ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Peggy Angela White

The Graduate School

Morehead State University

April 14, 2014

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GALLATIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT READINESS ASSESSMENT FOR
SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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Abstract of capstone

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

Peggy Angela White

Shelbyville, KY

Committee Chair: John H. Curry, Ph.D.

Morehead, Kentucky

April 14, 2014

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GALLATIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT READINESS ASSESSMENT FOR
SYSTEMIC CHANGE

We are living in exponential times. The world is changing more rapidly than ever before and the rate of change is accelerating at a rate unprecedented in human history. In contrast to the exponential changes reflected in society at large, our schools have not changed their basic structure in over 50 years. Our current model of education, which is based in the Industrial Age, no longer meets the needs of students living in the Information Age. Simply improving upon the existing educational system will not meet the demands of our society. Districts must become learning organizations to successfully implement the disruptive innovations necessary to transform our schools into organizations that are relevant for learning in the 21st century. The process of shifting from a bureaucracy to a learning organization begins by first assessing the organization's readiness for systemic change.

While the literature on systemic change in education provides reasons why it is needed and often explains what the outcomes should be, few address how to facilitate the redesign of a school district. Consequently, the readiness assessment developed for this study is an amalgamation of several protocols and frameworks. The purpose of this study was to determine the Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. This was accomplished by examining the perceptions of district and school administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the learning process.

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This readiness assessment was an essential first step in the process of the Gallatin County School District becoming a learning organization capable of implementing disruptive innovation. An analysis of the study results can be used to inform stakeholder decisions regarding the changes and innovations necessary to meet the academic needs of the population served by the Gallatin County School District. Additionally, this study provides pertinent information on the process of data collection and analysis for a readiness assessment, which may prove valuable as other districts begin the process of becoming a District of Innovation.

KEYWORDS: readiness assessment, systemic change, innovation

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GALLATIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT READINESS ASSESSMENT FOR
SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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UMI Number: 3619833

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Dissertation Publishing

UMI 3619833

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DEDICATION

This capstone is dedicated to the self-described doctoral windower, my loving husband Brent, who listened, talked, and encouraged me through the process while cooking meals, doing laundry, and picking up around the house. To my daughter, Jennifer, who listened, read, and edited my work. Your turn is coming. I love you both and am truly blessed to have you in my life.

Now, pack your bags. It is time to travel!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Our world has changed, but schools have essentially remained unaltered for almost a century (Kelly, McCain, & Jukes, 2009). Our current model of education, which is based in the Industrial Age, no longer meets the needs of students living in the Information Age (Jukes, McCain, & Crockett, 2010). Simply improving upon the existing educational system will not meet the demands of our society. Chris Whitte of the Edison Project said, "We need a complete redesign of the way we teach our children. When Thomas Edison invented the electric illumination, he didn't tinker with candles to make them burn better. Instead he created something brilliantly new: the light bulb. In the same fashion, American education needs a fundamental breakthrough, a new dynamic that will light the way to a transformed educational system" (Dryden & Vos, 1994, p. 476). Districts must become learning organizations to successfully implement the disruptive innovations necessary to transform our schools into organizations that are relevant for learning in the 21st century. The process of shifting from a bureaucracy to a learning organization begins by first assessing the organization's readiness for systemic change.

We are living in exponential times. The world is changing more rapidly than ever before and the rate of change is accelerating at a rate unprecedented in human history (McCain & Jukes, 2001). Consider the following: It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million people, TV 13 years, the Internet 4 years, the iPod three years, and Facebook two years; The number of internet devices in 1984 was one thousand, in

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1992 one million, in 2008 one billion; 4 exabytes (4 x 10^19) of unique information

will be generated this year: more than the previous 5,000 years combined; The

amount of technical information is doubling every year; The most in-demand jobs of

2010 did not exist in 2004; Some of today's most innovative and significant market-

leading companies did not exist 20 years ago: Amazon and eBay were founded in

1995, Google in 1998, Wikipedia in 2001, Skype & iTunes in 2003, Facebook in

2004, YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006 (Fisch, 2012; Ziomek, 2012). The rapid

infusion of technology has changed the lives of virtually everyone in today's society.

As this trend continues, the job skills of most employees will soon be obsolete

(Goodvin, 2005). Consequently, the demand for increased technical knowledge and

the ever increasing amount of generated information will create the need for

individuals to become life-long learners.

        According to Senge (1990) a true learning organization that promotes life-

long learning is one "where people continually expand their capacity to create the

results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured,

where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to

learn together" (p.4). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education (1999) states

that 21st century citizens will "need to be better educated to fill new jobs and more

flexible to respond to the changing knowledge and skill requirements of existing

jobs….Lifelong skills development must become one of the central pillars of the new

economy" (p. 6).

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In contrast to the exponential changes reflected in society at large, our schools have not changed their basic structure in over 50 years. Our current education organizational structure is irrelevant for the needs of the Information age (Gatto, 2002).   The report of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (Crane et al, 2003) states, "The education system of today faces irrelevance unless we bridge the gap between how students live in the information age and how the education system is structured for learning" (p. 6). Kelly, McCain, & Jukes (2009) emphasize the point further by stating, "It is absolutely critical that everyone involved in education realize that change is not optional for schools today" (p.1).

Unfortunately, many changes and innovations that have been attempted in education have resulted in failure. Schlechty (2009) explains,

> The reason change in schools is so hard is that the innovations that are most likely to have an impact on learning are those that are most intimately connected to the directional system, the knowledge development system, and the recruitment and induction system…When an innovation threatens existing patterns in the operating systems most directly affected by the way power and authority are arranged, the way value is assigned, and the way boundaries are defined, if these three systems are not arranged in a flexible way, the odds of the innovation working are limited indeed. (p.31)

Schlechty (2009) goes on to explain that innovations have a better chance to succeed in a learning organization instead of a bureaucracy, which is the typical school

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organization. He says, "Learning organizations are flexible and responsive; bureaucracies are brittle and nonresponsive. In learning organizations, innovation is a continuous and disciplined occurrence. In bureaucracies, innovation, especially major innovations, are disruptive events, more to be managed and domesticated than to be exploited and embraced" (pp. 138-139). Consequently, it is imperative that schools work toward becoming learning organizations so as to be conductive to successful innovations and changes necessary to prepare students for their future.

This study determined the Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions of district and school administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the learning process. This readiness assessment provided the necessary foundation from which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin County School District.

For the purposes of this study certain terms need to be operationally defined in order to accurately describe their function in the research. A *System* is "a set of interrelated elements organized around a common function" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 27). *Systemic change*, often called paradigm shift, entails replacing the whole thing. It recognizes that a fundamental change in one system within an organization requires fundamental changes in other systems in the organization in order for it to be successful. *Innovation* is a new or creative alternative to existing instructional and administrative practices intended to

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improve student learning and performance throughout the district. *Disruptive innovations* are "innovations that are incongruent with the existing social systems and therefore require fundamental changes in [both the operating and social] systems of an organization if the innovation is to be properly installed and sustained" (Schlechty, 2009, p. 27). A *district of innovation* is, "a district that has developed a plan of innovation, in compliance with these [Kentucky] statues, which has been approved by the KBE [Kentucky Board of Education] and exempts that district from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions to improve the educational performance of students within the district" (Cook & Trotter, 2012, p. 1).

The participants of this study were confined to district and school administrators, teachers, and selected stakeholder representatives of the Gallatin County School District, constituting a purposive sample. Consequently, the findings of this study are limited. Because of the nature of the research, certain empirical limitations must be considered when reviewing or applying the results. This study focused on assessing the readiness of the Gallatin County School District for systemic change and cannot be generalized to other populations. The study used self-reporting data which cannot be independently verified and may possibly be biased due to demand characteristics. Similarly, this researcher may have had an inadvertent effect on the study since she is an administrator in the Gallatin County School District. However, other data collected in the study was used to establish concurrent validity.

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Additionally, the budget allocated for the study was essentially limited to materials and equipment made available to the researcher by the district; such as a computer, copier, and the time permitted for the researcher to conduct the study.

School leaders view the need for systemic change according to their experience and training (Ellsworth, 2000). The results of the readiness assessment identified current perceptions based on experience and training related to systemic change. This readiness assessment was an essential first step in the process of the Gallatin County School District becoming a learning organization capable of implementing disruptive innovation. An analysis of the study results can be used to inform stakeholder decisions as necessary changes and innovations are determined in order to meet the academic needs of the population served by the Gallatin County School District. This study provides pertinent information on the process of data collection and analysis for a readiness assessment, which may prove valuable as other districts begin the process of becoming a District of Innovation.

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Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The basic organization of schools in America dates back to the early 1900s. During this time period, Henry Ford created his assembly line factory, which was based on Frederick Winslow Taylor's ideas of scientific management. Until then, cars were expensive because they were tailor-made. These ideas dramatically increased productivity at Ford and were quickly applied in other facets of society. The American school was one of the places that these ideas/processes were applied (Kelly, McCain, & Jukes, 2009). When we think about our academic system, it works on principles similar to those of the assembly line. Children going through the system are molded to fit the specifications of universities and/or the workplace.

Due to this shift in society, William Wirt later developed the concept of a "platoon school." As Darling-Hammond (1997) explains, "Hoping to save on wasted plant space and solve overcrowding in schools, Wirt devised a system in which students circulated through the school from one classroom to another, with different teachers teaching them different subjects for short periods of time" (p. 41). The result was a school modeled after Ford's assembly line and teachers who specialized, teaching one content area all day, as students passed through their classrooms.

This history reveals just how little American schools have changed over the last century. Vander Ark (2011) asserts, "Education is a virtual public service and the basis for long-term economic development. However, it operates largely like it did one hundred years ago with same-age groups of kids slogging through a print

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curriculum" (p. 119). Despite the fact that technology has catapulted our society into the Information Age, our schools are still structured and operate in much the same way that they did in the early 1900s of the Industrial Age. That design focused on sorting students and is unsuitable for the requirements of the Information Age, and this mismatch between organization design and environmental demands is at the root of the teaching-learning problems associate with schooling in America (Duffy & Reigeluth, 2008). Kelly, McCain, & Jukes (2009) indicate that, "because the basic instructional strategies have not changed significantly over that time, the assumptions behind school facility design have not changed that much either" (p. 12). Incredibly, new teachers customarily begin their teaching career teaching just as their teachers did, and their teachers before them. Jukes, McCain, & Crockett (2010) explain, "The established ideas about what teachers and students are supposed to do are so pervasive it is almost impossible to escape their influence.   Because the thinking behind our current instructional approach was developed so long ago, nothing in our educational paradigm has equipped teachers to deal with the digital world" (p. 18). "Old school" instructional strategies are reinforced and perpetuated in generation after generation of educators. Students in the Information Age are receiving a stagnant education. David Warlick (2006) summarized the current dilemma well in his blog, 2¢ Worth, "No generation in history has ever been so thoroughly prepared for the Industrial Age."

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While the structure of the American school was based on the "best practice" solutions of the time, they are no longer relevant and should reflect the needs of the Information Age. Jukes, McCain, & Crockett (2010) explain, "Even when you walk into a bright and colorful classroom complete with a teacher who has all the students participating and raising their hands, you are being misled because the structural model and operating assumptions of this classroom is exactly the same as it was more than a hundred years ago" (p. 83).   Kelly, McClain, and Jukes (2009) go on to explain, "If we are going to prepare our students for life and work in the world that awaits them beyond school, rather than the world we knew when we grew up, we must rethink traditional schools, we must rethink learning, we must rethink teaching—and we need to do it now!" (p. 253).

This inability or unwillingness to change will have a far-reaching impact on our economy.   Vander Ark (2011) describes the results of inaction saying, "If we don't address the United States' inability to innovate in the delivery of public services, it is certain that our children will be the first generation to be less well off than their parents" (p. 101).

Approaching the issue from an economic perspective, Drucker identifies a new class of worker, knowledge workers, who work in jobs which offer greater opportunities than manufacturing jobs. He asserts, however, that most of these new jobs will require formal education. They require a different approach to work and a different mind-set. He predicts that education will become essential in the knowledge

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society and school will be the key institution (Drucker, 1994). He explains,

"Increasingly, an educated person will be somebody who has learned how to learn,

and who continues learning, especially by formal education, throughout his or her

lifetime" (Drucker, 1994, p. 54). Reigeluth (1994) expands on Drucker's statements

stating, "In the industrial age we needed minimally educated people who would be

willing and able to put up with the tedium of work on the assembly lines. However,

those assembly-line jobs are rapidly becoming an endangered species. This makes

effective learning paramount. But, surprisingly, our current system is not designed

for learning!" (p. 7).

Bill Gates compared America's high schools to using a 50-year-old

mainframe in his address at the National Summit on High Schools in Washington,

D.C. Those from that era may remember the monitors in one room connecting to the

mainframe in another, which was the brains of the whole operation; a radical change

from today's handheld computers.

America's high schools are obsolete…By obsolete, I mean that our high

schools, even when they're working exactly as designed, cannot teach our

kids what they need to know today.   Training the workforce of tomorrow

with the high schools of today is like trying to teach kids about today's

computers on a 50-year-old mainframe.   It's the wrong tool for the times.

Our high schools were designed fifty years ago to meet the needs of another

age.   Until we design them to meet the needs of the 21st century, we will keep

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limiting, even ruining, the lives of millions of Americans every year." (Gates, 2005)

Jukes, McCain, & Crockett (2010) voice a similar concern saying, "We must realize that the education system can't continue operating this way. It can't continue to get better at delivering an obsolete education…We must also change if public education is to survive. If we choose to ignore this, private industry will innovate us out of business" (p. 92). These same authors (Jukes, McCain, & Crockett, 2010) go on to say, "We can't just pretend that somehow education is immune to the fundamental and disruptive global changes that are occurring outside of education" (p. 79). According to Vander Ark (2011), "The charge is for schooling to make the same shift from the centralized, industrial model to a more nimble, customized model that we have made in so many other areas of life" (p. 157). Vander Ark (2011) does not propose a complete separation from the past, but instead argues that, "In shaping schools for new students entering a new world, we have to look backward and forward: back to the liberal tradition that emphasizes deep exploration and critical thinking and forward to a digital future that will allow us to make such an education available to all students" (pp. 24-25). It is also important to recognize that these schools will need to be different depending upon the population that they serve. Kelly, McCain, & Jukes (2009) emphasize this point saying, "There should be no 'base,' 'standard,' 'normal,' 'conventional,' or 'traditional' high school. If we are to create new high schools that truly work, we must be willing to reexamine our

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assumptions about teaching and learning every time we build or renovate a school for each community it will serve" (p. 253).

It is important to note that not only have education needs changed, but students have also changed. Growing up in the Information Age has allowed students to communicate, manipulate, and understand the world around them in a manner which is much different from students of the past. This new environment has a profound impact on their lives.

These kids are different. They study, work, write, and interact with each other in ways that are very different from the ways that you did growing up. They read blogs rather than newspapers. They often meet each other online before they meet in person. They probably don't even know what a library card looks like, much less have one; and if they do, they've probably never used it. They get their music online—often for free, illegally—rather than buying it in record stores. They're more likely to send an instant message (IM) than to pick up the telephone to arrange a date later in the afternoon. They adopt and pal around with virtual Neopets online instead of pound puppies. And they're connected to one another by a common culture. Major aspects of their lives— social interactions, friendships, civic activities—are mediated by digital technologies. And they've never known any other way of life. (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p. 2)

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Just as students today are very different from the students of the past, their academic needs are also different.   Prensky (2005) explains students' attitudes about school saying, "Students certainly don't have short attention spans for their games, movies, music, or Internet surfing.   More and more, they just don't tolerate the old ways— and they are enraged that we are not doing better by them" (p.64).   Obviously, those needs are not being met through the current school structure.   Kelly, McCain & Jukes (2009) agree saying, "[O]ur high schools continue to operate on the ideas and assumptions from the Industrial Age.   As a result, there is a fundamental disconnect between students and the schools they attend" (p. 9).

Today's students are digital natives and are very comfortable using a wide variety of technologies outside of the classroom.   It is time for our schools to provide opportunities for students to use these tools in meaningful ways during school hours as well.   Vander Ark (2011) agrees saying, "Our kids are ready for new learning options: one-to-one mobile access, personalized content, virtual environments, social networks, big questions, and engaging applications.   They are ready to learn at home, on the job, in the community, as well as at school.   The question is, are we ready to create the schools our students deserve?" (pp. 28-29).

America's public schools have had little competition and maintain a virtual monopoly on education.   Consequently, schools have been insulated against many of the changes taking place in the rest of the world.   However, educators have recognized the need for change, albeit a delayed recognition.   Jenlink, Reigeluth,

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Carr, & Nelson (1998) explain, "Increasingly, educators are recognizing that the conditions and educational needs of their communities are becoming dramatically different from what they were in the 1950s and 1960s" (p. 1). Over the decades countless innovations, changes and reforms have been implemented in our schools, but with limited success. Schlechty (2009) states, "There is general agreement that the schools of America must be improved. There is, however less agreement about what needs to be done to improve them. Most who say schools need to be improved want to reform them in some way" (p. 3). Tyack and Cuban have pointed out that most improvement efforts have involved tinkering with the existing system. These efforts have been shallow and have not addressed the root of the problems (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Jukes, McCain, & Crockett (2010) explain, "They tinker with the education system and curriculum as it exists and want to keep it the same instead of addressing what it needs to become for the benefit of the students" (p. 91). It is when the tinkering exceeds the limits of the existing systems that the reform is rejected or domesticated (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Schlechty (2009) describes our schools as being inflexible bureaucracies instead of flexible learning organizations. Consequently, when an innovation or reform requires changes in the social and operating systems, innovation becomes more difficult because the changes are disruptive in inflexible social systems. Schlechty explains saying,

> The reason change in schools is so hard is that the innovations that are most
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> likely to have an impact on learning are those that are most intimately

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connected to the directional system, the knowledge development system and

the recruitment and induction system…When an innovation threatens existing

patterns in the operating systems most directly affected by the way power and

authority are arranged, the way value is assigned, and the way boundaries are

defined, if these three systems are not arranged in a flexible way, the odds of

the innovation working are limited indeed. (Schlechty, 2009, p.31)

It has become clear that the inflexible, bureaucratic structure of schools must change

if innovations are to be successful. Schlechty (2009) states, "Efforts to tinker with

this structure have not been particularly successful in the past and are unlikely to be

any more successful in the future unless they are approached from a system

perspective rather than programmatically" (p.36). Hargreaves (2009) echoes

Schlechty saying, "Following years of frustration developing promising innovations

that existed only as outliers and failed to spread, of watching pilot projects be

replicated only poorly when their designs were then mandated across a system, and of

seeing that early implementation of changes rarely turned into full blown, widespread

and effortless institutionalization, educational reformers began to look at more

coordinated system-wide designs for reform" (p. 90).

If we are to accept what Schlechty and Hargreaves are purporting, one must

conclude that our current system is inadequate and if so, no amount of tinkering with

the system will result in significant improvement. Small changes within systems will

not have the necessary impact. More aggressive innovations which require flexibility

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in inflexible systems will fail or be domesticated. Analysis of the literature suggests that systemic change or system-wide change is the only way educators can successfully implement innovation and lasting change. In an interview with John O'Neil, Peter Senge stated:

> So there's absolutely no choice but trying to create change on multiple levels. Yes, there needs to be fundamental innovation in the classroom. Yes, you've got to find and support these teachers who are really committed to that. And no, it's completely inadequate by itself, because you have to be working simultaneously to create a totally different environment in the classroom, in the school, in the school system, and eventually in the community. And that's why it's not easy. (O'Neil, 1995, p. 21)

Unfortunately, "systemic change" and "systemic reform" have come to mean different things to different people. This has made progress in this area go more slowly than one would like. However, Frank Newman, president of the Education Commission of the States explains:

> If there is a common thread among the various interpretations of systemic change, it is a belief that change in one component of a system affects everything else in that system—and that various pieces of the system must be better aligned toward achieving a common end. If some components of the education system are left untouched 'the pieces that aren't changed drag schools back to the old system.' (O'Neil, 1993, p.10)

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While educators have come to recognize that lasting innovation requires systemic change, they rarely have experience facilitating such a change. Systemic change is considerably more difficult than piecemeal reform. While the literature on systemic change in education provides reasons *why* it is needed and often explain *what* the outcomes should be, only a few address *how* to facilitate the redesign of a school district. The product, not the process, appears to be the focus of most available research. Research on the process of systemic change in education is severely lacking (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010). The release of "A Nation at Risk" (1983) triggered the development of design theories to assist in bringing about the transformation of the educational system (Duffy et al., 2000; Jenlink, Reigeluth, Carr, & Nelson, 1998; Reigeluth, 1994). Unfortunately many of these design theories did not provide sufficient detail or support necessary to conduct long-term systemic change. Moreover, many of the proposed theories focused on schools instead of a district or community as the unit of change (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010). Two design theories, however, do provide some level of detail and support for district-wide systemic change. These two design theories are the "Knowledge Work Supervision (KWS)" (Duffy et al., 2000) and the "Guidance System for Transforming Education (GSTE)" (Jenlink, Reigeluth, Carr, & Nelson, 1998). Both of these design theories include assessing readiness as an initial step in the process of systemic change. Further, Schlechty (2009) identifies assessing "the current status of operations at the classroom, building, and district levels" as a critical step in building capacity for

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systemic change and provides tools to support these assessments on their website, www.schlechtycenter.org (p. 228).

Once a district makes the decision to change and successfully navigates the process of systemic change within the district to create schools that students deserve, they are usually confronted with a maze of laws, statutes, and regulations which impede their progress. Vander Ark (2011) addresses this issue stating, "It's time to rethink how we provide public education in America. State leaders, in particular, have the historic responsibility to guide the pivot from books to digital content, from bubble sheet tests to instant feedback, from birthdays to competency-based progress, from funding school inputs to funding student outcomes, and from back-loaded employment to diverse performance-based learning professions" (p. 117). Kentucky has begun to address this issue by enacting House Bill 37 or KRS 156.108 and 160.107 in October 2012. Cook and Trotter (2012) explain that the new law will allow, "Kentucky public school districts the opportunity to apply to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to be exempt from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions, as well as waiving local board policy, in an effort to improve the learning of students. By 're-thinking' what a school might look like, districts will be able to redesign student learning in an effort to engage and motive more students and increase the numbers of those who are college and career ready" (p. 2). Specific statutory reliefs available to Districts of Innovation include:

(a) Use of capital outlay funds for operational costs;

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(b) Hire persons for classified positions in nontraditional school and district assignments who have bachelors and advanced degrees from postsecondary education institutions accredited by a regional accrediting association as defined in KRS 164.740;

(c) Employ teachers on extended employment contracts or extra duty contracts and compensate them on a salary schedule other than the single salary schedule;

(d) Extend the school days as is appropriate within the district which compensation for the employees as determined locally;

(e) Establish alternative education programs and services that are delivered in nontraditional hours and which may be jointly provided in cooperation with another school district or consortia of districts;

(f) Establish a virtual school within the district for delivering alternative classes to meet high school graduation requirements;

(g) Use a flexible school calendar;

(h) Convert existing schools in to schools of innovation;

(i) Modify the formula under KRS 157.360(2) for distributing support education excellence in Kentucky funds for student in average daily attendance in nontraditional programming time, including alternative programs and virtual programs. Funds granted to a district shall not exceed those that would have otherwise been distributed based on average

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daily attendance during regular instructional days. (Cook & Trotter, 2012, p. 2)

Additionally, Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday filed Articles of Incorporation for the Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky, a new, independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity formed to help support innovative strategies in Kentucky public schools on October 17, 2012. The foundation has an independent board of trustees and staff, and it will seek to access funding sources to provide support to school districts outside of traditional state, federal, and local sources. The board of trustees held its first meeting on October 18, 2012 at the offices of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce in Frankfort (Gross, 2012). While the foundation is in its infancy, its creation sends a powerful message to district level leaders. Combined with the District of Innovation opportunity, the state of Kentucky is clearly encouraging and supporting districts which are attempting to bring about the necessary paradigm shift to meet the needs of our students. This support and encouragement is brought about through both new legislation and potential funding. Both are key factors as districts begin their work in the area of innovation.

The Gallatin County School District plans to pursue the District of Innovation designation. Plans and initiatives currently in place were developed under the old constraints of Kentucky statutes and regulations. The District of Innovation designation and the Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky are "game changers." These developments allow for the paradigm shift discussed earlier. It is

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imperative for the Gallatin County School District to determine the change(s)

necessary to best meet the academic needs of the student population it serves.   Duffy

and Reigeluth (2008) emphasize the importance of a school system needing "to use a

methodology that will help them identify *their* unique characteristics, explore *their*

unique problem-sets, create an idealized vision for *their* future, and engage in a

process of invention and design that will lead them to *their* idealized future" instead

of attempting to replicate another district's successful change effort (p. 41).

According to Jukes, McCain & Crockett (2010), "The key to making successful

change is knowing where we are going.   Without a clear goal in mind, much effort

may be wasted in heading in the wrong direction. The first thing we must do is to

establish a goal or target to aim for.   How do we determine what our goal should be,

particularly in light of the rapidly changing modern world?" (p. 99).   The first step in

determining the goal for the Gallatin County School District was to assess the

district's readiness for systemic change.   Such assessments are, as Altschuld &

Watkins (2000) explain, "conducted by organizations…to determine the nature of

problems affecting them and to seek ways that the problems can be overcome" (p. 8).

Bauer & Brazer (2012) extend this explanation saying, "Sustaining a systemic inquiry

process is vital; when the problem is thoroughly understood, promising solutions will

be much more evident and will have a higher probability of success" (p. 78).

 When reflecting on the history and current state of the public education

system in America it has become painfully obvious that this system is lacking.

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Attention has been called to these inadequacies for decades, yet no great change has been seen. However, recent legislation has been passed in Kentucky in an attempt to rectify the situation, allowing districts to use innovative measures to meet the academic needs of the student populations they serve. However, in order to properly address these needs, the district must ensure that systemic change can be successfully implemented. The first step in the process is to determine readiness for systemic change. The goal of this study is to conduct a readiness assessment for the Gallatin County School District to successfully engage in a systemic change effort and to provide recommendations for "next steps" in the change process.

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Chapter 3: Methodology

The Gallatin County School District has enjoyed steady growth in students and resources, currently serving just over 1700 students in preschool through grade 12 in a rural environment. The majority (88%) of the student population is identified as white with Hispanic students making up the largest minority population (9%). Approximately 70% of students receive meal assistance (free or reduced lunch pricing). The Gallatin County School District consists of five schools: the Lower Elementary serving Preschool through second grade, the Upper Elementary serving third through fifth grade, the Middle School serving sixth through eighth grade, the High School serving ninth through twelfth grade, and Wildcat Academy serving as the district's alternative school. The current graduation rate is just over 90%.

The district is not meeting its strategic goals: all students reaching proficiency on the state assessment and 61% of students who are college and career ready by 2015. Our current education model no longer meets the needs of students living in the Information Age. Simply improving upon the existing system will not meet the demands of our society. Districts must become learning organizations to implement the disruptive innovations necessary to transform our schools into organizations that are relevant for learning in the 21st century. The process of shifting from a bureaucracy to a learning organization begins by first assessing the organization's readiness for systemic change. Systemic change allows for new and innovative

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models of learning which are necessary to support and promote college and career readiness.

This study determined the Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions of district and school administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the learning process. This readiness assessment provides the necessary foundation from which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin County School District.

As stated earlier, research on the process of systemic change in education is severely lacking (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010). Three design theories were discovered and studied as possible models for this study. Two of the design theories were Knowledge Work Supervision (KWS) (Duffy et al., 2000) and the Guidance System for Transforming Education (GSTE) (Jenlink, Reigeluth, Carr, & Nelson, 1998). Duffy and Reigeluth, realizing the similarities of their work, collaborated on the third design theory, the School System Transformation (SST) protocol (Duffy, F.M., & Reigeluth, C.M., 2008). The SST protocol provided a promising model for this study. Of particular interest was a toolkit, which was in development, mentioned in articles. However, no additional information could be located on the SST protocol. This researcher contacted Dr. Reigeluth to discuss and obtain any additional research on this model and to inquire about the toolkit. During those discussions Dr. Reigeluth

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indicated that no additional work had been completed and that the toolkit had not been developed.

Since no additional design theories or detailed models of readiness assessments were identified, this researcher began researching needs assessment models. Several models were examined and studied, but the most promising model was located in A Practical Guide to Needs Assessment (Gupta, 1999). This model was most closely aligned with the process outlined by Duffy and Reigeluth in the SST protocol.

The SST protocol and Gupta's five phase model for needs assessment still did not provide some of the detailed content needed to conduct a readiness assessment. The focus and purpose of the readiness assessment was to assist the Gallatin County School District as it begins the process of implementing the disruptive innovation necessary to provide students with the education they deserve. One tool in the innovation process is District of Innovation designation awarded by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE). One of the instruments provided by the Division of Innovation and Partner Engagement in the District of Innovation application process is the Readiness Survey for Innovative Change for School Districts (Cook & Trotter, 2012). This document is a brief self-assessment for districts to use when preparing to apply for District of Innovation status. That survey provided some of the detailed content needed for portions of this study.

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The readiness assessment developed for this study is an amalgamation of Duffy and Reigeluth's SST protocol, Gupta's needs assessment framework, and KBE's readiness survey. The needs assessment framework provided a five phase format for the study, while the SST protocol guided the process used. Finally, the readiness survey provided some of the detailed content missing from the other two sources.

The resulting readiness assessment accomplished the following:

1. Determined if, when, where, and how innovative practices could be implemented to affect student achievement.

2. Identified instructional and non-instructional solutions that could contribute improved student achievement.

The readiness assessment consisted of five phases. Upon completion of each phase, the researcher and the superintendent reviewed a draft report that detailed the process and outcomes. They also reviewed the proposed process for completing the entire readiness assessment. All data collection was completed on-site; however, all data analysis and report writing was completed off-site. The researcher grouped the data into response themes; no individual data was reported. The readiness assessment phases, processes, outcomes and timelines are outlined below.

Phase 1: Gather Preliminary Data About the Gallatin County School District

Purpose: The purpose was to provide a basis for investigating the perceptions of participants as they related to systemic change.

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Process: The researcher reviewed district documents and performance, as well as national and state data trends. An analysis of the documents formed the foundation of the survey, interview and focus group questions.

Outcomes: A draft report that: (1) summarized the archival data reviewed and (2) established goals for the assessment.

Timeline: Phase 1 was completed over a four week period from July 5, 2013 through July 31, 2013.

Phase 2: Plan the Readiness Assessment

Purpose: The purpose was to develop a work plan to ensure that the assessment stayed on target.

Process: The researcher determined the types of data to collect and the sources of the data, as well as the data-collection tools to be used. The types of analyses to be performed were also determined. Additionally, the researcher decided how data was collected and managed. Interviews gather specific information from the perspective of the interviewees (Patton, 2002). Focus groups guide participants in greater awareness and participation than other unidirectional collection methods. Focus group participants respond to the comments of others providing a more in depth information (Patton, 2002; New York State Teacher Centers, 2013). Surveys

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may provide data from a larger number of participants. Use of these

collection tools allowed for triangulation of data.

Outcomes: A draft report that recommended: (1) the type of data to be collected

(2) the data sources, (3) the types of data-collection tools to be used,

(4) the types of analysis performed, and (5) how the collected data

was to be managed.

Timeline: Phase 2 was completed over a two week period from August 2, 2013

through August 16, 2013.

Phase 3: Develop and Use Assessment Tools

Purpose: The purpose was to develop the assessment tools and collect the

assessment data.

Process: The researcher developed and validated each assessment tool. Expert

reviewers were used to review and evaluate the assessment tools

prior to their use. The researcher collected the data and monitored

the process, as well as organized the data.

Outcomes: A draft report that: (1) documented the readiness assessment tools

and described the validation and review process, and (2) described

how data was collected, monitored, and organized for analysis.

Timeline: Phase 3 was completed over a 24 week period from August 19, 2013

through January 31, 2014. Administrator interviews were conducted

over a 20 week period from September 9, 2013 to January 27, 2014.

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Focus group interviews were conducted over a two week period from September 16, 2013 to September 26, 2013. The teacher online survey was made available for 15 weeks from November 4, 2013 to February 14, 2014.

Phase 4: Analyze the Data

Purpose: The purpose was to interpret the collected data using systemic and useful processes.

Process: The researcher compiled the qualitative and quantitative data and wrote the draft analysis. The researcher determined the instructional and non-instructional implications of the data and met with the superintendent to review the draft analysis.

Outcomes: A draft report of the analyzed data and the instructional and non-instructional implications was disseminated to those involved in the process.

Timeline: Phase 4 was completed over a five week period from February 15, 2014 through March 24, 2014.

Phase 5: Process and Outcomes Documentation

Purpose: The purpose was to document the readiness assessment process and outcomes.

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Process: The researcher combined information from all phases of the readiness assessment and reported the readiness assessment results to the superintendent.

Outcomes: The final readiness assessment report.

Timeline: Phase 5 was completed over a few days from March 24, 2014 through March 27, 2014.

Data Collection Instruments

As outlined in Phase 3, the researcher developed and used three data collection instruments for the study**.** Use of these collection tools allowed for triangulation of data. Each of the data collection instruments used in the study may be found in Appendix C.

Administrator interviews.

During phase 2 of the study, it was determined that interviews would be the best instrument to use in gathering data related to administrator's perceptions about the Gallatin County School District and the change process. Interviews are designed to gather a specific type of information from the perspective of the participants (Patton, 2002). Given the research design of this study, the interview questions evolved after reviewing district documents in Phase 1. The researcher developed an interview guide, based on information gathered through the review of the district documents, which provided specific direction for the interviews. The interview guide also provided a consistent structure for collecting information from participants

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(Bryman, 2001). The administrator interview consisted of fourteen research questions. The first four questions were general in nature to determine the length of time the administrator had been in their current leadership role and their perceptions regarding the core values, strengths and areas of growth of the district. These questions were designed to identify administrators' perceptions regarding district culture and attitude regarding the district. The next four questions focused on change efforts. These questions were intended to identify the strategies, processes and beliefs regarding change. The following three questions related to district decision making and decision making roles in the district. These questions were proposed to determine if administrators perceive decision making as a transparent process and as one in which staff and administrators are encouraged to be creative and innovative. The next two questions related to communication processes in the district. These questions were meant to determine the directionality of communication protocols and to ensure that communication reached all levels. The final question offered the interviewee the opportunity to express his/her thoughts regarding change which had not been previously discussed in the interview. This question was devised to allow the interviewee to contribute additional information which he/she considered pertinent to the discussion and which the researcher had not anticipated. Each response was significant to the study as administrator beliefs and attitudes regarding change impact the Gallatin County School District's ability to implement systemic change.

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Focus groups.

During phase 2 of the study, it was determined that focus group interviews would be the best instrument to use in gathering data related to perceptions about the Gallatin County School District and the change process from stakeholder groups such as parents, business and community, and senior citizens. Focus groups guide participants in greater awareness and participation than other unidirectional collection methods. Focus groups consisting of eight to twelve participants provide the opportunity for a somewhat open, free flowing discussion, through the guidance of a facilitator (Morgan, 1998). Focus groups are most useful for getting at complex underlying ideas or opinions in a setting where the sharing of experiences can help guide the other participants to greater awareness and participation. In a focus group setting, participants are able to hear each other's responses and make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say (Patton, 2002; New York State Teacher Centers, 2013).

The focus group interview questions emerged from the review of district documents in Phase 1. The focus group interview protocol consisted of five guided questions that explored participant's knowledge of and readiness for systemic change. The first two questions were to determine their perceptions regarding the Gallatin County School District's performance by identifying areas in which the district was doing well and areas of growth for the district. The following two questions focused on change efforts. These questions were intended to identify perceptions and beliefs

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regarding change. The final question offered the focus group participants the opportunity to express thoughts regarding change which had not been previously discussed in the session. This question was devised to provide the focus group participants the opportunity to contribute additional information which they considered pertinent to the discussion and which the researcher had not anticipated. Each focus group's responses are significant to the study as these beliefs and attitudes regarding change impact the Gallatin County School District's ability to implement systemic change.

Teacher online survey.

Surveys are one of the most common types of research tools. It is possible to collect data from a large group using surveys. Surveys are an effective tool to obtain stakeholder input, but they require much time and effort. The survey used in this study was an online questionnaire. Questions fell into two categories: open-ended and closed. In open-ended questions, participants answered the questions in their own words. These types of questions were used to gather respondents' feelings and perceptions with regard to change, communication and decision-making processes in the district. While open-ended questions provide much information, they are more difficult to analyze since they may cover a wide range of topics. Consequently, they must be grouped to provide some level of summary.

The online survey consisted of fifteen research questions. The first three questions probed teacher beliefs regarding the core values, strengths and areas of

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growth in the district. These questions were designed to identify perceptions

regarding district culture and attitude regarding the district. The next four questions

focused on change efforts. These questions were intended to identify the strategies,

processes and beliefs regarding change. The following two questions related to

district decision making and decision making roles in the district. These questions

were proposed to determine if teachers perceive decision making as a transparent

process and as one in which staff and administrators are encouraged to be creative

and innovative. The next question related to their role in the change process. This

question was designed to determine the level of ownership and responsibility in

change processes. The next two questions related to communication processes in the

district. These questions were meant to determine the directionality of

communication protocols and to ensure that communication reached all levels. The

following question offered the survey participant to express his or her thoughts

regarding change which had not been addressed in the online survey. This question

was devised to provide the survey participant the opportunity to contribute additional

information which s/he considered pertinent to the discussion and which the

researcher had not anticipated. Each response was significant to the study as teacher

and staff beliefs and attitudes regarding change will impact the Gallatin County

School District's ability to implement systemic change. The final two questions were

demographic in nature. These questions were posed to determine school association

and length of employment.

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Data Collection Instrument Validation

Typically, after a data collection instrument is developed it is tested on a small sample of possible participants prior to use for validation purposes. However, the number of potential participants for this study was small and the researcher did not want to further reduce the number of prospective participants by testing the instruments on them. Instead, the researcher used expert reviewers from outside of the district to validate the data collection instruments used in this study. Dr. Jim Flynn, Superintendent of Simpson County Schools, Dr. Lisa James, Superintendent of Carroll County Schools, and Dr. Susan Cook, former Superintendent of Kenton County Schools and associate professor at Northern Kentucky University were asked to review the data collection instruments and identify potential problems and suggest improvements. Additionally, Dr. Cook recruited another survey expert, Jan Stansberry, to review the data collection tools. The reviewers' experience as both superintendents and researchers qualified them as expert reviewers. The data collection instruments were modified based on their recommendations prior to their use in the study. Administrators were also given the opportunity for member checking after their interviews. Similarly, focus group discussions were summarized and reviewed for member checking at the conclusion of each focus group session.

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Study Participants

This study is limited to the Gallatin County School District administrators, teachers, and stakeholders. Each of the data collection instruments used in the study was designed to gather data from a unique group of participants.

There are fourteen administrative positions in the Gallatin County School District. Eleven administrators interviewed for the study. One administrative position is currently open and the Superintendent was not interviewed as she initiated the study. The researcher holds the remaining administrative position. Eight of the administrators interviewed are at the school level and all of these administrators were interviewed. Additionally, three district level administrators were interviewed.

Five focus groups were used in the study. These groups were categorized as certified staff, classified staff, parents, community and business, and senior citizens. These participants were invited to participate in the focus groups, but these are open meetings which anyone could attend. These focus groups meet with the Superintendent two times during each school year. The superintendent uses these focus group meetings to update focus group members on district initiatives. The superintendent also provides the time and opportunity for focus group members to bring up issues and/or concerns. The fall focus group meetings were used to conduct the interviews with the focus groups.

All certified staff were invited to complete the teacher online survey. This invitation was submitted through a distribution list for email on two occasions. The

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emails explained the purpose of the study and provided a URL for the online survey. Duplication of participants from the certified staff focus group was possible, but it is unlikely since the certified staff focus group was asked not to participate in the online survey at the focus group meeting.

Angie White, the researcher for this project, subscribed to the ethical guidelines of ISPI and the Academy of Human Resource Development. The district allowed the researcher to collect data on-site during the work day.

No direct costs were associated with conducting the readiness assessment. The district provided in kind support in the form of administrative assistance for scheduling interviews and observations; copies; and network resources.

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Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter provides a discussion of the data analysis for this study. Organization of this chapter is centered on the first three phases of the study and the results, designed to identify the perceptions regarding the elements of systemic change. A summary of findings follows each section.

Phase 1: Gather Preliminary Data About the Gallatin County School District

In the first phase of the readiness assessment preliminary data about the Gallatin County School District was gathered from a variety of district documents. Review of this data provided a basis for investigating the perceptions of participants as they related to systemic change. The outcomes of this phase provided the foundation for phase two of the readiness assessment.

Documents ground research in the "context of the problem being investigated" (Merriam, 1988, p. 108). Documents can be used as a reliable source of information concerning the attitudes, beliefs, and views of an organization according to Erlandson et al (1993). This form of data collection can provide rich information which is less susceptible to researcher bias. Additionally, documents provide an enduring component of qualitative research as they are easily accessed at little or no cost.

The documents examined in this phase of the study included the Gallatin County School District Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (2011 CDIP), 2012 Strategic Plan, 2012 District Report Card, 2013 TELL survey results and

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2013 District of Innovation application. The information collected from these documents was used to design questions for the interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted in the study. In the context of this study, these documents provided a basis for investigating the perceptions of participants as they related to change.

In Kentucky, schools and districts develop improvement plans outlining the process of preparing students to be college and career ready upon graduation. These plans are called Comprehensive District Improvement Plans (CDIP) and Comprehensive School Improvement Plans (CSIP). The process focuses improvement efforts on identified priority needs and closing achievements gaps between subgroups of students. The Gallatin County School District Comprehensive District Improvement Plan (CDIP 2011) identified nine goals which included increasing the graduation rate, improving scores on state assessments, increasing parent involvement, improving teacher and principal effectiveness and increasing the number of students who are college and career ready.

Strategic planning in education is intended to" impel a district to action" (Reeves, 2008, p. 86). It is a methodical and thoughtful process which links the beliefs, mission and goals of a district with strategies and activities which are designed to achieve those goals. The Gallatin County School District 2012 Strategic Plan identified two goals: all students proficient on state assessments and increase the percentage of students who are college and career ready to 61% by 2015. The

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strategies employed to achieve these goals were research based and ranged from teacher/principal effectiveness strategies to parent involvement strategies.

School and District Report Cards are posted on the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE's) website annually. These Report Cards provide information such as assessment results, school safety and teacher qualifications about each school and district. Assessment scores reported on the 2012-2013 School and District Report Cards for the Gallatin County School District indicated small incremental increases in scores, but no major increases. Joseph and Reigeluth (2010) shed light on this phenomenon by identifying two types of educational change. Small incremental increases or improvements can be achieved through piecemeal change which involves "making adjustments to the current paradigm of education," whereas systemic change in which larger, more significant gains can be achieved involves "transforming the current paradigm into a different one" (p. 97).

The TELL Kentucky Survey provides data and tools to assist in school improvement. The survey consists of questions on topics such as Community Support and Involvement, Professional Development, and School Leadership. The 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey was the second statewide survey of educators in Kentucky and it used the same survey instrument as was used in 2011, providing longitudinal data for individual schools and districts. Review of the Community Support and Involvement and School Leadership portions of the 2013 TELL survey results indicated that the schools in Gallatin County are supported by an involved

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community and that school leadership supports teachers and the school council.

Questions from these portions of the survey revealed an increased percentage in

positive responses on the majority of indicators from 2011 to 2013. Similarly, a

comparison of Gallatin County School District responses and state-wide responses

showed higher percentages in positive responses on the majority of indicators by

Gallatin County teachers.

Legislation enacted in 2012 provides school districts in the state of Kentucky

the opportunity to apply to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) for District or

School of Innovation designation. This designation allows the school or district to be

exempted from some statutory provisions and administrative regulations as they

endeavor to improve student learning and achievement. This legislation allows

schools and districts to re-imagine "school" and design instruction and instructional

practices to best meet the needs of students and ensure that they are college and/or

career ready upon graduation. The Gallatin County School District applied to be a

District of Innovation in 2013. The district was not approved, but the Kentucky

Board of Education was intrigued by the district's application which proposed the

district-wide implementation of the piloted Professional Growth and Effectiveness

System (PGES). As a result, the Kentucky Department of Education has partnered

with the Gallatin County School District to implement the system district-wide, but

without the District of Innovation designation and associated exemptions. Review of

the District of Innovation application indicated that the district promotes innovation

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and has experience implementing innovative efforts. The application and accompanying rubric provided insight into the various structures and systems which impact innovative change in the K-12 environment. These documents were used in the design phase to determine topics for interview and survey questions.

Overall, the review of district documents revealed a dedication to continuous improvement and a willingness to take risks to advance student learning and achievement. Specific goals cited in these documents include increased graduation rates and improved scores on state assessments. These documents provided a good starting point to begin seeking answers to deeper questions about Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. Specific areas of questioning included perceptions regarding past and current change efforts, the relationships between the schools, the district and the community, models of decision making, and models of communication.

Phase 2: Plan the Readiness Assessment

In the second phase of the readiness assessment a plan to ensure that the readiness assessment remained on target was formulated. The outcomes of this phase established the type of data to be collected, the data sources, the types of data-collection tools used, the types of analysis performed, and how the collected data would be managed.

Qualitative research methods have grown popular in education related research over the past decade, since they are well-suited to the dynamic and relational

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characteristics found in education environments (Attride-Stirling, 2001). One must

consider what information is necessary when determining the design of a research

project. What information is being sought? Where or from whom can that

information be found? What resources are available to carry out the study? Who will

use the information and how will they use it? (Patton, 1990). Gathering data on site

and face-to-face dialog with participants provided a more comprehensive

understanding of the district.

      With regard to data analysis, "there is relatively little said on how to

analyze the textual material that qualitative researchers are presented with at the

end of the data gathering stage" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). Furthermore, the

collection, analysis and reporting of data in qualitative research is difficult

because these often occur simultaneously (Meriam, 1988).

      The characteristics of qualitative methodologies were most appropriate for the

data gathering needs of this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were

collected in the study. However, the majority of the data was qualitative in nature.

Data collection methods best suited for this study included; face-to-face interviews

with administrators, focus group interviews, and teacher surveys. Administrator

interviews were used to gather specific information from the perspective of the

interviewees (Patton, 2002). Focus groups guide participants in greater awareness

and participation than other unidirectional collection methods. Focus group

participants also respond to the comments of others providing a more in depth

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information (Patton, 2002; New York State Teacher Centers, 2013). For these reasons, focus groups were used as a data collection tool. Surveys provided both qualitative and quantitative data from a larger number of participants. Use of these collection tools allowed for triangulation of data.

An ongoing list of emerging themes were recorded and tracked when analyzing the data. The researcher read and noted administrator and focus group interviews and teacher survey responses to search for patterns and themes. However, the teacher survey data was retrieved after the online survey was closed.

All materials gathered were stored by the researcher. Files were maintained for all surveys and interview transcripts. With the exception of the phase reports and final paper, all materials pertinent to data collection will be maintained three years after completion of the study.

Phase 3: Develop and Use Assessment Tools

In the third phase of the readiness assessment the data collection tools for the study were developed and evaluated, and then used for data collection. The outcomes of this phase documented the data collection tools used and the validation process for these tools. It also described how the data was collected, monitored and organized for analysis.

The assessment tools used in the study were interviews, focus groups and surveys. The analysis of district documents in phase one was used to determine the questions to be developed and used in the interviews and survey. The questions were

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constructed and designed to determine the capacity of Gallatin County School District to achieve systemic change.

The assessment tools are presented here in three parts. The first part presents the findings from individual interviews with school and district administrators. The second part presents the findings from five stakeholder focus groups. These focus groups were Certified Staff, Classified Staff, Parents, Business and Community, and Senior Citizens. The third part presents the findings from the teacher online survey.

Administrator interviews.

Administrators were provided a presentation detailing current academic, economic, and employment data trends for Gallatin County before the interview (see Appendix A for presentation). This presentation was designed to frame the need for systemic change in the Gallatin County School District. The findings from the administrator interviews follow.

How long have you been in this role?

Of the eleven administrators interviewed, four have been in their current role for 5 years or less, two for 6-10 years, three for 11-15 years and two for 16-20 years. Both the mean and median years in their current role were 9 years. Given the small number of administrators, the number of years served in their current role was relatively evenly distributed. This provides a beneficial balance between experience and stability and new perspectives.

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What are the district's core values for improving schools?

There were five response themes to the question regarding the district's core values for improving schools. The most frequent response theme identified valuing the student or doing all that can be done for each student as the district's core value. Three other response themes were also frequently given. These response themes included ensuring that students are college and career ready, improving the community by preparing students to be productive citizens, and maximizing student learning and achievement. The final response theme was ensuring that students perform at grade level in reading, writing, and math. These responses reflect a culture of continuous improvement in the district. Additionally, all responses refer to students and student success. This indicates that the district's core values are student centered.

What do you consider to be the district's strengths?

There were five response themes to the question regarding the district's strengths. The most frequent response theme identified teachers and their willingness to work as a strength. Two additional response themes were frequently given. These were the district leadership, namely the Superintendent, and the relationships the district works to develop. The district employees and the district vision were also named, but less frequently. These responses reflect a culture of strong leadership and work ethic focused on doing what is best for students.

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What do you consider to be areas of growth in the district?

There were only three response themes to the question regarding the areas of growth in the district. These response themes were not strong and the majority of responses were single or unique responses. The three response themes were: the mindset of TTWWADI (That's the way we've always done it), connecting with community and parents, and changing the perception of education in the community. These three growth areas are already well recognized in the district. A variety of strategies and activities have been and continue to be used, but meet with limited success. It is significant that unlike the question regarding district strengths, there are no decisive response themes to the question of growth areas. Ideas about what needs to be changed are not clear or focused. One administrator stated this idea well saying, "We don't know what the next step is…We can't jump to the next level. We are missing a piece, but we don't know what it is. We are trying to find that out."

Describe past or current change efforts. What did/do you think of each?

Nine past and current change efforts were identified in the responses to this question. Some were initiatives and programs, while others were strategies and activities. Each is listed below, but in no particular order.

Springboard.

Springboard was one of the current change efforts described. Springboard is the college and career readiness program developed and provided by College Board, a not-for-profit organization, which includes curriculum, assessment and professional

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development components. Springboard has only been in place for a few months at

Gallatin County Middle School, and therefore its effectiveness cannot be determined.

It was noted that the Springboard standards do not always match with Kentucky

standards, but it uses technology effectively. An awareness of the mismatch in

standards is not an issue if it is addressed in the implementation of the program.

Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES).

The Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) was clearly

identified as a major change effort in the district. The vision for Kentucky's

Professional Growth and Effectiveness System is for every student to be taught by an

effective teacher, for every school to be led by an effective principal and each district

to be led by an effective superintendent. The goal of the system is to provide a fair

and equitable approach to measure effectiveness through multiple sources and act as a

vehicle for professional development. Gallatin County was one of 50 school districts

in Kentucky to field test the new system for teachers during the 2012-2013 school

year and is piloting implementation district-wide for the 2013-2014 school year.

Responses indicate that this has been a positive change effort, "putting us in a better

place." Very powerful conversations and reflections are a result of implementing this

evaluation system. However, it is acknowledged that implementation of this system

is time consuming and that the time involved presents a problem—even with the

assistance provided from the district.   The district added an additional assistant

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principal so that each school would have an assistant principal to help with the issue

of time and to allow all principals to be the instructional leaders in their schools.

Technology.

Technology was identified not as a single change effort, but a continual

process. Responses indicated that we use out-of-the-box thinking and consider non-

traditional students in technology decisions.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Odyssey.

The implementation of Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA's)

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment paired with the use of Odyssey

from Compass Learning generated the most favorable responses. NWEA is a not-for-

profit educational services organization. Its flagship interim assessment, MAP is a

technology-based, formative testing system which responds dynamically to the

student and provides educators detailed information and insight into the student's

learning. Odyssey from Compass Learning determines the student's strengths and

needs and then assigns a personalized learning path consisting of activities that

address the concepts the student needs to work on most. Compass Learning and the

NWEA have partnered to enable districts and schools to import the MAP assessment

results to the Odyssey management system, which automatically creates a standards-

aligned learning path for each student. Interview responses indicated that it has

helped inform teachers and instruction, as well as helped to engage students through

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goal setting. While the expense of these products was recognized, it was indicated that the benefits outweighed the expense of the programs.

Classroom walkthroughs and instructional rounds.

Classroom walkthroughs provide a way to determine overall instructional progress and use the data collected as a starting point for reflective dialogue. This data is used to see the "big picture" to determine the overall impact of new interventions and to identify instructional gaps, not to evaluate individual teacher performance. Instructional rounds is a process adapted from the medical rounds model that doctors use in hospitals. Instructional rounds help educators look closely at what is happening in classrooms in a systemic, purposeful and focused way. These "rounds" are based on a question or questions around which a school wants to collect data, described as the "problem of practice." Classroom walkthroughs and Instructional rounds were described as informative and beneficial, but were time consuming. The time required made it difficult to sustain the process. It was decided that other change efforts would replace this process. So, while successful, this change effort was discontinued to pursue other change efforts in the district.

Career Pathways and scheduling.

Career Pathways provide a framework for public schools to address the needs of both students and employers in Kentucky. Career Pathways provide a more seamless path for students to achieve post-secondary credentialing. These pathways are developed and implemented in partnership with postsecondary institutions,

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businesses and potential employers. There have been changes in the way students are

scheduled into Career Pathway classes at the high school and how student career

pathways are identified. Though this more streamlined process is in its infancy, the

high school is "determining what is best for students and making those changes."

Success will have to be measured at a future date after students in the high school

graduate and pursue college and/or careers.

Changing community perceptions.

Various events and strategies have been employed to change community

perceptions about education in general and the school district specifically. These

have met with limited success. The Superintendent held a "State of Our Schools"

event for elected officials and community stakeholders. While it was well attended, it

did not impact community perceptions. Posting recordings of Board and Focus

Group meetings on the District website has not produced the desired results.

Additional attempts to reach the community through Facebook and Twitter have met

with similar results.

Response To Intervention (RTI).

Response to Intervention is a program required by the Kentucky Department

of Education. It is a method of academic intervention use to provide early assistance

to students who are having difficulty learning. In Kentucky, RTI incorporates

assessment and intervention with a prevention system designed to maximize student

achievement and minimize behavioral issues. Schools identify "at risk" students,

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monitor their progress, and provide research-based interventions. RTI is also used to determine special education eligibility. In the interviews, RTI was identified as a good program, but as one that has not been embraced. Some teachers and schools are only doing what is necessary for compliance instead of implementing the program with fidelity. A lack of follow-up training was identified as one possible reason for the program's lack of success.

Strategic plan.

As previously stated, strategic planning is a methodical and thoughtful process which links the beliefs, mission and goals of a district with strategies and activities which are designed to achieve those goals. The Gallatin County School District 2012 Strategic Plan identified two goals: all students proficient on state assessments and increase the percentage of students who are college and career ready to 61% by 2015. The strategic planning process was identified as a good one. However, there has been no extended follow through after the first year or two of the plan. It was speculated that increased outcomes may result from extended attention to the plan and associated activities and strategies.

The responses to this interview question reveal multiple change efforts. They do not reflect thoughtful approaches that align to one another. This lack of alignment and focus may account for the limited success of many of these change efforts. However, responses indicate that the district has a history of volunteering for pilots and programs to help improve student achievement. Some of the past initiatives and

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programs specified were the Scholastic Audit and the Culture and Climate Audit, as well as current initiatives such as PGES, AdvancED standards, and Virtual Peer Observations. The willingness to volunteer implies a willingness to change and do whatever is in the best interest of the student, but may appear unfocused.

What are the district's priorities and strategies for change?

Six response themes were identified in the responses to the question about district priorities and strategies for change. The most common response theme was the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). Administrators know and understand that this change initiative is considered the primary district initiative. Three additional response themes were frequently given. These responses included the use of MAP/Odyssey to determine instructional changes, preparing students to be college and career ready upon graduation, and appropriate planning and gaining buy-in for new change initiatives. Other response themes were: AdvancED Standards and tools and students are the priority and the reason to change. The AdvancED Standards are research-based standards which emphasize teaching and learning. The majority of responses reflected an understanding that the future needs to be different from the present and the past. However, some responses indicated priorities and strategies which require only minor or piecemeal changes.

How would you describe an effective change process?

Four response themes were identified for the question regarding effective change processes. Two response themes occurred most frequently. The responses

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were gaining ownership/buy-in by seeing it as a positive change and developing a detailed plan, implementing it, and then monitoring progress. The next most frequent response theme identified monitoring and feedback as essential elements in the process. Another response theme indicated communicating the need for change. All responses recognized the need for working across boundaries and levels to accomplish change.

What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective change?

Two response themes were identified for the question regarding the skills and resources needed to accomplish effective change. These two themes were new people/manpower and time. However, most of the responses were single responses. These response themes do not reflect a strong common response indicating that administrators are unsure about what is needed to accomplish effective change.

Describe the model for decision making that exists in the school district.

There were two response themes given to describe the district's decision making model. One response theme occurred most frequently. That response theme indicated that the superintendent employs a collaborative model of decision making in which needs are identified and solutions sought out by seeking the ideas and input of others at all levels. The next most common response theme indicated that the Comprehensive Improvement Plans for the district and the schools guided the decision making process since they were based on needs assessments and data. The responses collected indicate that the decision making process in the district is

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relatively transparent, but the process/purpose is not always communicated to all levels and stakeholders.

How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the district?

There were four response themes given for the question about empowering staff and administrators to make decisions. The response theme which occurred with the most frequency was through meetings such as administrative/principal meetings and the District Instructional Leadership Team (DILT) meetings. District Instructional Leadership Team members are responsible for implementing school-wide initiatives for instruction, and modeling cultural norms. The remaining response themes occurred with equal frequency. These response themes were through the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), the district (particularly the superintendent) empowers teacher leaders, and good leaders are expected to make good decisions. These response themes do not reflect a strong response for this answer. This would indicate an uncertainty about how staff and administrators are included in the decision making process. Those response themes given most frequently generally reflect more formal avenues for decision making citing DILT and the CSIP.

Describe your role in implementing change.

There were two response themes in the descriptions given for roles in implementing change. The response theme most frequently given was a responsibility for implementing the change. The next most frequent response theme

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was to provide support for both administrators and teachers. The strong response themes for this description indicate that administrators understand and accept direct responsibility for change efforts. Additionally, the answers indicate that they are accustomed to change and their role in change efforts.

Describe current communication protocols which are effective.

Five response themes were given for the description of effective communication protocols. Two response themes occurred more often than other descriptions and with comparable frequency. These response themes were face-to-face communication with all stakeholders (staff, community, and parents) and electronic communications such as email and Friday Notes, the district's weekly electronic newsletter. The next most frequently given response theme was texting both teachers and parents. Other response themes given were telephone calls and newsletters. The strong response themes given reflect communication protocols which reach all levels of the organization and all stakeholder groups.

What opportunities exist for two-way communication?

Three response themes were given for the question regarding two-way communication. The response theme given most frequently was overwhelmingly face-to-face meetings (formal and informal). The next most frequently given response theme was telephone calls. Texting was another response theme. These response themes reflect the open lines of communication to and from all levels and

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stakeholder groups. The small size of the district may explain the reason that face-to-face meetings are frequently used for two-way communication.

Do you have additional feedback relative to change in the district?

No significant response themes were given in answer to the question on additional feedback. However, the responses were significant to the administrators interviewed and therefore important data in the study. These responses are included below:

- We need a culture of change. We need to develop a culture of college going students.

- Feedback and monitoring are important. We need continual communication through monitoring and discussion.

- I do not see a sense of urgency in our teachers. I hear excuses instead of solutions and changes.

- We need to analyze and compare our PGES and MAP data. Does student growth match teacher evaluations?

- It is important to have vertical curriculum alignment. We need communication to go from building to building. How much time is spent working between the levels?

- There are drastic changes in certification that have led to having a stable staff. That's important because students have a stable experience.

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- We need to make sure we change with a focus, not just because someone else is.

The response themes gathered from the administrator interviews provide the researcher with valuable insights into district administrator perceptions regarding systemic change. There is strong leadership and a strong work ethic among administrators and teachers. There is a culture of continuous improvement and efforts are student centered. Administrators accept responsibility for change, but include teachers and staff as they work across boundaries to affect change processes. The decision making process appears to be transparent, but the process is often not communicated at all levels which impedes buy-in and possible success. Additionally, there are multiple change efforts which do not appear to be strategically aligned.

It appears that while the district is open to change and recognizes the need for change, it is not sure what needs to change or what is needed to implement the change process. The large number of unique/single responses to the question about skills and resources needed to accomplish effective change and the large number of unique/single responses to the question about growth areas for the district support this finding. However, a strong desire to enact change to ensure student success is evident through the numerous pilots and programs for which the district has volunteered.

Focus groups.

Each of the focus group sessions used in the study were conducted in three parts. The first part of the session was devoted to presenting the current academic,

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economic, and employment data trends for Gallatin County (see Appendix A for

presentation). This presentation was designed to frame the need for systemic change

in the Gallatin County School District. The presentation was followed by group

discussion framed around five questions.

What is going well in the Gallatin County School District?

The majority of the focus groups recognized the district's efforts to ensure that

students are college and career ready upon graduation. Specifically, discussions

included events such as Close the Deal, FAFSA night, and college and university

visits through GEAR UP Kentucky and other groups. Close the Deal is a program

designed to create a strong college-going culture in schools with low college-going

rates and to involve business partners and former graduates as mentors. The FAFSA

is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This application is intimidating at

best. Consequently, Gallatin County High School hosts an evening event to assist

students and parents in this process. GEAR UP Kentucky is a federally funded

program that strives to create a college-going culture in middle schools and high

schools in Kentucky. The program provides services to students and their families to

ensure that they graduate from high school ready for a successful college experience.

The focus groups also recognized teacher work in Professional Learning

Communities (PLCs), communication with parents, and modern facilities as going

well in the district. A Professional Learning Community is a group of teachers who

meet regularly, share expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills

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and the academic performance of students. In most of the schools in Gallatin County these PLCs meet at least once a week.

These responses were very positive and reflect an overall understanding and support for the school district and the work it is doing for the students. It is important to note that responses did not include a focus on test scores other than their connection with College and Career Readiness. The focus group responses reflected a district culture of continuous improvement, but did not reflect non-traditional solutions to educational issues. Instead responses reflected piecemeal change in the district, as opposed to systemic change.

What changes do you see as necessary in the Gallatin County School District?

Just as the majority of focus groups recognized the district's efforts to ensure that students are college and career ready, they also recognized that even more needs to be done. The focus groups discussed the student need for career information, student communication with industries in the area, encouragement to attend two year colleges, not just four year colleges, and offering advanced classes sooner to challenge high achieving students. The need for students and their parents to understand the importance of continuing education was also discussed. Specifically, service learning, the reality store and goal setting were discussed.   Particular instructional needs were discussed as well. These included the need for expanded Gifted/Talented services, a literacy specialist, expanded access to technology, and a

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ROTC program. Ideas to address at-risk student needs included mentoring and a program for pregnant teens.

The focus group responses indicated an underlying frustration not with the district, but with the parents of students. Focus group facilitators recognized their frustration, but directed the conversation toward things that the district could do to impact the lives of students. These subsequent responses indicated doing more of the same types of activities and providing additional services.

How would you describe an effective change process?

The majority of focus groups identified communication as the primary factor in an effective change process. The focus groups described the importance of sharing successful changes with all stakeholders and ensuring that all stakeholders understand the reason why change is needed. They also identified planning and parent involvement as important factors in the change process.

The focus group responses clearly identify the importance of including all stakeholders in the change process, even if it is just to keep them informed about the process. Discussions did not include specific implementation components of the change process beyond planning. Therefore, it can be assumed that beyond the communication aspect of the change process, the focus groups perceived little community and/or business involvement in the process.

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What are some past and current change efforts? What did/do you think of each?

Eight past and current change efforts were identified in the responses to this question. Some were initiatives and programs, while others were strategies and activities. Each is listed below.

Goal setting.

Goal setting engages students in their own learning. It has been done, but more needs to be done and at all levels. Students need to be aware of their achievement levels and set goals for improvement. It should not be something that only teachers and administrators do.

Tobacco Free Campus.

A 100% Tobacco Free Campus policy prohibits tobacco use by staff, students and visitors twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, inside Board-owned buildings or vehicles, on school owned property, and during school-sponsored student trips and activities. The idea to implement this policy in the Gallatin County School District came from Diane Coleman of the Three Rivers Health Department. She asked that the School Board pass and implement a 100% Tobacco Free School policy. The school sent out a survey to students, personnel, parents and community members. There were no major issues or disagreement. The Board had a first reading, then a second, and the policy passed. The policy went into effect August 1, 2013. Between the time of passage and the effective date, the district focused on providing information about cessation opportunities. The Tobacco Free Campus initiative has

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been very successful and has met with limited resistance. The success of this program was attributed to an extensive planning and implementation process. It was discussed and communicated for approximately a year prior to implementation. It was well thought out and well executed.

College visits.

The college visits planned by different groups at the high school allow our students to see what a college campus is like and that students (just like them) from other communities attend colleges and universities. The high school has also addressed this by taking students to two year colleges so that students understand that as an option as well.

Outside of school experiences.

Field trip opportunities are limited, but students need to get out of the community to have experiences to broaden their perspective. There need to be more trips like the Marine Biology trip for seniors and the eighth grade trip. Younger students go to the zoo and the Freedom Center, but these opportunities are limited. The cost associated with such trips is understandably a barrier for many, but we need to find more fundraising opportunities to allow students to have life experiences.

Sixth grade as part of the elementary school.

The sixth grade was at one time part of the elementary school. This was due to space issues prior to construction projects. The sixth grade is currently part of the middle school. Some expressed preference for including the sixth grade as part of the

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elementary school. The sixth graders were kept away from the older students a little longer. This was seen as a positive arrangement.

Increased drop out age to 18.

During the 2013 regular session of the General Assembly, legislators voted to amend KRS 159.010 to raise the compulsory school age for attendance from 16 to 18. This policy is to take effect in the 2015-16 school year. There is much concern about the impact of keeping a student who does not want to be in school for two additional years. The district does not have a choice in the matter and will be working closely with these students to make sure they are successful. Specifically, the district will be working with them on Career Pathways, scheduling and credit recovery when appropriate.

Full day kindergarten.

Full day kindergarten was a change effort which was started several years ago. Kindergarten is only funded by the state for half of a day so the district must shoulder the burden of the additional expense. This has become increasingly difficult as funding from all sources has dwindled. However, the district is seeing the results from this early intervention and plans to continue the program.

Eighth graders in high school classes.

The district has allowed some eighth graders to take classes at the high school, specifically math. This has been beneficial for those students and parents would like

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to see this practice increased to provide increased opportunities for high achieving students to keep them challenged.

The eight change efforts identified, while recognized as positive, are not aligned to one another and are not strategically linked. This lack of alignment and focus may account for the limited impact of these change efforts. The positive perceptions of each of the change efforts identified reflect support and cooperation for change efforts in the district.

Is there anything else you feel is important to add to this discussion?

Only one new item was given in response to this question. It related to the issue of bullying. More than one focus group mentioned that bullying issues were not as common and the situation was getting better. Other responses simply restated some of the points made in earlier discussions. However, the responses were significant to the focus group members and therefore important data in the study. These responses are included below:

- The majority of students taking College Now courses go on to college.

- We need career, vocational/technical certificates for our students.

- All students need to be involved in a club, a sport—something.

- Students need team building and community service opportunities.

- Churches are more involved.

- We need to continue to talk with students about their future.

- We need to make sure that students are college and career ready.

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- We are concerned about what is going to happen with 18 year olds who don't want to be in school.

The responses gathered from the focus groups provide valuable insights into stakeholder group perceptions regarding systemic change. The focus groups recognize the effort to ensure that students are college and career ready, but also understand that what we are doing is not enough. However, most discussions indicated doing more of the same types of activities and providing additional services. Most suggestions were traditional in nature and would not be considered risk-taking measures. Additionally, multiple change efforts were identified, but do not appear to be strategically aligned. It appears that while the focus groups view change positively, they do not recognize the need for extensive stakeholder involvement beyond communication regarding the necessity for change and the process.

Teacher online survey.

An email was sent to the teachers requesting that they complete the online survey. The email contained an attachment with a presentation detailing current academic, economic, and employment data trends for Gallatin County (see Appendix A for presentation). This presentation was designed to frame the need for systemic change in the Gallatin County School District. The email also provided a link for the online survey. There was a very low response rate to the online survey. A second email was sent at a later date with the same information requesting participation. Additional participation requests were planned as part of professional development

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workshops at each school. However, these efforts were thwarted by cancellation of both school and professional development due to inclement weather. Consequently, the return rate for the online survey was very low, accounting for only 6% of teachers in the district.

What are the district's core values for improving schools?

There were three response themes to the question regarding the district's core values for improving schools. The most frequent response theme identified college and career readiness as the central core value for the district. Two other response themes were also frequently given. These response themes included maximizing student learning and achievement and preparing students to be 21st Century learners. These responses reflect a culture of continuous improvement in the district.

What do you consider to be the district's strengths?

There were four response themes to the question regarding the district's strengths. The most frequent response theme identified teachers who are willing to do what is best for students as a strength. Three additional responses were frequently given. These were continuously improving technology, teacher willingness try new things and a desire to change the culture to one of a college-going community. These responses reflect a strong work ethic among teachers who are focused on doing what is best for students.

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What do you consider to be areas for growth in the district?

There were only three response themes to the question regarding the areas of growth in the district. These response themes were not strong and the majority of responses were single or unique responses. The three response themes were having and sustaining a culture that values education, teachers taking on leadership roles, and communication between schools. It is significant that unlike the question regarding district strengths, there are no decisive response themes to the question of growth areas.

Describe past or current change efforts. What did/do you think of each?

Two past and current change efforts were identified in the responses to this question. These change efforts are on-going initiatives. Other responses did not identify specific change efforts, but instead revealed current dispositions regarding change. The two change efforts identified are listed below, but in no particular order.

Technology.

Technology was one of the current change efforts described. Technology is identified as being used to help students grow. Teachers and administrators use technology to collect longitudinal data to help improve and individualize instruction. Students use technology for online instruction, productivity and to gather information.

Changing community perceptions.

This change effort was cited several times, but each response recognized the failure of the efforts to bring about this change. The community needs to understand

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that education is essential and value the educational process. This change effort has been approached in a variety of ways, but none have proven effective.

Two response themes were prevalent in response to this question, but did not cite specific change efforts. The first theme addressed the change process. Responses reflected the district's desire to improve student achievement and success, but that the district does not know how to produce that change. One respondent stated, "I think the district wants to change, but doesn't know what to do to make the biggest impact." The second response theme reveals a frustration with the number of change efforts implemented and that they are not implemented long term. Another respondent stated, "I have become disenchanted with piloting every new initiative that comes down the pike. We are always first, but first is not always best. I would like for us to make a plan and stick with it long term rather than jumping on every new bandwagon."

What are the district's priorities and strategies for change?

Two response themes were identified in the responses to the question about district priorities and strategies for change, but neither provided numerous responses. The most common response theme was making sure that all students are on grade level in both reading and math. The other response theme indicated the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) as a district priority. Other responses were single responses and did not provide a response theme. The weak response themes

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may indicate that the teachers and staff are not aware of or certain about the districts

priorities and strategies for change.

How would you describe an effective change process?

There were no response themes identified for this question. However,

stakeholders were mentioned in more than one response. Therefore, including

stakeholders in the change process can be considered as an important component of a

change process. The lack of response themes for this question may indicate that the

teachers and staff are not certain about the components for effective change.

What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective change?

Three response themes were identified for the question regarding the skills

and resources needed to accomplish effective change. The most frequent response

theme was allowing time for the change to become a regular part of how things are

done in the district. The next most frequent response theme identified the need for

additional human resources to support student learning. The final response theme

identified the need for training including the necessary time set aside for proper

training so that change efforts can be implemented with fidelity. Responses to this

question echo some of the concerns raised in the previous questions regarding change

initiatives.

Describe the model for decision making that exists in the district.

There were four response themes given to describe the district's decision

making model. One response theme occurred most frequently. That response theme

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indicated that the respondents were not sure what the decision making model was for the district. The three remaining response themes occurred with equal frequency. A top-down model for decision making was one of the response themes. Collaborative decision-making at the school level was identified as another model for decision making. Site based decision making councils were the third model for decision making identified. The responses collected indicate that the decision making process in the district is not always communicated to all levels and stakeholders.

How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the district?

Only one response theme was identified in answer to the question regarding empowering staff and administrators to make decisions. A significant number of responses indicated that committees, including site based council, were how staff and administrators were empowered to make decisions. This response theme reflects a formal avenue for decision making.

Describe your role in implementing change.

There were four response themes in the descriptions given for roles in implementing change. The two response themes most frequently given were working with students, parents, administrators and other staff to bring about the change and working in teams and professional learning communities to determine how to bring about necessary change. One of the next most frequent response themes was to provide support for decisions made by the district and school and support faculty as they work to improve student performance. The other equally frequent response

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theme was an indication of N/A for not applicable.   The most frequent response themes for this description indicate that teachers and staff recognize a responsibility for implementing and supporting change efforts. However, the N/A response theme indicates that many teachers and staff still do not understand their role in the change efforts.

Describe current communication protocols. Are they effective?

Two response themes were given for the description of effective communication protocols. One response theme occurred more often than other descriptions. This response theme was face-to-face communications. These face-to-face communications included formal and informal meetings, as well as individual and group meetings. The second response theme was electronic communications and telecommunications such as email, phone calls and Friday Notes. Responses indicating current communication protocols as effective occurred twice as often as those indicating ineffective communication protocols. The strong response themes given reflect communication protocols which reach all levels of the organization.

What opportunities exist for two-way communication?

Three response themes were given for the question regarding two-way communication. The response theme given most frequently was overwhelmingly face-to-face meetings (formal and informal). The next most frequently given response theme was email. Telephone conversations was the third response theme. These response themes reflect the open lines of communication to and from all levels.

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The small size of the district may explain the reason that face-to-face meetings are frequently used for two-way communication.

Do you have additional feedback relative to change in the district?

No significant response themes were given in answer to the question on additional feedback. However, the responses were significant to the teachers and staff who took the survey and therefore important data in the study. The responses are listed below:

- There are too many initiatives at one time then never using it the next year.

- We are reactive and not as proactive as we need to be at times.

- I would like to see more parental involvement and a direct address to core work values.

- I think we need to do something different, but I am not sure what. We all work too hard for our scores to look like they do.

- We need to focus and then monitor. We need to hold people accountable and provide the training and resources they need to get better.

- Schools currently design their own CSIP. If Central Office designed a CDIP to be used as a guide for schools to design their CSIPs, it could increase collaboration between schools and help us all walk down the same path toward the same path toward the same district goal instead of separate parallel paths.

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- I realize money is tight within the district but feel that in order for the students to be college and career ready it needs to start early in their school career. More instructional help and lower number in all classrooms would go a long way in making the district more college and career ready.

- Voices of all stakeholders need to be heard, not just those in leadership positions. Our ideas also need to be considered instead of shot down quickly.

With which school are you associated?

The majority of survey respondents were from the Lower Elementary. The percentages are as follows: 71.4% from the Lower Elementary, 21.4% from the Upper Elementary, 7.1% from the Middle School and 7.1% from the High School. The low response rate to the survey coupled with the high percentage rate of respondents from the Lower Elementary skews the results. However, the results are considered valuable.

How long have you been employed in the school district?

The majority of survey respondents have been working in the school district for 10-14 years. Additionally, a large number of survey respondents have been working for the district for 15-19 years and 25+ years. These numbers indicate that the majority of respondents are long term employees and can attest to the change initiatives and protocols established in the district. The ranges and percentages of respondents are as follows: 0-4 years was 14.3%, 5-9 years was 14.3%, 10-14 years was 28.6%, 15-19 years was 21.4%, 20-24 years was 0% and 25+ years was 21.4%.

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The response themes gathered from the teacher survey provide the researcher with valuable insights into district teacher perceptions regarding systemic change. There is a strong work ethic among the teachers and a culture of continuous improvement both of which are student centered. Respondents were unable to provide strong response themes identifying areas of growth for the district, priorities and strategies for change, or even effective change processes. This may be due to the number of change efforts implemented and abandoned in the short term. The teacher's responses indicate a high level of frustration over the number of change efforts implemented which require time and training only to be forsaken when another change effort is initiated.   Similarly, a large number of respondents do not recognize their role in the change process. The decision making process is often not communicated at all levels which impedes buy-in and possible success of change initiatives. Communication appears to be effective and to reach all levels.

It appears that while communication efforts are generally successful that decision making processes, planning and implementation strategies for change initiatives have not been communicated with teachers and staff at all levels. Consequently, teachers and staff are experiencing a growing level of dissatisfaction with change efforts and do not understand their role in the change process.

Summary of the findings.

The data from the interviews, focus groups, and online survey were combined, compared and analyzed to produce the research findings. The significant findings for

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each research question were combined into response themes and reported for each of the three stakeholder groups participating in the study. The significant findings are listed and explained below.

The district's core values for improving schools.

There is a culture of continuous improvement in the district as evidenced by the district's participation in multiple pilot programs and initiatives. However, the unfocused and variable implementation of these programs and initiatives has left many teachers experiencing frustration with the change process.

District strengths.

The responses to this question reflected a culture of strong leadership and strong work ethic among teachers, both focused on doing what is best for students. Stakeholders also recognize district efforts to ensure student college and career readiness.

Growth areas for the district.

The response themes for this question were very weak. Administrators and staff are unsure of what needs to be done to improve student achievement. Community stakeholders recognize district efforts towards college and career readiness, but also recognize that more needs to be done. Most suggestions for growth were piecemeal changes, not systemic in nature.

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Effective change efforts.

Several response themes were identified for this question. However, these themes had very little cross-over of themes between stakeholder groups. Most change efforts were seen as positive, but most were not implemented with fidelity, or abandoned, over time. These change efforts were not focused or aligned to a common vision or purpose.

Priorities and strategies for change.

Two response themes were identified by both administrators and teachers for this question. These were the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) and getting students college and career ready. However, the response themes were stronger in the administrator interviews than in the online teacher survey. There is a general understanding among stakeholders that our future must be different from our past if students are to be successful.

Effective change processes.

Strong response themes for this question were only identified in the administrator interviews. These responses identified gaining ownership/buy-in, developing a detailed plan, implementing it, and then monitoring as essential elements in the change process. Administrators understand that the change process relies upon stakeholders working across boundaries and levels to produce the desired change.

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Skills and resources necessary to accomplish effective change.

Two strong response themes emerged from this question. First, time is essential to successful change initiatives. This includes time for training and planning, but most importantly, time to fully implement the change and measure its impact. The second response theme was the need for additional personnel to assist in the implementation of the change.

District decision making model.

Administrators indicated a collaborative model of decision making, but the online survey did not provide a response theme for this question. The responses collected indicate that the decision making process in the district is relatively transparent, but the process/purpose is not always communicated to all levels and stakeholders.

Empowering staff and administrators to make decisions.

There were no strong response themes for this question. This would indicate an uncertainty about how staff and administrators are included in the decision making process. Those response themes given most frequently generally reflect more formal avenues for decision making such as DILT, PLCs, and the CDIP/CSIP.

Roles in implementing change.

Administrators provided strong response themes for this description indicating that they understand and accept direct responsibility for change efforts. Additionally, the answers indicate that they are accustomed to change and their role in change

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efforts. While the most frequent response themes for this description indicated that teachers recognize a responsibility for implementing and supporting change efforts, many provided a N/A response. The N/A response theme indicates that many teachers still do not understand their role in the change efforts.

Effective communication protocols.

Two strong response themes emerged from the data collection process. These themes were face-to-face (formal and informal meetings) and electronic communications such as email and electronic newsletters. The strong response themes given reflect communication protocols which reach all levels of the organization and all stakeholder groups.

Opportunities for two-way communication.

Face-to-face communication was the strongest response theme given for this question. Telephone calls and email also provided strong response themes. These themes reflect the open lines of communication to and from all levels and stakeholder groups. The small size of the district may explain the reason that face-to-face meetings are frequently used for two-way communication.

Chapter summary.

The analysis of data and findings in this section focused on the perceptions expressed by administrators, focus group members, and teachers in the Gallatin County School District. The chapter presented discussions based on the research questions. The data collected during this phase of the study were analyzed to

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determine Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. The qualitative data from the administrator and focus group interviews and the teacher survey were analyzed to determine themes and recognize patterns. The quantitative data from the teacher survey were analyzed to help inform demographic patterns in the study.

The findings of this study and their analysis present the researcher with useful data concerning the perception of stakeholders regarding systemic change. The district is seen as one in which continuous improvement is promoted. The district has pursued improvement through a wide variety of change initiatives and efforts. Some of these change efforts may be viewed as successful, but the degree of success has not lead to the necessary levels of improvement in student achievement. Additionally, these change initiatives and efforts have not been strategically aligned so as to result in the greatest impact. Consequently, many of these change efforts have been abandoned to pursue other change efforts. This has resulted in an increasing level of dissatisfaction with change efforts among teachers. While communication appears to be effective and to reach all levels, the dissatisfaction associated with change efforts is augmented by a lack of communication about the purpose, plan, implementation, and monitoring of change initiatives. Subsequently, teachers and staff do not know or recognize their role in the change process. It appears that while the district is open to change and recognizes the need for change, it is not sure what needs to change or what is needed to implement the change process. However, a strong desire to enact

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change to ensure student success is evident through the numerous pilots and programs for which the district has volunteered.

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Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

The final two phases of the study were: Analyze the Data and Process and Outcomes Documentation. A description of the final two phases of the study provides conclusions, implications, and recommendations. Recommendations for future research close the chapter.

Phase 4: Analyze the Data

In the fourth phase of the readiness assessment the data collected in the study was interpreted. The researcher compiled the data and formulated an analysis of the data. The outcomes of this phase provided a draft report of the analyzed data which was provided to the superintendent.

The data from the study indicates that the basic framework for systemic change is in place in the Gallatin County School District. There is a foundation of strong leadership within the district. However, much work needs to be done both within and outside of the district for a systemic change initiative to be successful.

The administrator interviews revealed a "shotgun" approach to change. Many good programs and initiatives were implemented, but many did not address the deeper needs of the district. More importantly, there was not a focused vision to align initiatives or strategically link them. When new programs/initiatives were adopted, old ones were dropped or instituted with less fidelity and district support because the new initiatives were seen as addressing needs not previously addressed. The district needs to focus on a specific objective. This may mean "missed" opportunities for

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pilot and volunteer participation in programs, but will help the district maintain focus. These missed opportunities can be revisited at another time. The district also needs to view the change process as a continuous cycle not as something that starts and stops.

The focus group sessions revealed that the makeup of these groups may need to be modified to provide the necessary association within certain segments of the stakeholder community. The current focus groups represent a wide range of stakeholders, but the focus groups also need to consist of key social, political, and economic representatives. In his book, The Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell describes three agents of change in the tipping points of epidemics. Gladwell states, "The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts" (2002, p. 33). These agents of change are described as Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. While focus groups consisting of all three agents of change would benefit the district and the community, the essential change agents are the community's mavens. Gladwell describes mavens as people who accumulate knowledge and know how to share it with others. According to Gladwell, mavens start "word-of-mouth epidemics" (p. 67). Since focus groups have primarily served as a vehicle for the superintendent to share information with the community stakeholders and to "dispel rumors, myths and gossip," it would appear sensible to include mavens in these focus groups. Each focus group participant should bring the needs and concerns of their stakeholder segment forward for discussion so the group can explore solutions. True mavens will

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have the network of people to disseminate and collect information concerning the

district. As Gladwell states, "Mavens are really information brokers, sharing and

trading what they know" (p. 69).

The online teacher survey indicated that teachers have invested themselves in

past district initiatives only to see them dropped or phased out. This has left them

feeling devalued and frustrated. Some have become resistant to change as a result.

Additionally, the time to implement and sustain initiatives has not been allocated.

Pressure has been applied to teachers with the accelerated implementation of the

Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). They are supportive, but

wary.

The primary change initiative within the district at this time is the Professional

Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). All other initiatives, strategies, and

activities need to align with this initiative to provide focus and direction for the

district. Much like the Scholastic Audit conducted in 2008, the AdvancED standards

and ELEOT walkthrough have the potential to catapult student achievement.

However, it is essential that these instruments are viewed and used as tools to support

and supplement the PGES. It will be important to align initiatives, strategies, and

activities to the PGES until it is fully implemented and is no longer perceived as a

change effort. Once it becomes the normal way of doing things, a new initiative can

be adopted to spearhead the change process within the district.

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Next Steps

It is this researcher's opinion that the following must be addressed before the Gallatin County School District is ready to implement a systemic change effort:

- Align and focus district initiatives

- Reconfigure focus groups to include mavens as participants

- Allow time for the PGES to become a routine process

- Allocate sufficient time to plan, communicate, implement, and monitor any proposed change initiative

Much like the Scholastic Audit conducted in 2008, the AdvancED standards and ELEOT walkthrough have the potential to catapult student achievement. However, it is essential that these instruments are viewed and used as tools to support and supplement the PGES. It will be important to align initiatives, strategies, and activities to the PGES until it is fully implemented and is no longer perceived as a change effort. Once it becomes the normal way of doing things, a new initiative can be adopted to spearhead the change process within the district.

Communication with district and community stakeholders and their inclusion in the planning process is essential to systemic change efforts. One strategic framework for this process is already in place in the form of the Superintendent Focus Groups. However, additional frameworks need to be developed and the current make-up of the focus groups needs to be reconfigured. Membership of the focus

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groups needs to include key social, political, and economic representatives who accumulate knowledge and share it with others. Participants from these focus groups would then bring the needs and concerns of their stakeholder segment forward for discussion and resolution.

Common components of successful change initiatives are extensive planning and communication with all stakeholder groups. Two change initiatives which were identified as successful in the study were the Tobacco Free Campus initiative and the district-wide implementation of the PGES. Descriptions of both of these change initiatives included these components. The Tobacco Free Campus initiative was communicated to all stakeholder groups for approximately a year before actual implementation. Additionally, a detailed implementation plan was put into place and followed to ensure success. Similarly, the district-wide implementation of the PGES was communicated to district stakeholders through discussions at faculty meetings and with the community stakeholders in focus group meetings. As a part of Gallatin County's District of Innovation application, a minimum percentage of teachers had to vote in favor of the implementation as well. District administrators worked closely with Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) officials in planning the implementation process. These examples will prove to be excellent change models as the district prepares to implement future systemic change initiatives.

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Phase 5: Process and Outcomes Documentation

In the fifth phase of the readiness assessment information from all previous phases were combined in a final readiness assessment report and the results were presented to the superintendent. No new information was reported during this phase of the readiness assessment. The resulting report was only a compilation of the reports from the previous four phases.

Recommendations for Study Replication

The focus of this study addressed the perceptions of stakeholders regarding Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. This study was limited to selected school administrators, focus group members and teachers in the Gallatin County School District. During the analysis of the data and the determination of findings and conclusions it became obvious that the design of the study had imposed limitations that could quite well become areas to be included in research studies replicating the process outlined in this study. Specifically, the design of this study excluded students. Future research could include the study of student perceptions regarding readiness for systemic change. Similarly, teacher leaders such as instructional coaches could be included in the interviews conducted in the study to provide additional perspectives and perceptions on readiness for systemic change.

Teachers were asked to complete the online survey as a part of the study. However, due to survey fatigue, few did so, resulting in a low number of respondents. Studies replicating the processes outlined in this study may include the survey as a

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part of professional development activities to increase the response rate. Similarly,

inducements such as gift cards may be used to incentivize teachers to participate in

the online survey.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A

Data Collection Instruments

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Administrator Interview Questions

- How long have you been in this role?

- What are the District's core values for improving schools?

- What do you consider to be the District's strengths?

- What do you consider to be areas of growth in the District?

- Describe past or current change efforts? What did/do you think of each?

- What are the District's priorities and strategies for change?

- How would you describe an effective change process?

- What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective change?

- Describe the model for decision making that exists in the school district?

- How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the district?

- Describe your role in implementing change?

- Describe current communication protocols that are effective.

- What opportunities exist for two-way communication?

- Do you have additional feedback relative to change in the district?

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Focus Group Questions

- What is going well in the Gallatin County School District?

- What changes do you see as necessary in the Gallatin County School District?

- How would you describe an effective change process?

- What are some past and current change efforts? What did/do you think of each?

- Is there anything else you feel is important to add to this discussion?

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Teacher Online Survey

Perception Survey

Introduction

My name is Angie White and I am a doctoral student at Morehead State University in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. I am conducting a study to determine the Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the learning process. This study will provide the necessary foundation from which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin County School District.

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Perception Survey

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality as a participant, as well as your anonymity in relation to any comments made will be protected. If you don't feel comfortable participating in this online survey for any reason, please feel free to exit the survey at this time. By entering the survey you are providing consent, acknowledging your willingness to voluntarily participate in this study.

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Perception Survey

*1. What are the District's core values for improving schools?

*2. What do you consider to be the District's strengths?

*3. What do you consider to be areas for growth in the District?

*4. What do you think of current District change efforts?

*5. What are the District's priorities and strategies for change?

*6. How would you describe an effective change process?

*7. What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective change?

*8. Describe the model for decision making that exists in the District.

*9. How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the District?

*10. Describe your role in implementing change.

*11. Describe current communication protocols. Are they effective?

*12. What opportunities exist for two-way communication?

*13. Do you have additional feedback relative to change in this school district?

*14. With which school are you associated?

☐ Lower Elementary
☐ Upper Elementary
☐ Middle School
☐ High School

*15. How long have you been employed in the school district?

○ 0-4 Years
○ 5-9 Years
○ 10-14 Years
○ 15-19 Years
○ 20-24 Years
○ 25 + Years

[Prev]   [Next]

1. What are the District's core values for improving schools?

2. What do you consider to be the District's strengths?

3. What do you consider to be areas for growth in the District?

4. What do you think of current District change efforts?

5. What are the District's priorities and strategies for change?

6. How would you describe an effective change process?

7. What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective change?

8. Describe the model for decision making that exists in the District.

9. How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the District?

10. Describe your role in implementing change.

11. Describe current communication protocols. Are they effective?

12. What opportunities exist for two-way communication?

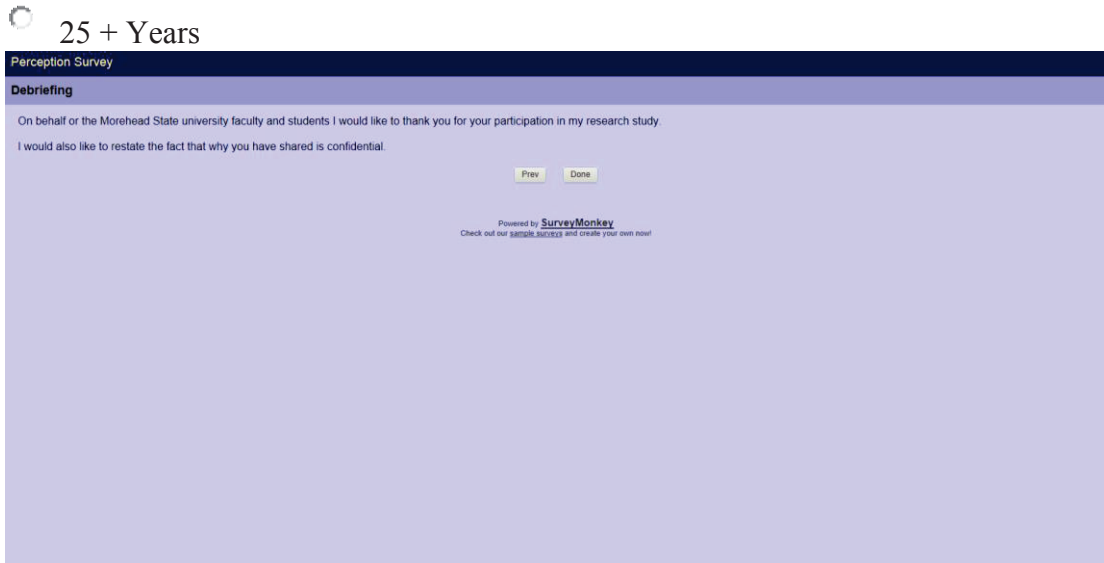13. Do you have additional feedback relative to change in this school district?

14. With which school are you associated?
☐ Lower Elementary
☐ Upper Elementary
☐ Middle School
☐ High School

15. How long have you been employed in the school district?
○ 0-4 Years
○ 5-9 Years
○ 10-14 Years
○ 15-19 Years
○ 20-24 Years

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25 + Years

Perception Survey

Debriefing

On behalf of the Morehead State University faculty and students I would like to thank you for your participation in my research study.

I would also like to restate the fact that why\at you have shared is confidential.

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Appendix B

Academic, Economic and Elmployment Data Trends for Gallatin County

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Academic, Economic and Elmployment Data Trends for Gallatin County

My name is Angie White and I am a doctoral student at Morehead State University in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. I am also the Chief Information Officer with the Gallatin County School District.

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"MAXIMIZING STUDENT LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENT"

"Organizations only improve where the truth is told and the brutal facts confronted" (Collins, 2001, as cited in Schmoker, 2006, p. 103).

I am conducting a study that specifically seeks to determine the Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the learning process. This study will provide the necessary foundation from which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin County School District.

It is important that we look at the facts and address needs openly and honestly. As Schomker states, "Organizations only improve where the truth is told and the brutal facts confronted" (Collins, 2001, as cited in Schmoker, 2006, p. 103).

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"Preparing all student to be 21st century learners and ready for college, career and life"

What does "College and Career Ready" mean?

Our District Vision is "Preparing all students to be 21st Century learners and ready for college, career and life." So, what does "college and career ready" mean?

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Kentucky Department of Education Proposal: Career Measures Definition
College Ready, Career Ready, and College AND Career Bonus

College Ready: Must meet benchmarks on one of following:	Career Ready: Must meet benchmarks for one requirement in Career Academic area and must meet one requirement in Career Technical area.		Bonus - College AND Career Ready: Must meet at least one from each area.	
College Ready	Career Ready Academic	Career Ready Technical	College Ready Academic	Career Ready Technical
ACT	Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)	Kentucky Occupational Skills Standards Assessment (KOSSA)	ACT or COMPASS or KYOTE	KOSSA
COMPASS	ACT Work Keys (Applied Math, Locating Information, and Reading for Information)	Industry Certificates	Notes: (1) By meeting the college ready academic definition, the student does not have to take the additional tests of ASVAB or WorkKeys for the bonus area. (2) For accountability purposes, the bonus shall not allow the readiness percentage to exceed 100 percent.	Industry Certificates
KYOTE				

The commonwealth of Kentucky is focused on making college and career readiness a reality for every Kentucky student. With this focus, Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) was enacted in 2009. To identify students as college- and career-ready, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has approved indicators of readiness that include students meeting: (1) the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's System-wide Benchmarks on the ACT in Reading, English and Mathematics; or (2) the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's College Placement Test Benchmarks; or (3) career academic and technical benchmarks. The chart represents the definition of College/Career Readiness approved by the KBE in August 2011.

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Gallatin County High School: ACT Average Score 2008-2012

School Year	School Name	Number of students tested	English Average Score	Mathematics Average Score	Reading Average Score	Science Average Score	Composite Average Score
2008	Gallatin County High School	94	14.4	17.2	17.1	17.3	16.7
2008	-- State Total --	42,921	17.3	18.1	18.5	18.7	18.3
2009	Gallatin County High School	95	15.3	17.3	17.2	17.1	16.9
2009	-- State Total --	43,493	17.3	18.2	18.4	18.5	18.2
2010	Gallatin County High School	104	16.6	18.3	18.2	18.0	17.9
2010	-- State Total --	44,388	17.7	18.2	18.8	18.7	18.5
2011	Gallatin County High School	117	16.5	18.5	18.1	18.1	18.0
2011	-- State Total --	44,053	18.0	18.5	19.0	19.0	18.8
2012	Gallatin County High School	109	17.1	18.6	18.8	18.9	18.5
2012	-- State Total --	44,516	18.4	18.8	19.0	19.1	19.0

As mandated by Senate Bill 130, all Kentucky public school students in the eleventh grade are required to take the ACT. The multiple-choice tests cover four skill areas: English, reading, mathematics and science. The tests emphasize reasoning, analysis, problem solving, and the integration of learning from various sources, as well as the application of these proficiencies to the kinds of tasks college students are expected to perform. This report displays the average scores of grade 11 tested students in English (18), Mathematics (22), Reading (21), Science (24) and overall Composite. In the chart, you can see an overall trend of improved scores in Gallatin County from 2008-2012.

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Beyond preparing students for college and career, we have a moral obligation to prepare our students to be prepared to succeed in life. So, let's explore some "life ready" information for Gallatin County.

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Successful Transition

					Gallatin County High School		
School Year	Percent In College	Percent Voc/Tech School	Percent Military	Percent Working	Percent Combined Work/School	Percent Not Successful	Percent Successful Transition
2006	30.50	3.70	3.70	39.00	4.90	18.30	81.71
2007	32.00	0.00	0.00	47.20	1.40	19.40	80.56
2008	43.50	1.00	4.00	37.60	6.90	6.90	93.07
2009	22.20	5.10	3.00	40.40	13.10	16.20	83.84
2010	31.40	11.63	3.49	25.58	12.79	15.12	84.88
2011	31.50	7.6	6.7	25.7	13.3	15.2	84.80

The Kentucky Department of Education measures success by enrollment in college or a voc/tech school, military service or working the spring after graduation. We have experienced limited success in this area. Let's look at the workforce data for the county.

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Kentucky Educational Outlook to 2020

Employment and Average Annual Job Openings by Educational Attainment Categories, 2010-2020

	Employment		Change		Total Average Annual Job Openings	
Educational Attainment	Distribution		2010-2020		2010-2020	
Category	2010	2020	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total, All Occupations	100.0%	100.0%	235,430	12.4%	69,310	100.0%
Doctoral or Professional Degree	2.3%	2.5%	9,300	20.9%	1,720	2.5%
Master's Degree	1.4%	1.5%	5,260	19.7%	1,130	1.6%
Bachelor's Degree	12.4%	12.7%	34,710	14.8%	8,910	12.9%
Associate's Degree	6.1%	6.4%	20,840	17.9%	4,250	6.1%
Postsecondary Non-Degree Award	5.0%	5.2%	15,870	16.8%	3,390	4.9%
Some College, No Degree	0.6%	0.6%	2,170	20.2%	550	0.8%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	45.8%	45.2%	95,520	11.0%	29,290	42.3%
Less than High School	26.3%	25.9%	51,760	10.4%	20,070	29.0%

This section of the Outlook 2020 report groups Kentucky occupations by levels of educational attainment typically needed to enter that occupation. The assignments for the required education for each occupation were made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Occupations requiring more education are increasing in share of total employment.

Occupations requiring at least some college accounted for 27.8 percent of all Kentucky employment in 2010. This share increased from 27.5 percent in 2008 and is projected to increase to 28.9 percent by 2020. Those occupations requiring only a high school diploma or equivalent or less than high school are expected to account for

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a smaller percentage of total employment in 2020 than they did in 2010, indicating a

shift toward occupations requiring an increasing amount of education.

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Workforce Data

The Percentage of Workers Employed in the Following Sectors			
Sectors	**Gallatin County**	**Kentucky**	**Gap from State** (County % - State %)
Agriculture and Related- Ag, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	1.80	2.61	-0.81
Construction	10.84	7.41	3.43
Manufacturing	20.39	15.25	5.14
Wholesale Trade	5.63	2.89	2.74
Retail Trade 2.61	8.33	10.39	-2.06
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	9.18	6.57	2.61
Information	1.32	2.09	-0.77
Finance and Related- Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, & Rental/Leasing	3.91	5.48	-1.57
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative	4.92	7.04	-2.12
Educational, Health and Social Services	15.02	23.00	-7.98
Arts & Entertainment- Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	9.31	7.79	1.52
Public Administration	5.00	4.41	.59
Other Services	4.36	5.07	.71

(Over 1/3 of jobs — Construction, Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade)

In Gallatin County, a larger percentage of workers are employed in the fields of *manufacturing, construction, wholesale trade, and arts & entertainment, and transportation, warehousing & utilities* than throughout the state. These fields often do not require educational attainment beyond a high school diploma. *Several of these industries are declining because of economic conditions.* (2010 census data)

This section of the report is based on a wide spectrum of statistics collected and developed by the staff of the Research and Statistics (R&S) Branch in the Kentucky Office of Employment and Training (OET).

Workforce Outlook to 2020

- Occupations requiring at least some college or higher are projected to increase by 16.7 percent, while those requiring only a high school diploma or less will grow by only 10.8 percent.

- Obtaining a postsecondary degree offers more job opportunities, increased job security and greater potential for financial gain.

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- Occupations that require a doctoral or professional degree are expected to grow by 20.9 percent as a group between 2010 and 2020, the fastest growth rate among all groups. The occupations in this group are primarily comprised of postsecondary teachers and health diagnosing and treating practitioners.

- Occupations that require a master's degree are expected to grow by nearly 20 percent between 2010 and 2020, which is much faster than the average for all education levels (12.4%).

- Occupations generally requiring a bachelor's degree will provide the largest number of annual job openings (8,910) for those seeking postsecondary education.

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The Value of Education

Kentucky Median Wages by Educational Attainment, Ages 25+, 2010	
Educational Attainment	**Median Wage**
Doctoral, Professional or Master's Degree	$51,576
Bachelor's Degree	$42,150
Associate's Degree, Postsecondary Non-Degree Award, or Some College, No Degree	$30,207
High School Diploma or Equivalent	$24,355
Less than High School	$17,635

* Source: Research and Statistics Branch, 2010-2020 Occupational Projections
**Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey

Educational attainment is one of the most critical factors in gaining employment in a chosen field. While there are many non-monetary reasons for selecting a career, higher education usually leads to higher compensation. In fact, the value of education has increased in the last 20 years and will continue to do so.

There are significant payoffs for attending postsecondary school.

The table shows the median wage by educational attainment in Kentucky for 2010. The smallest training category, which consists of all degrees higher than a bachelor's degree, earns by far the most on average. Occupations that generally require a bachelor's degree earn markedly less than those requiring a doctoral, professional, or master's degree, but they still earn a great deal more on average than

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those occupations that normally require an associate's degree, a postsecondary non-degree award, or some college, no degree. The bulk of Kentucky's workforce continues to reside in those occupations requiring either a high school diploma or equivalent or less than high school. These categories, when combined, account for over 71 percent of the state's total employment. With technology expanding throughout the workforce, many of these occupations will require additional education in the future.

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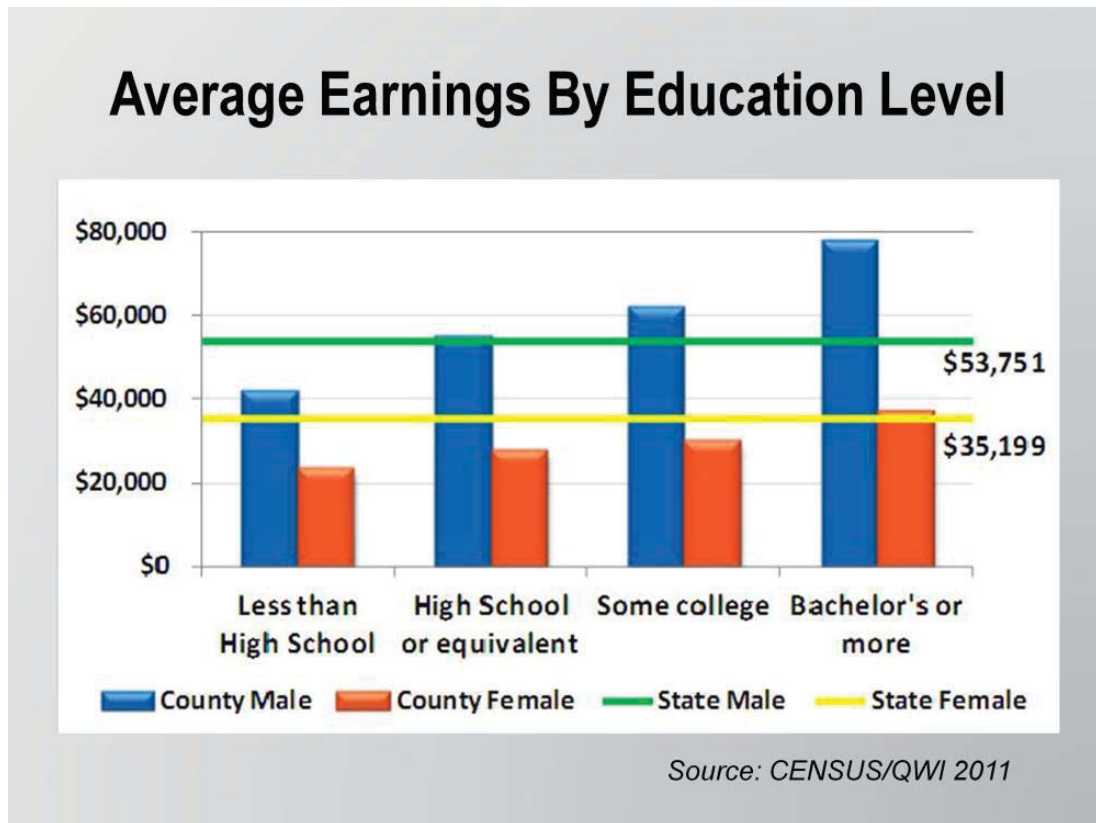
The bar graph presents the average annual earnings by education level and gender. The eight bars in the figure represent county-level annual earnings. Blue bars represent male earnings and orange bars represent female earnings, each subdivided among four different education levels. Additionally, the two lines represent the overall average annual earnings for the state of Kentucky, but split by gender (not education); male and female are shown as a green and yellow line, respectively.

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Poverty Levels

2011 Federal Poverty Guidelines	
Persons in Family or Household	Maximum Income Level
1	$10,890
2	14,710
3	18,530
4	22,350
5	26,170
6	29,990
7	33,810
8	37,630
For each additional person, add	3,820

The US Government defines poverty by Income Guidelines.

In the chart the dollar amounts represent annual earnings that a person must be below to be considered in poverty. For a single parent earning $14,710, this would be the equivalent of $7.07 per hour. In Gallatin County 1,380 (17.3%) people live in poverty.

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This chart indicates 2011 income levels in Gallatin County.

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Gallatin County Housing Data

Housing Wage	Housing Costs		Renter Households		
Hourly wage necessary to afford 2 BR FMR	Two bedroom FMR	Income needed to afford 2 BR FMR	Estimated mean renter hourly wage (2011)	Rent affordable at mean wage	Full-time jobs at mean renter wage needed to afford 2 BR FMR
$14.46	$752	$30,080	$9.95	$517	1.5

62% of workers in Gallatin County are unable to afford a 2 bedroom rental.

Data Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition 4.5 *Out of Reach 2011*

This figure presents the affordability of housing in Gallatin County. Housing is generally more expensive in Gallatin County than throughout the state and in adjacent counties.

FMR = Fair Market Rent

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In Summary:

- *Steady progress is being made toward college and career readiness goals.*
- *The District has limited results in preparing graduates for successful transition to adult life.*
- *More than 1/3 of the workforce is working in industries which are declining.*
- *In Kentucky occupations requiring more education are increasing in share of total employment.*
- *There are significant payoffs for attending postsecondary school.*

- The Gallatin County School District is making steady progress toward college and career readiness goals.

- The Gallatin County School District has had limited results in preparing graduates for successful transition to adult life.

- Workforce data indicates that more than 1/3 of those currently employed in Gallatin County are working in industries which are declining because of economic conditions.

- In Kentucky occupations requiring more education are increasing in share of total employment.

- There are significant payoffs for attending postsecondary school.

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Appendix C

Data Collection Protocols

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Data Collection Protocols

Administrator Interview Protocol

1. Explanation of the Study

   This study specifically seeks to determine the Gallatin County School
   District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions of
   administrators regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized
   and in the learning process. This study will provide the necessary foundation
   from which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin
   County School District.

2. Explanation of Confidentiality

   Distribute the consent form and give interviewee the opportunity to decline if
   they wish.

   - When the data from this interview is reviewed, no names will be
     associated with the data.

   - Your confidentiality as a study participant, as well, as your anonymity
     in relation to any comments made will be protected.

   - You will need to sign a consent form acknowledging your willingness
     to voluntarily participate in this study.

   - With your permission, I will record our interview. Recording our
     discussion will allow me to concentrate on the stories you are sharing.

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- I will provide a transcript of the interview for verification to ensure that you were accurately understood.

3. Why We Are Here

- Share comparative data about student performance

- Share data about economic trends effecting our community job opportunities for our students

- Discuss your beliefs and perspective on re-inventing current models of student learning that better prepare students for success in life

4. Data Review

- Share Data Review PowerPoint

5. Interview Questions

Please state your name and school in which you are a school leader.

Ask:

1. How long have you been in this role?

2. What are the district's core values for improving schools?

3. What do you consider to be the district's strengths?

4. What do you consider to be the areas of growth in the district?

5. Describe past and current change efforts. What did/do you think of each?

6. What are the district's priorities and strategies for change?

7. How would you describe an effective change process?

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8. What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective

   change?

9. Describe the model for decision making exist in the school district?

10. How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the

    district?

11. Describe your role in implementing change.

12. Describe current communication protocols that are effective.

13. What opportunities exist for two-way communication?

14. Do you have additional feedback relative to change in the district?

6. Debriefing

- On behalf of the Morehead State University faculty and students I

  would like to thank you for your participation in my research study.

- I would also like to restate the fact that what you have shared today is

  confidential.

- No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying

  information will be used in any report, display, or other publicly

  accessible media coming from this research.

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Focus Group Protocol

1. Introductions

   My name is Angie White and I am a doctoral student at Morehead State
   University in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. I am also the
   Chief Information Officer with the Gallatin County School District.

2. Explanation of the Study

   This study specifically seeks to determine the Gallatin County School
   District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions
   regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the
   learning process. This study will provide the necessary foundation from
   which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin County
   School District.

3. Explanation of Confidentiality

   Distribute consent forms and give participants the opportunity to decline and
   leave if they wish.

   - It is important that whatever is said here is left here.

   - We all need to protect each other's privacy.

   - When the data from this focus group is reviewed, no names will be
     associated with the data.

   - Your confidentiality as a participant, as well, as your anonymity in
     relation to any comments made will be protected.

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- If you don't feel comfortable participating in this focus group for any reason, please feel free to leave at this time. (Pause to allow participants to leave).

- You will each need to sign a consent form acknowledging your willingness to voluntarily participate in this study.

- With your permission, I will record our focus group. Recording our group discussion will allow me to concentrate on the stories you are sharing.

- I will provide a summary at the end of the session to ensure that you were accurately understood.

4. Ground Rules

Before we begin, I would like to share a few ground rules:

- It is important that we honor each person's right to speak. Please allow others to finish their thought, before making comments.

- We will use first names in our discussion; however no names will be used in reporting the results.

- We only have one hour to complete this focus group. If I occasionally interrupt what you are saying, please understand that my interruption is not a reflection on comments, but an effort to move the discussion along. If additional time is needed to explore to topic further, I may request additional time with specific individuals.

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5. Why We Are Here

   - Share comparative data about student performance

   - Share data about economic trends effecting our community job opportunities for our students

   - Discuss your beliefs and perspective on re-inventing current models of student learning that better prepare students for success in life

6. Data Review

   - Share Data Review PowerPoint

7. Focus Group Questions

   1. What is going well in the Gallatin County School District?

   2. What changes do you see as necessary in the Gallatin County School District?

   3. How would you describe an effective change process?

   4. What are some past and current change efforts? What did/do you think of each?

   5. Is there anything else you feel is important to add to this discussion?

8. Debriefing

   - Share the summary of the discussions.

   - On behalf of the Morehead State University faculty and students I would like to thank you for your participation in my research study.

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- I would also like to restate the fact that what you have shared today is confidential.

- No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any report, display, or other publicly accessible media coming from this research.

- Are there any additional questions?

- Thank you for your time. Have a great afternoon.

Teacher Online Survey

1. Introduction

   My name is Angie White and I am a doctoral student at Morehead State University in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program. I am also the Chief Information Officer with the Gallatin County School District.

2. Explanation of the Study

   This study specifically seeks to determine the Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change by examining the perceptions regarding the need for change in the way schools are organized and in the learning process. This study will provide the necessary foundation from which to develop a plan to bring about systemic change in the Gallatin County School District.

3. Explanation of Confidentiality

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- Your confidentiality as a participant, as well, as your anonymity in relation to any comments made will be protected.

- If you don't feel comfortable participating in this online survey for any reason, please feel free to exit the survey at this time. (Exit button available on page).

- By entering the survey you are providing consent, acknowledging your willingness to voluntarily participate in this study.

4. Data Review

- Share Data Review PowerPoint

5. Survey Questions

1. What are the district's core values for improving schools? (Open Response)

2. What do you consider to be the district's strengths? (Open Response)

3. What do you consider to be areas for growth in the district? (Open Response)

4. What do you think of current district change efforts? (Open Response)

5. What are the district's priorities and strategies for change? (Open Response)

6. How would you describe an effective change process? (Open Response)

7. What new skills and resources are needed to accomplish effective change? (Open Response)

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8. Describe the model for decision making exist in the district. (Open Response)

9. How are staff and administrators empowered to make decisions in the district? (Open Response)

10. Describe your role in implementing change. (Open Response)

11. Describe current communication protocols. Are they effective?

12. What opportunities exist for two-way communication? (Open Response)

13. Do you have additional feedback relative to change in this school district? (Open Response)

14. With which school are you associated?

- Lower Elementary

- Upper Elementary

- Middle School

- High School

15. How long have you been employed in the school district?

- 0-4 Years

- 5-9 Years

- 10-14 Years

- 15-19 Years

- 20-24 Years

- 25+ Years

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7. Debriefing

- On behalf of the Morehead State University faculty and students I would like to thank you for your participation in my research study.

- I would also like to restate the fact that what you have shared today is confidential.

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Dear participant,

My name is Angie White and I am a doctoral candidate at Morehead State University in the Department of Foundational and Graduate Studies in Education. I am requesting your assistance with a research project I am conducting to determine Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. Let me emphasize that you do not have to participate. If you do not wish to take part in the study, you do not have to answer any of the questions. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. This study has been reviewed to determine that participants' rights are safeguarded and there appears to be minimal risk or discomfort associated with participation in the study. You may choose to discontinue your participation at any time. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

The answers you provide will be kept strictly confidential and all research subject responses (completed surveys, audio recordings, and video recordings) will be stored in a locked cabinet, accessible only to the researcher. Please feel free to ask for help if something does not make sense to you and if you have any questions. If you experience any discomfort, you may contact Dr. John Curry at Morehead State University at 606-783-9053.

If you choose to volunteer, please be sure to **PRINT YOUR NAME** on the form and **SIGN** it to indicate your willingness to participate. That will be our indication that you understand the purpose of the study and that you are willing to help.

NAME (please print)

_____

Signature

_____

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the researcher:

Angie White
Wallace Office Building
859-567-2828
angie.white@gallatin.kyschools.us

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Appendix D

Final Report

Readiness Assessment for Gallatin County School District

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Final Report

Readiness Assessment for Gallatin County School District

Phase 5: Process and Outcomes Documentation

Submitted to: Dr. Dorothy Perkins

Superintendent

Gallatin County School District

75 Boardwalk

Warsaw, KY 41095

859-567-1820

dorothy.perkins@gallatin.kyschools.us

Submitted by: Angie White

Doctoral Candidate

Morehead State University

859-322-8663

angie.white@gallatin.kyschools.us

Date: March 24, 2014

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Executive Summary

The fifth phase of the readiness assessment develops the final needs assessment report. The report documents the readiness assessment process and outcomes. All phases of the readiness assessment were combined and reported to the superintendent.

Goals:

1. Develop the final readiness assessment report

2. Report the needs assessment results to the superintendent

Process:

The readiness assessment process for this phase included the following steps:

1. Combine all phases of the readiness assessment into the final report

2. Review the needs assessment results with the superintendent

Findings:

Phase 1:

Documents ground research in the "context of the problem being investigated" (Merriam, 1988, p. 108). Documents can be used as a reliable source of information concerning the attitudes, beliefs, and views of an organization according to Erlandson et al (1993). This form of data collection can provide rich information which is not impacted by the researcher's presence. Additionally, documents provide and enduring component of qualitative research as they are easily accessed at little or no cost.

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The documents examined in this phase of the study included the current Gallatin County School District Consolidated District Improvement Plan (2011 CDIP), 2012 Strategic Plan, 2012 District Report Card, 2013 TELL survey results and 2013 District of Innovation application. The information collected from these documents will be used to design questions for the interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted in the study. In the context of this study, these documents will provide a basis for investigating the perceptions of study participants as they relate to change.

The current Gallatin County School District Consolidated District Improvement Plan identifies nine goals which include increasing the graduation rate, improving scores on state assessments, increasing parent involvement, improving teacher and principal effectiveness and increasing the number of students who are college and career ready. The 2012 Strategic Plan identifies two goals: All students proficient on state assessments and increase the percentage of students who are college and career ready to 61% by 2015. The strategies employed to achieve these goals are research based and range from teacher/principal effectiveness strategies to parent involvement strategies.

Assessment scores reported on the school report card indicate small incremental increases in scores, but no major increases. Joseph and Reigeluth (2010) explain this phenomenon by identifying two types of educational change. Small incremental increases or improvements can be achieved through piecemeal

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change which involves "making adjustments to the current paradigm of education," whereas systemic change, in which larger, more significant gains can be achieved, involves "transforming the current paradigm into a different one" (p. 97).

Review of the Community Support and Involvement and School Leadership portions of the 2013 TELL survey results for the Gallatin County School District indicate that the schools in Gallatin County are supported by an involved community and that school leadership supports teachers and the school council. Questions from these portions of the survey reveal an increased percentage on the majority of indicators from 2011 to 2013. Similarly, comparison between Gallatin County School District responses and state-wide responses show higher percentages on the majority of indicators by Gallatin County teachers.

Review of the District of Innovation application indicates that the district promotes innovation and has experience implementing innovative efforts. The application and accompanying rubric provide insight into the various structures and systems which impact innovative change in the K-12 environment. These documents will also be helpful in the design phase.

Overall the review of district documents reveals a dedication to continuous improvement and a willingness to take risks to advance student learning and

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achievement. Specific goals cited in these documents include increased

graduation rates and improved scores on state assessments.

Phase 2:

Qualitative research methods have grown popular in education related

research over the past decade since they are well-suited to the dynamic and relational

characteristics found in education environments (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Gathering

data on site and face-to-face dialog with study participants provides a more

comprehensive understanding of the district.

One must consider the information needs of the study when determining the

design of a research project. What information is being sought? Where or from

whom can that information be found? What resources are available to carry out the

study? Who will use the information and how will they use it? (Patton, 1990).

With regard to data analysis, "there is relatively little said on how to analyze

the textual material that qualitative researchers are presented with at the end of the

data gathering stage" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). Furthermore, the distinct

collection, analysis and reporting of data in qualitative research is difficult because

these often occur simultaneously (Meriam, 1988).

Phase 3:

The assessment tools used in the study were interviews, focus groups and

surveys. The analysis of district documents in Phase 1 was used to determine the

questions to be used in the interviews and survey. The questions were constructed

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and designed to determine the capacity of Gallatin County School District to achieve systemic change.

Interviews are designed to gather a specific type of information from the perspective of the participants (Patton, 2002). Given the research design of this study, the interview questions evolved after reviewing district documents. The researcher developed an interview guide, based on information gathered through the review of the district documents, which provided specific direction for the interviews. The interview guide also provided a consistent structure for collecting information from participants (Bryman, 2001).

Prior to their use in the study, interview questions were reviewed by expert reviewers who were not involved in the study in order to validate their effectiveness. Interviewees had the opportunity for member checking after the interviews.

Focus groups consisting of eight to twelve participants provide the opportunity for a somewhat open, free flowing discussion, through the guidance of a facilitator (Morgan, 1998). Focus groups are most useful for getting at complex underlying ideas or opinions in a setting where the sharing of experiences can help guide the other participants to greater awareness and participation. In a focus group setting, participants are able to hear each other's responses and make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say (Patton, 2002). The focus group interview questions emerged from the review of district documents. The focus group interview protocol consisted of guided questions

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that explored participant's knowledge of and readiness for systemic change. The

focus group questions were reviewed by expert reviewers not involved in the study

prior to their use with a group of stakeholders in order to validate their effectiveness.

Surveys are one of the most common types of quantitative research tools. It

was possible to collect data from a large group using surveys. The survey used in this

study was an online questionnaire. Questions fell into two categories: open-ended and

closed. In open-ended questions, participants answered the questions in their own

words. These types of questions were used to gather respondents' feelings and

perceptions with regard to change, communication and decision-making processes in

the district. While open-ended questions provide much information, they are more

difficult to analyze since they may cover a wide range of topics. Consequently, they

must be grouped to provide some level of summary. Surveys are an effective tool to

obtain stakeholder input, but require much time and effort. The survey questions were

reviewed by expert reviewer not involved in the study prior to their use in the study.

Phase 4:

The data from the interviews, focus groups, and online survey were combined,

compared and analyzed to produce the research findings. The significant findings for

each research question were combined into response themes and reported for each of

the three stakeholder groups participating in the study. The significant findings are

listed and explained below.

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The district's core values for improving schools.

There is a culture of continuous improvement in the district as evidenced by the district's participation in multiple pilot programs and initiatives. However, the unfocused and variable implementation of these programs and initiatives has left many teachers experiencing frustration with the change process.

District strengths.

The responses to this question reflected a culture of strong leadership and strong work ethic among teachers, both focused on doing what is best for students. Stakeholders also recognize district efforts to ensure student college and career readiness.

Growth areas for the district.

The response themes for this question were very weak. Administrators and staff are unsure of what needs to be done to improve student achievement. Community stakeholders recognize district efforts towards college and career readiness, but also recognize that more needs to be done. Most suggestions for growth were piecemeal changes, not systemic in nature.

Effective change efforts.

Several response themes were identified for this question. However, these themes had very little cross-over of themes between stakeholder groups. Most change efforts were seen as positive, but most were not implemented with fidelity, or

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abandoned, over time. These change efforts were not focused or aligned to a

common vision or purpose.

Priorities and strategies for change.

Two response themes were identified by both administrators and teachers for

this question. These were the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES)

and getting students college and career ready. However, the response themes were

stronger in the administrator interviews than in the online teacher survey. There is a

general understanding among stakeholders that our future must be different from our

past if students are to be successful.

Effective change processes.

Strong response themes for this question were only identified in the

administrator interviews. These responses identified gaining ownership/buy-in,

developing a detailed plan, implementing it, and then monitoring as essential

elements in the change process. Administrators understand that the change process

relies upon stakeholders working across boundaries and levels to produce the desired

change.

Skills and resources necessary to accomplish effective change.

Two strong response themes emerged from this question. First, time is

essential to successful change initiatives. This includes time for training and

planning, but most importantly, time to fully implement the change and measure its

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impact. The second response theme was the need for additional personnel to assist in the implementation of the change.

District decision making model.

Administrators indicated a collaborative model of decision making, but the online survey did not provide a response theme for this question. The responses collected indicate that the decision making process in the district is relatively transparent, but the process/purpose is not always communicated to all levels and stakeholders.

Empowering staff and administrators to make decisions.

There were no strong response themes for this question. This would indicate an uncertainty about how staff and administrators are included in the decision making process. Those response themes given most frequently generally reflect more formal avenues for decision making such as DILT, PLCs, and the CDIP/CSIP.

Roles in implementing change.

Administrators provided strong response themes for this description indicating that they understand and accept direct responsibility for change efforts. Additionally, the answers indicate that they are accustomed to change and their role in change efforts. While the most frequent response themes for this description indicated that teachers recognize a responsibility for implementing and supporting change efforts, many provided a N/A response. The N/A response theme indicates that many teachers still do not understand their role in the change efforts.

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Effective communication protocols.

Two strong response themes emerged from the data collection process. These themes were face-to-face (formal and informal meetings) and electronic communications such as email and electronic newsletters. The strong response themes given reflect communication protocols which reach all levels of the organization and all stakeholder groups.

Opportunities for two-way communication.

Face-to-face communication was the strongest response theme given for this question. Telephone calls and email also provided strong response themes. These themes reflect the open lines of communication to and from all levels and stakeholder groups. The small size of the district may explain the reason that face-to-face meetings are frequently used for two-way communication.

The analysis of data and findings focused on the perceptions expressed by administrators, focus group members, and teachers in the Gallatin County School District. The data collected during this phase of the needs assessment were analyzed to determine Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. The qualitative data from the administrator and focus group interviews and the teacher survey were analyzed to determine themes and recognize patterns. The quantitative data from the teacher survey were analyzed to help inform demographic patterns in the study.

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The findings of this study and their analysis present the researcher with useful data concerning the perception of stakeholders regarding systemic change. The district is seen as one in which continuous improvement is promoted. The district has pursued improvement through a wide variety of change initiatives and efforts. Some of these change efforts may be viewed as successful, but the degree of success has not lead to the necessary levels of improvement in student achievement. Additionally, these change initiatives and efforts have not been strategically aligned so as to result in the greatest impact. Consequently, many of these change efforts have been abandoned to pursue other change efforts. This has resulted in an increasing level of dissatisfaction with change efforts among teachers. While communication appears to be effective and to reach all levels, the dissatisfaction associated with change efforts is augmented by a lack of communication about the purpose, plan, implementation, and monitoring of change initiatives. Subsequently, teachers and staff do not know or recognize their role in the change process. It appears that while the district is open to change and recognizes the need for change, it is not sure what needs to change or what is needed to implement the change process. However, a strong desire that enact change to ensure student success is evident through the numerous pilots and programs for which the district has volunteered.

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Recommendations:

Phase 1:

These documents provide a good starting point to begin seeking answers to deeper questions about Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. Specific areas of questioning should include perceptions regarding past and current change efforts, the relationships between the schools, the district and the community, models of decision making, and models of communication.

Phase 2:

The characteristics of qualitative methodologies are most appropriate for the data gathering needs of this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected in the study. However, the majority of the data will be qualitative in nature. Data collection methods best suited for this study include; face-to-face interviews with administrators, focus group interviews, and teacher/staff surveys. Administrator interviews will be used to gather specific information from the perspective of the interviewees (Patton, 2002). Focus groups will be used to guide participants in greater awareness and participation than other unidirectional collection methods. Focus group participants respond to the comments of others providing a more in depth information (Patton, 2002; New York State Teacher Centers, 2013). Surveys will provide quantitative data from a larger number of participants. Use of these collection tools will allow for triangulation of data.

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An ongoing list of emerging themes will be maintained to use when analyzing the data. I will read and make margin notations on all administrator and focus group interviews to search for patterns and themes.

All materials gathered will stored by the researcher. All files will be maintained for all surveys and interview transcripts. All interview tapes were also labeled and properly stored. With the exception of the phase reports and final paper, all materials pertinent to data collection will be destroyed after completion of the study.

Phase 3:

The data collected during this phase of the study can be analyzed to determine Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. The qualitative data from the administrator and focus group interviews can be analyzed to determine themes and recognize patterns. The quantitative data from the teacher/staff survey can be coded and analyzed to help inform the patterns and themes identified in the study.

Phase 4:

The data collected during this phase of the study was analyzed to determine Gallatin County School District's readiness for systemic change. The instructional and non-instructional implications of the analysis should be disseminated to those who are involved in the change process.

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The data from the study indicates that the basic framework for systemic change is in place in the Gallatin County School District. There is a foundation of strong leadership within the district. However, much work needs to be done both within and outside of the district for a systemic change initiative to be successful.

The administrator interviews revealed a "shotgun" approach to change. Many good programs and initiatives were implemented, but many did not address the deeper needs of the district. More importantly, there was not a focused vision to align initiatives or strategically link them. The district needs to focus on a specific objective. This may mean "missed" opportunities for pilot and volunteer participation in programs, but will help the district maintain focus. These missed opportunities can be revisited at another time. The district also needs to view the change process as a continuous cycle not as something that starts and stops.

The focus group sessions revealed that the makeup of these groups may need to be modified to provide the necessary association within certain segments of the stakeholder community. The current focus groups represent a wide range of stakeholders, but the focus groups also need to consist of key social, political, and economic representatives. In his book, The Tipping Point, Malcolm Gladwell describes three agents of change in the tipping points of epidemics. Gladwell states, "The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of social gifts" (2002, p. 33). These agents of change are described as Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. While focus groups

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consisting of all three agents of change would benefit the district and the community, the essential change agents are the community's mavens. Gladwell describes mavens as people who accumulate knowledge and know how to share it with others. According to Gladwell, mavens start "word-of-mouth epidemics" (p. 67). Since focus groups have primarily served as a vehicle for the superintendent to share information with the community stakeholders and to "dispel rumors, myths and gossip," it would appear sensible to include mavens in these focus groups. Each focus group participant should bring the needs and concerns of their stakeholder segment forward for discussion so the group can explore solutions. True mavens will have the network of people of disseminate and collect information concerning the district. As Gladwell states, "Mavens are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know" (p. 69).

The online teacher surveys indicate that teachers have invested themselves in past district initiatives only to see them dropped or phased out. This has left them feeling devalued and frustrated. Some have become resistant to change as a result. Pressure has been applied to teachers with the accelerated implementation of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). They are supportive, but wary. All new initiatives should be aligned with the PGES or many teachers will not withstand the added stress and the PGES initiative and/or the other initiative will fail or experience limited success.

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Current and past change efforts were not "bad" initiatives, but were not focused and did not address the deeper needs of the district. When new programs/initiatives were adopted, old ones were dropped or instituted with less fidelity and district support because the new initiatives were seen as addressing needs not previously addressed.

The primary change initiative within the district at this time is the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). All other initiatives, strategies, and activities need to align with this initiative to provide focus and direction for the district.

It is this researcher's opinion that the following must be addressed before the Gallatin County School District is ready to implement a systemic change effort:

- District initiatives must be aligned and focused on one primary goal or objective.

- Teachers and administrators must be accustomed to the PGES as a routine process.

- Focus groups need to be reconfigured to include mavens as participants.

- Sufficient time must be allocated to plan, communicate, implement, and monitor any proposed change initiative.

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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