and staff engage in quiet reading every day

Authentic Assessment: How do we know that we are achieving our intended results?

1. Plan for how projects will be assessed by more than one adult, with opportunities for students to improve products to meet quality standards
2. Demonstrated achievement, with plan for public presentations including community involvement
3. Electronic standards tracking/reporting system and electronic student portfolios
4. Standardized testing; results inform Personalized Learning Plans and continuous improvement
5. Value-added measures including assessment of life skills and results from Hope

Study enhance Personal Learning Plans and continuous improvement
6. Post-secondary plans for all students beginning at ninth grade
7. Graduation includes standards met as well as project credits, life skills gained, and a senior project

Teacher-Ownership/Democratic Governance: How do we engage "Teachers as Owners" of a democratic learning community?

1. Autonomous school management with control over budget and staffing; individual responsibility and accountability for school finance and educational success
2. Teachers model ownership and demonstrate democratic leadership; inspire students, parents and community to take ownership and actively engage in decision making; incorporate consensus model
3. Teacher evaluations by peers, students, and parents; performance-based pay, at-will employment (if applicable)
4. Evaluations inform individual Professional Development Plans; focus on self and school improvement
5. Coaching/mentoring plan for incorporation of new members and continuous improvement

Appendix C
Limits of Growth/Implementation of the EdVisions Model

Appendix D

Personal Learning Plan Cycle
Student Orientation-Graduation

Experiencing & Assessing
(Begin ASAP, then as needed.)

Examples:
- Community explorations
- Community expert speakers
- College/Vocational explorations
- Career interest assessments
- Guided reflection & journaling
- Learning styles & Interest surveys
- NWEA/ MAP
- 4sights & State assessments
- Hope Survey

Data Analysis
(Review with student during your scheduled bi-weekly meeting.)

Goal: Student owns the data

EQ: What does this data mean to me and what can I learn from it?
- Identify my Strengths and develop a strategy for leveraging strengths.
- Identify my competency gaps and develop a strategy for addressing essential skills

Action Planning
- Brainstorm strategies: What do I need to do? What projects, seminars/training and experiences do I need to achieve my goals?
- Select/ prioritize strategies
- Establish a schedule and important milestones
- Define who to go to for help
- Identify resources needed

Diagnostic Interview with Advisor
(First two weeks, then as needed.)
- Identification & reflection of interests, goals and needs.
- Agreement on what experiences & assessments might be helpful & informative
- Scheduling of assessments

The Portfolio
Documentation of the PLP includes a 3 ring binder and electronic storage.

Creation of PLP Document
(Within 8 wks; revisit as needed.)
- Narrative of learning strategies based on your personal mission statement and assessments
- Starts simple and builds in depth and ownership over time.
- A current road map to achievement, this could also include a block plan or weekly goals. Consider posting goals on your desk as a way to keep on target/task

Orientation Phase
Focused on:
- experiencing the culture
- experiential orientation to your model & mission
- pre-assessments
- learning & behavior contract

Feedback on PLP
- Advisor and participants provide helpful feedback
- PLP rated on a rubric
- Next steps defined

Implement the plan
(Weekly topic in advisories.)
- Document your progress
- Seek help from others when you have questions/ problems
- Utilize quality review circles to improve rigor and focus

Students express an interest in attending your school.
Start Here

Student-Led Conferences
- Student presents for 20 minutes their PLP.
- Demonstrates learning, discusses challenges and next steps.
- Includes who I am when I am at my best.

Prepare for Student-led conference
- Summarize & practice
- Determine who will attend your conference (Advisor, parent & peer are recommended participants)

S. Rippe 2010 sjrippe@earthlink.net

CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Process and outcomes of an urban school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model

IRB Log Number: C11-054-92

I am conducting a study about the process and outcomes of starting a new school in an urban community. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because *you have been part of the school community within the last three years*. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by: *Steven J. Rippe through the Organizational Learning and Development department, University of St. Thomas, MN.*

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to document from an organization development perspective, the process and outcomes of implementing a new high school in an urban setting that is advisory centered and project-based. This research could benefit new school development and continuous improvement efforts.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Participate in a 40-60-minute interview that will include a survey and responding to open ended questions. I will record the audio of the interview digitally and take notes to help me remember your answers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has no known risks and there is no direct benefit or compensation for participating in the study. In the study I will use nothing that will identify you, confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study and responses will be summarized into aggregate data.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way.   The types of records I will create include consent forms, survey data, audio recordings and written notes. The data will be kept in a locked file and only Steven J. Rippe will have access. All data will be destroyed after five years.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with XXXXXXX Schools or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you will not be used in the study. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is *Steven J. Rippe*. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at *612-735-2522*. You may also contact my Advisor, Professor John Conbere, at 651-962-4456. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information.   My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study and to being audiotaped. I am at least 18 years of age.

_____   _____

Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____

Print Name of Study Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   **Date**

Student Assent Form

Assent Form
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

IRB Log Number: C11-054-92

Process and outcomes of an urban school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model

My name is Steven J. Rippe and I am doing research on the process and outcomes of starting a new school in an urban community. I am a doctoral student in Organization Development at the University of St. Thomas, MN. I am trying to learn about what happens when a school decides to teach differently than most traditional schools by utilizing a project-based, advisory centered model. If you would like, you can be in my study.

I want to learn more about the benefits and challenges of attending a school that utilizes project based learning and advisories. Ideally I am searching for ways to understand and support new schools that want to teach differently.

You don't have to be in the study unless you want to. If you decide you want to, I will interview you for about 30 minutes that will include survey questions and responding to open-ended questions. I will audiotape the interview and take notes to help me remember your answers. If you decide now that you want to be in the study and change your mind later, you can stop at any time and no one will be upset with you.

I will not tell other people if you are in my study. I will put information I have about you with information from other people in the study, so no one can tell what information I got from you. When I tell other people about my research, I will not use your name, so no one can tell who I am talking about.

Your parents or guardian have to say it's OK for you to be in the study. After they decide, you get to choose if you want to do it too. If you don't want to be in the study, no one will be mad at you. If you want to be in the study now and if you change your mind, that's OK too.

My name is Steven J. Rippe and my telephone number is 612-735-2522. You or your parents can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don't want to be in the study any more.

I will give you a copy of this form in case you want to ask questions later.

Agreement

I have decided to be in the study even though I know that I don't have to do it. I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview. The researcher, Steven J. Rippe answered all my questions.

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____
Print Name of Study Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   **Date**

PARENT CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
Process and Outcomes of an urban school implementing an advisory centered, project-based school reform model
IRB Log Number: C11-054-92

My name is Steven J, Rippe and I am conducting a study about starting a new school in an urban community. I invite your child to participate in this research. Your child was selected as a possible participant because they have been a student at the school for two or more years. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before allowing your child to be in the study. The study is being conducted by Steven J. Rippe through the department of Organization Learning and Development at the University of St. Thomas, MN.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to document from an organization development perspective, the process and outcomes of implementing a new high school in an urban setting that is advisory centered and project-based. The research could benefit new school development and continuous improvement efforts.

Procedures:

If you allow your child to be in this study, I will ask him or her to participate in a 30-minute interview that will include a survey and responding to open ended questions. I will record the audio of the interview digitally and take notes to help me remember the answers.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has no known risks and there is no direct benefit or compensation for participating in the study. In this study I will use nothing that will identify your child.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify your child in any way. Research records will be kept in a locked file; I am the only person who will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow him or her to participate will not affect your child's or your own

current or future relations with XXXXXXX Schools or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to allow participation, you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty. Your child will also be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study without penalty. Should you or your child decide to withdraw, data collected from him or her will be withdrawn from the study.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Steven J. Rippe.   You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 612-735-2522.   You may also contact my Advisor, Professor John Conbere, at 651-962-4456. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I give consent for my child to participate in the study and to being audiotaped during the interview.

_____   _____
signature of Parent or Guardian   Date

_____
Print the name of your child

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date