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WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER: RESHAPING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SCHEDULING PRACTICES WITH AN IMPLEMENTATION OF A PARALLEL
BLOCK SCHEDULING SYSTEM AS A MEANS TO EFFECTIVELY AND
EFFICIENCTLY REACH SCHOOL GOALS

Lisa M. Marion-Howard

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

in Educational Leadership

National College of Education

National Louis University

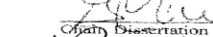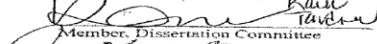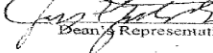May, 2016

A THREE PART DISSERTATION:

THE EFFECTIVE EDUCATOR: RESHAPE THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS'
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARLOTTE
DANIELSON'S FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING
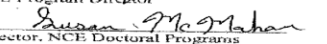
WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER: RESHAPING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SCHEDULING PRACTICES WITH AN IMPLEMENTATION OF A PARALLEL
BLOCK SCHEDULING SYSTEM AS A MEANS TO EFFECTIVELY AND
EFFICIENCTLY REACH SCHOOL OUR GOALS

CONNECT THE DISCONNECTED: ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING
WITH AN IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LESSON
PLANNING PRACTICES WHICH IMPROVE INSTRUCTION, SCHOOL CLIMATE
AND ACCOUNTABILITY DATA

Lisa M. Marion-Howard

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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_____6/5/16_____
Date Approved

Abstract

The teachers at this elementary school worked hard, but did not appear to know how to work smart. They struggled with time management, priority and goal setting and the creation of class schedules that met the required subject allocations for core subjects. They had difficulty with effective integration of specialty classes, and meeting the diverse academic/behavior needs of their students. A school-wide revised scheduling system was developed and implemented in an effort to help teachers to work smarter and not harder. The implementation of a Parallel Block Scheduling System provided adequate instructional time for the core subjects, intervention, enrichment, special services, encore classes, and common planning time for teachers during the school day. As a result of this implementation, teachers were able to improve the quality use of school time, effectively meet students' needs, improve overall academic achievement and reach school goals.

Preface

As I worked to develop, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of my change leadership project, I learned that communication, relationships, and accountability are critical components to the success of any system-wide transformational change process. Effective and timely communications was instrumental in the creation of staff buy-in and ownership. As the leader, I had to provide a thorough rationale of the need for change.

I learned that relationships were a vital component of a shared-decision making process; and stakeholders' had to be given voice. Collaborative teams were established; and teams were given authority to provide input and make decisions collectively. Conflict and trust issues were resolved and all participants had to feel safe/comfortable sharing input and providing feedback related to the implementation process, its failure and/or success. Leadership capacity was strengthened. As a school family, we learned how to work together as a professional learning community; and the importance of holding each other accountable in an effort to produce our desired results and achieve our goals.

This experience has helped to prepare me for district level leadership work by teaching me the importance of building positive relationships, teamwork, communication, collaboration, and the positive impact that school-wide implementations could have on systemic change. I learned that true leaders have to have a viable plan of action that includes a vision, a clear rationale for work, and collective efforts of stakeholders. They recognize the importance of examining data/gathering resources, making decisions based on data results and the development of common system of operations to ensure the fidelity of the implementation and accountability. Most importantly, I learned that true leaders are ethical, fair and firm when needed, and they are never afraid to delegate.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the most significant people in my life: my sons (Brandon and Holase, Jr.), brothers (Robert, Brian and Desmond), parents (Julius and Sharon), nephews (Demetrius, Desmond, Daelen and Dallas), niece (LaNyla), cousin (Melvin), best friends (Tanyialisa, Martha and Charm), Goddaughters (Alexa and Iyanna), principal coach (Beverly), muses (Victor, Mark and Claude), cooperating superintendent (Linda), staunch supporters (Reshunda, Amaeshia and Karen), Engleburg Elementary School (staff, students and parents), editors (Wendy and Wanda) and the memory of my favorite aunt and uncle (Helen and Milton). Most importantly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior whom due to his goodness, grace, mercy and favor have blessed me with the intellect, stamina, perseverance, and resilience to complete this work.

Although unplanned and perhaps even unexpected, my birth was no mistake or mishap; and my life was not a fluke of nature. I learned very early that God created me for a reason, a season and with a purpose; and in accordance to his intricate plan for me, He strategically ordered my steps by placing angels along my life's path to inspire and guide the work that I needed to do in order to fulfill the purpose for which I was created to achieve. It is with great humility and a humbled heart that I respectfully dedicate this dissertation to the most influential angels in my life. Without your unconditional love, encouragement, support and understanding along my educational journey this work may have remained just a sequestered dream. Thank you.

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Section One: Introduction

"Our education system was never designed to deliver the kind of results we now need to equip students for today's world – and tomorrow's. The system was originally created for a very different world. To respond appropriately, we need to rethink and redesign."
Tony Wagner et al.

According to Canady and Rettig (1995), school scheduling was a very valuable and, most often, untapped resource for school improvement. They were among the few pioneers who conducted extensive research on the efficiency and effectiveness of school scheduling practices across our nation and, of those innovators, they were the only two who examined elementary school scheduling systems. Their research concluded that a well-crafted school schedule could improve the effectiveness of time, space and resources and could be used to improve instructional climate, resolve problems with instruction and assist in establishing desired programs and instructional practices (Rettig, 1995). Research indicated when students fail to learn, display an unwillingness to work to their full potential and neglect to meet their academic and/or behavior goals, the problem were most often the structure of the organization, not the inadequacies of the people who worked within them (Rettig, 1995).

Many of the teachers at this school struggled to effectively and efficiently meet the growing demands of our stakeholders—students, parents/caregivers, administration and the state. They shouldered the daunting tasks of providing adequate academic support that complied with state standards, while dealing with students' behavioral issues (that may be a manifestation of deeper issues) and facing scrutiny by parents/caregivers. These challenges led to undue hardship on staff members, which lead to poor attendance, disciplinary issues and, finally, total burnout. In the past, these school-wide issues resulted in reduced productivity levels for teachers and students and prevented them from

achieving their personal, academic and/or district goals. Periodically, this school's accountability data would show occasional hiccups of success at a few grade levels–specifically kindergarten–but the achievements were insufficient to improve our overall accountability data and/or result in the removal of our school's name from the state's "Focus School" list.

I have witnessed the tireless efforts of several of the teachers at my school as they gave their all--day in and day out--to meet the varied and various needs of our students; unfortunately, their hard work and determination were not positively reflected in our school's accountability data. There appeared to be too much work and too little time during the school day for teachers to adequately complete their professional tasks. Teachers needed more time to help students in the areas of learning, mastering concepts and reaching their desired goals; yet, adding more time to our school day was not feasible.

In an effort to help teachers work smarter and not harder, our staff decided to take the advice of Canady and Rettig and implement a Parallel Block Elementary School Scheduling System during the 2014–2015 school year. We hoped that our new and improved school-wide scheduling system would increase work productivity and create a positive culture for teaching and learning. Ideally, the revised scheduling system would allow common planning time during school hours and, also, permit teachers to collaborate with colleagues, discuss student data, make data-driven decisions, collectively plan for instruction, meet the required weekly minutes for instruction for each subject and begin to better meet our students' vast behavior and academic needs. We envisioned the new system as the tool that would facilitate shared responsibility among grade-level

teams, thereby enhancing student learning, and we believed it would decrease stress levels, while increasing job satisfaction. Simply put, the revised school-wide scheduling system was intended to be the tool that would create a surge in productivity for all stakeholders in every area, while creating a positive culture for teaching and learning; consequently, teacher/student burnout would be eliminated.

Rationale

During the 2013–2014 school year, I had the distinct pleasure of serving in a dual capacity at my elementary school for almost three months. I served as a fourth/fifth grade split classroom teacher for a class, for a teacher on leave, and the principal. Serving as the school principal was my appointed position and the position for which I was paid, but extenuating circumstances forced me to assume the role as teacher in order to keep my school as a whole afloat and the overall school climate somewhat intact. This particular classroom experienced an influx of unqualified substitute teachers who drifted in and out of this fourth/ fifth grade split classroom. Many of the substitute teachers attempted to deliver high quality instruction, but the demands of two grade level curriculums, coupled with some of these students' poor behaviors, due to the many changes, caused these substitute teachers' residencies to be short lived. The substitute teachers' temporary stays caused a revolving door to form, havoc to brew, instability among the students and students to rapidly lose academic footage. The inconsistent instruction and lack of positive guidance by a single individual began to take a negative toll on the students' and as a committed principal; I could not stand by and allow my students to continue to lose valuable instruction time and or learning opportunities. In an effort to prevent further loss of instruction, I decided to serve as the substitute teacher in this classroom, until a stronger and more suitable replacement teacher was assigned. This experience afforded

me a bird's eye view of the life and struggles of classroom teachers. I gained first-hand knowledge and personal experience of the issues that were never really voiced out loud, but festered underneath the surface in secrecy as the teachers' struggles. Needless to say, a few revelations occurred.

The first was when I learned that the compilation of this class composite was very heterogeneous and consisted of students with seven different instructional levels! As I planned for and delivered instruction to adequately meet the wide variety of needs for this difficult group of students, I struggled to teach two curriculums simultaneously and differentiate to provide multi-tiered instructional groups. At times, I had two to three different discussions transpiring at the same time and it was very difficult to manage. I spent a great deal of time teaching to the low groups and expecting my high groups to function as independent learners in full charge of their own learning journeys. Needless to say, after my seventeen year hiatus from teaching, I experienced a renewed awakening to the realities of teaching. I quickly regained a new fond respect for and understanding of the other classroom teachers within my school. As a principal, who observed classrooms as an outsider, I had lost that first-hand sight of these experiences.

My second revelation occurred during my teaching experience, when I reached out for help. As I continued with my own struggles to plan for effective instruction in an effort to address the various student needs in the delivery of my instruction, I began to solicit advice from some of my teacher colleagues. To my surprise, many of the teachers I collaborated with to gain ideas regarding best practices for meeting the needs of students assigned to classrooms with a wide variety of instructional groups began to express their own concerns. I learned that many of the teachers whom I collaborated with

shared my similar struggles. They too were in desperate need to find the magic solution to resolve this spiraling and critical dilemma of meeting the diverse needs of many. They, like me, were not finding the time during the day to teach science, social studies and or health. A few teachers even expressed that they were lucky if they were able to teach these subjects at least once each week. "No wonder our science scores are rock bottom

I selected to focus on a revision of our current school scheduling system, because I believed this was what my school needed at this time. I recognized the value and the positive impact a well-crafted master school schedule could have on the transformational process that our school needed to undergo in order to become the positive school community that was once present, but now was gone. I believed we could begin to improve our students' behavior, attendance and academic achievement, if we implemented a viable school scheduling system that afforded all teachers with opportunities to share responsibility for providing quality education for all students as they worked together collectively to ensure that this goal was achieved.

I believed that if students found school appealing; and we implemented an effective school scheduling system that afforded students opportunities to move regularly throughout their school day and be taught by a variety of teachers, then we could begin to create the school environment that would positively reflect increases in our attendance, student ownership of their learning, work productivity and academic growth/ achievement. If we could convince students to like school again, I believed the success would be evidenced by decreases in students' misbehaviors and decreases in the need for teachers to write office incident referrals for student misbehavior. Most importantly, if students enjoyed school, there would be a noticeable overall positive school climate,

which could be positively impacted by students' improved perceptions, this evidence would result in an environment

We chose to implement a new elementary school scheduling system at my school, because it was vital that teachers learn how to work smarter and not harder. This implementation was not a district-wide mandate, but an option that we chose to help us to produce positive achievement and climate results. We believed this implementation was a necessity, which our staff believed would assist them with working more effectively and efficiently to better meet our students' emotional, social, psychological and academic needs. We believed a change in our school scheduling practices would help us to prevent staff, as well as student, burn out by decreasing the overwhelming feelings that typically stemmed from the effects of the vast demands, pressures and chronic exhaustion associated with our overabundance of professional responsibilities, which are related to our own, students, parents and public expectations.

In conclusion, Wagner provided another rationale in his research for why it would be advantageous of our school to revise our current school scheduling practices, when he stated, "If we continue to wait, we'll continue to do about as well as we've done" (Wagner, 2006, p. 56).   At this point, the staff at my school could not continue to do as we had always done. Our students were not making sufficient progress; and staff members were on the verge of giving up! My staff and I were constantly overwhelmed with job related responsibilities/ issues, continuously functioning in a state of disequilibrium and teetering on a verge of burn out. We were overburdened with the pressures and demands that were placed on us by ourselves, school district, parents and the community at-large. There were too many district initiatives and other unreasonable

expectations that made scheduling and meeting all of the demands almost impossible.

The declines in both human and capital resources, coupled with the expectation to do

more with less also made our work hard. If our school schedules were not changed and

workloads were not reduced, then I feared that someday there would not be enough

teachers willing to teach the students at my school and or other schools.

Why this Implementation Matters

My change leadership project mattered to me because, as the school's appointed

instructional leader, I felt personally and professionally responsible for guiding my

school's academic success. Therefore, it was my duty to consistently research and

implement best practices to improve the overall quality, climate and academic progress of

my school. Tony Wagner stated in his book, *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to

Transforming Our Schools,* when leaders begin owning these problems and taking

responsibility for student achievement, they model a different and more productive way

of approaching problems (Wagner, 2006). When teachers are happy on their jobs, one can

assume that they will experience positive interactions with their students. Satisfied

students would promote positive student behaviors improved school climates, increased

work productivity, raised academic achievement, and decreased public and parental

complaints.

Providing schools within the district with a simple and convenient way for

teachers to meet the various needs of most of their students and raise achievement levels

was necessary. Teachers were better able to meet both the district and the Wisconsin

Department of Public Instructions allocation of time requirements for all subjects,

including adequate time for specials. Teachers were able to spend sufficient time,

collaborating with colleagues, planning collectively, team teaching, differentiating and personalizing instruction for all students to better meet their needs. Common planning time for grade levels to meet would be built into the school day with cross-grade level meetings scheduled after school. Intervention and enrichment times would be intentionally built into the students' daily schedules. All available school staff, regardless of their job title, would be assigned to assist students during their mandatory intervention block. A majority of the students with special needs would be instructed in a less restrictive environment in accordance with the law. Students would not have to be pulled out to receive their special education services. Resource teachers would be required to provide their services inside the general education classrooms in partnership with the general education teachers–which meant all available hands would be on deck to collective provides extra support for students.

 This change leadership project was important to the educational community at-large, because it allowed teachers opportunities to teach on two–three subjects that they enjoyed teaching, as opposed to the six to seven subjects they were accustomed to teaching. Teachers were better able to meet the needs of their students in each of their classes, because they did not have broad range of learners assigned to each of their classes. Each class was homogeneously grouped with no more than two to three heterogeneous groups. This allowed teachers to provide quality, tiered instruction efficiently, effectively and easily. Teacher workloads were reduced, because they were responsible for fewer subjects, so they could plan, prepare, dive deeply into common core state standards and meet students' individual needs. Teachers and students work productivity increased as a result of less stress and reduced accountability due to the

lightened workloads. The master schedules allowed teachers to meet by grade level at least two – three times per week within the school day, and cross grade level content teams met after school one time per month. Teachers were given ample opportunities to meet and collaborate weekly with their teammates about teaching and learning. They had sufficient time to conduct data chats, develop common formative assessments based on data and plan instruction collectively each week. The implementation of the common system of operations kept teachers on one accord with an identical understanding of our current reality and concretely identified the work that needed to be done. Grade level teams were kept abreast of our current state of affairs–the effectiveness of their strategies and the collective direction they needed to proceed in in order to achieve the common vision, mission and goals of the school.

Problem

The need for my school to change our instructional practices became brutally apparent to me when I received and reviewed the results of our 2013–2014 state report. There had been a growing awareness of the school's poor performance, but seeing this harsh reality released in print to the public ignited a strong sense of urgency to improve our systemic practices. The school's overall accountability score and rating was forty-nine percent, which indicated that we failed to meet the state's expectations. The school had received low ratings and scores in all four of the priority areas: Student Achievement, Student Growth, Closing the Gaps, On-Track and Post-Secondary Readiness. In addition, we received a five-point reduction on our student engagement indicator, because our absenteeism rate exceeded the established thirteen percent minimum. On a positive note,

our test participation was above ninety-five percent and our dropout rate was below six percent, which satisfies state requirements.

Four years ago, the staff at New Beginnings Elementary School began to seriously agonize over our school's failing academic achievement, decreasing staff/student attendance and a rapidly declining culture for teaching and learning. We attributed our educators' job dissatisfaction to troubling working conditions and their inabilities to successfully reach and teach students. Teachers wore visible signs of mental exhaustion from being overworked and overwhelmed. These major school-wide concerns plagued our equilibrium and negatively impacted overall attendance, behaviors, academic achievement and instructional climate. We were forced to acknowledge that our school was becoming a place of discontent, where students' happiness levels and teachers' job satisfaction teetered on slippery slopes–one misstep from certain destruction. Our students reported to school daily with their personal "baggage." Parental involvement and support was at an all-time low, while teacher frustration levels and absenteeism were at an unprecedented high. We realized that something had to be done to rectify this situation; immediate action had to be taken.

In an effort to identify the root cause of our growing problems and begin the development of a viable action plan, our learning team conducted a root-cause analysis during one of our strategic planning sessions. We discussed several essential topics and conducted a very open and honest dialogue about our school difficulties—asking and addressing the following critical questions:

- ✓ Why are we not producing the student results we desire?
- ✓ What are we doing wrong?

      ✓ What corrective measures are needed to improve our current reality?

      ✓ How do we implement our plan?"

During this in-depth discussion related to our perceived school-wide issues, we identified one primary problem–ineffective use of instructional time–that, through the trickle-down effect, resulted in a losing battle in a host of other areas. We simply needed a better school scheduling system that could produce the outcomes we desired:

      ✓   better use of our allocated time during the school day

      ✓   help us to meet the required instructional minutes for each subject

      ✓   function more effectively and efficiently as one team

      ✓   meet the numerous demands of our daily work

      ✓   meet the district/state expectations, while at the same time

      ✓   positively impact our students' behavior and academic progress

In addition to the learning team's identification of our primary problem, we were also able to identify several secondary culprits that served as confirmation that we needed to change our current school scheduling practices. First, our school district mandated an abundance of initiatives over a four year span; and our school implemented all of them with fidelity in an effort to promote school-wide improvements every year during their implementation requirement. During the 2010–2011 school year, we implemented the fifteen-minute Positive Behavior Support System block (PBIS) and introduced the mandatory ninety-minute Comprehensive Literacy Plan Instructional block (CLP) coupled with the Common Core State Standards for Reading (CCSS). During the 2011–2012 school year, we implemented the mandatory ninety-minute Comprehensive Science and Math Plan (CSMP). This instructional design was accompanied with the

requirements of the Seven E's, LESA and the CCSS for Math. During the 2012–2013 school year, we implemented the mandatory sixty-minute English Language Arts block (ELA) accompanied with the CCSS for English Language Arts. In addition to the ELA block, we implemented the tier two level of PBIS and levels one and two of the Response to Intervention System (RTI). During this same school year, the requirement for school's to function as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) also resurfaced and was re-emphasized. The PLC implementation was originally introduced to and implemented districtwide during the 2003–2004 school year. During the 2013–2014 school year, we implemented Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching along with the components of a Standards-Based Instructional System. Unfortunately, these initiatives collectively were only somewhat fruitful. We experienced some success with these implementations, but not enough success to claim satisfaction in reaching our school improvement and district goals.

There was a need to change our ineffective school scheduling practices where there appeared to be minimal commonalities in collective planning, instruction and assessment practices among the teachers who taught at the same grade levels. We learned during our collaborations that most teachers taught their students in isolation and rarely met as grade level teams to collaborate about the business of teaching and learning. Teachers took their assigned students, closed their classroom doors and taught THEIR students in accordance with what they thought their students needed. There was no sense of shared responsibility among teachers that offered any assurance that ALL students were learning.

Many teachers, especially intermediate teachers, taught their students in whole groups without the use of proximity, to ensure focus on the lessons. Our school district mandated set instructional designs for all core subjects, but due to poor planning and timing, many teachers complained that they could not follow the designs with fidelity. Intervention and/or enrichment instruction was sporadic and varied from class to class. The teachers' differentiation practices were inconsistent and were dependent upon the teachers' willingness and skill to deliver such instruction. Some teachers even categorized students into "your kids" and "my kids" groups, as opposed to "our kids."

There was a need to change our ineffective school scheduling practices was an acknowledgement that there was a lack of common planning time for teachers to collaborate collectively, prepare for cohesive instruction/ assessments and set common grade level educational goals and instructional outcomes for all students at their grade levels. The data-driven decision making practices were inconsistent and differed in every classroom. Teachers utilized formative and summative assessments that were not necessarily intentionally targeted specifically to meet their students' individual needs. Students' assessment data was oftentimes skewed and used as unfair comparisons due to the inconsistent content exposures and non-uniformed formative assessments which were administered differently in every classroom. This fact became abundantly evident to me as I began to pay closer attention to teachers' instructional practices during my classroom observations, examinations of collected student work samples and inquiries made during monitoring conferences. The inconsistencies among teacher teams were dramatic and very noticeable.

Our monthly teacher team meetings were ineffective and failing to help us produce our desired results. The monthly grade level meeting format, expectations and time allotment for meetings were inadequate and lacked a common purpose. The discussions during these meetings were not rich or courageous; and they were not effective in guiding us in the direction that we needed to take in order to meet our goals. Teachers typically attended their monthly grade level/or cross grade level meetings, proceeded through the motions of completing the assigned tasks and submitting the mandatory minutes from their meetings, but there were no real connections being made between the teachers, their purpose for their work and student achievement. Teachers did not own their students' data.

We came to the realization that we did not have common system of operations. We had established meeting dates and times. The learning and leadership teams had thoughts and suggestions about what each grade level team/ committee should discuss during their meetings, but these thoughts and suggestions were poorly and/or never communicated with the staff at-large. When the various teams met, they set their own topics for their meeting agendas, which were quite often not supportive of our school's goals. In fact, the agenda items for each grade level rarely ever connected to its cross-grade. The staff's meeting experiences did not scaffold their learning; and the collaborations were not very meaningful. We lacked common systems of operation, and inadvertently lacked a common understanding of the direction from leadership to effectively navigate our school toward our goals.

The scheduling of special education resource pull-out times and service offerings for students with special needs needed to be addressed. The problems affiliated with the

delivery of special education were difficult for the resource teachers as well as their students. The resource teachers experienced difficulty scheduling their various students for services when their students were assigned to multiple classes with different specialists' schedules. The resource teachers' attempted to meet their students' required instructional time requirements in accordance with their individual educational plans (IEP) goals, but sometimes these students missed valuable general education instruction due to being pulled out for services.

The students, who were pulled out of general education classes to receive their IEP services, oftentimes experienced difficulty being pulled out of their general education classes because they did not like being pulled-out for services and missing the general education instruction. Many of these students, especially students enrolled at the intermediate level, expressed that they did not want to leave their general education classrooms and be isolated from their peers for fear of missed regular education assignments and or ridicule from their classmates. Oftentimes, students who were pulled out for services were faced with dealing with teasing from the other students and were negatively stigmatized because they were pulled out of class. Their return to class was oftentimes disruptive because they missed their general education teachers' explanations of the assignments and would not know what to do. During some instances, some of these students disrupted their learning and that of others with their behaviors until their teachers took the time to sufficiently address them and their needs.

It was evident that our students' were failing academically. According to our educational data, our school was on track to leave approximately fifty to sixty percent of our students behind scholastically! Our students, particularly at the intermediate level,

scored significantly lower than students' parallel grade levels in the nation in reading and math. The majority of our students exhibited growth in the areas of reading and math according to our quarterly Measurement of Academic Progress assessment data, but none of them scored in the proficient range in reading or math on the Wisconsin Badger State Assessments. These facts indicated that our students were not being sufficiently prepared for college and or career readiness.

Lastly, there was a growing awareness that there was a lack of time for teachers to instruct students in the required core subjects and include science and social studies in the course of an average school day. An average school day was approximately six hours and thirty-five minutes in length. During this six hours and thirty-five minutes, teachers were expected to teach six to seven subjects, provide adequate practice time for students to master skills and provide appropriate/effective intervention/ enrichment instruction to meet students' individual needs. In addition, teachers were expected to integrate time for lunch, recess and weekly specials (music, gym, art, computer lab and library) into their weekly schedules.

Contractually, teachers were expected to schedule subjects and plan educational opportunities that were in compliance with our school district and the state's Department of Public Instruction. According to the mandatory district's program and time requirements, for students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth, the allocation of time per day for a six-hour school day consisted of the following:

- ✓ 90-minutes for reading
- ✓ 60-minutes for English Language Arts
- ✓ 90-minutes for Corrective Action Literacy

✓ 60-minutes for Corrective Action Math

There were approximately three hundred and sixty minutes in an average elementary school day. Of that time, our district required teachers to engage students in educational activities three hundred minutes. This time restriction left only sixty minutes per day to schedule the mandatory forty-five minute lunch and recess periods.

When were students supposed to participate in their specialty classes?

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction guidelines, the recommended weekly minimum allocated instructional times for core and non-core subjects were as follows:

✓ 700 minutes for Reading/ English Language Arts

✓ 250 minutes for Mathematics

✓ 125 to 225 minutes for Social Studies

✓ 100 to 175 minutes for Science

✓ 75 to 125 minutes for Health

✓ 100 – 120 minutes for Physical Education

✓ 90 minutes for Art

✓ 75 minutes for Music

There were approximately one thousand eight hundred minutes that compose an average week of school for students at the elementary level. Of these one thousand eight hundred minutes, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction required teachers to engage students in educational activities from one thousand five hundred and sixty-five to one thousand six hundred and ninety minutes for students in first through fifth grade. Needless to say, these scheduling demands for teachers to meet the required minimum

instructional time allocations for core and non-core subjects, coupled with the countless

mandated district initiatives each year, made it almost impossible for teachers to meet the

scheduling demands, integrate all required components, effectively meet students' needs

and promote success.

Envisioned Consequence for a Successful Initiation of Change

I envisioned the consequence of a successful initiation of change, related to a

revision of our school's current scheduling system, to be very beneficial. I foresaw the

first benefit to be an implementation of a revised scheduling system that would allow

teachers to be responsible and held accountable for teaching less content matter. With the

newly revised school scheduling system, teachers were required to teach no more than

one to two subjects each day. I believed the revised scheduling system would restore

teachers' happiness and job satisfaction levels by ensuring that teachers were assigned to

teach subjects that they both enjoyed and were good at teaching.

The second benefit of this initiative was the development of teacher leadership

capacity among the teachers by strategically placing knowledgeable teachers at each

grade levels in positions to share a collective responsibility for teaching all students

assigned to their grade level. Teamwork and weekly regular collaborations were non-

negotiable expectations. Teachers were expected to collaborate with team members in

efforts to know what their grade level partners were teaching students in the subjects that

they were not assigned to teach. I believe an implementation of a well-crafted improved,

efficient and effective school scheduling system would improve communications among

grade level teams and encourage common grade level planning each week.

The third and most important benefit of this initiative was the elimination of the use of the terms "my students" and "your students." Teachers affectionately began to reference the students as "our students." Students were be taught collectively by all teachers at their grade levels and provided regular movements throughout their school days among all teachers. The new scheduling system eliminated student containment in one classroom with one teacher for the entire school day. Unlike the traditional schedules, if conflicts existed among teachers and students, and sometimes they did, each party only had to interact with the other a small portion of their school day, not the entire school day. We believed the implementation of a Parallel Block Scheduling System with three ninety-minute rotations, allowed students to be taught collectively. It was our belief that revised school scheduling system was the key to provide assurance that our dream of restoring our harmonious equilibrium would manifests into fruition.

Risk for Maintaining the Current System

When schools within our districts failed to meet the expectations of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in accordance to their school report card requirements over a five-year period, they were placed on at least one of the department's monitored watch lists and placed in one of the following categories: School in Need of Improvement, Priority School or Focus School. Our school was identified as a "Focus School" at the end of the 2013–2014 school year. If we continued our current practices of failing to meet the adequate yearly progress requirements, as mandated by the Wisconsin State Department of Instruction, then we would have continued to experience several risks and face ramifications. The risks and ramifications affiliated with our practices at that time included:

 ✓ Data would have continued to flat line with occasional ups and
   downs

 ✓ Poor academic growth among students

 ✓ No gap closures

 ✓ Lack of improved behaviors among students

 ✓ Stressed staff, students and parents

 ✓ Teacher, student and principal burn out!

 ✓ Poor work ethics

 ✓ Poor attendance for both staff and students

If our school chose to neglect to make effective changes in our instructional practices, then we would have openly accepted an invitation to be placed on the critical list of schools slated for closure. We would have continued to experience a lack of improvement in our students' behaviors and work ethics. Staff and student attendance rates would have continued to decline as a result of high stress, poor health and burn out!

Goals

The primary goal during the 2014–2015 school year was to create and implement a revised school-wide elementary school scheduling system that would more effectively and efficiently assist teachers to successful carry out our school's vision and mission; and accomplish the school goals that were collectively identified, agreed upon, and outlined in the school's improvement plan. The revised school scheduling system was expected to help the school to reshape the current practices, as Canady and Rettig (1995) suggested,

and make better use of our time, space and resources. The school had a desire to accomplish the following:

1. Improve the quality use of school time

2. Reduce problems associated with various pull-out programs

3. Decrease instructional group sizes during critical instruction times

4. Allow for temporary flexible instructional groups based on what and who is being taught

5. Provide varying amounts of time for students to learn based on their individual needs

It was the hope that these implementation efforts would improve our school's critical data sources and remove our school's name from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's list of "Focus Schools."

The plan to accomplish this goal was to focus on what Kotter (2009) refers to as "short-term wins." The first short-term win was to increase teacher and student work productivity by keeping a finger on the pulse of the happiness levels of both staff and students. Magloff (2014), the author of the article, *"Job Satisfaction vs. Work Productivity,"* stated in her research that people who were happy tended to experience more job satisfaction and were more likely to produce more work. She concluded that people work best when they view their work as both meaningful and as an opportunity to make a difference (Magloff, 2014). The monitoring the happiness level of staff and students regularly, combined with giving them voice in regards to the revised school

scheduling system, increased their motivation level, work productivity and, slightly, raised achievement.

The implementation of an elementary school scheduling system allowed staff to focus on the important business of educating children by strengthening the delivery of instruction. Tony Wagner (2006) stated in his book, *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools,* that there are seven disciplines for strengthening instruction that need to be implemented in effort to guide academic improvement effort implementations. Wagner's Seven Disciplines for Strengthening Instruction were as follows:

1. Urgency for instructional improvement using real data

2. Shared vision of good teaching

3. Meeting about the work

4. A shared vision of student results

5. Effective supervision

6. Professional development

7. Diagnostic data with accountable collaboration

Wagner believed the use of these seven disciplines helped schools to remain focused on the importance of the academic work that was needed to improve students' academic growth and achievement (Wagner, 2006). Teachers needed sufficient time intentionally built into their workday schedules to provide effective instruction, collaborate regularly with colleagues to discuss teaching/learning and conduct their business.

Guiding coalitions were implemented to move the necessary work forward (Kotter, 2009). Kotter referred to these coalitions as professional learning communities. In an effort to create camaraderie among staff, buy-in and motivation, leadership capacity was built and staff was given voice. Teachers in each grade level team took turns serving as the grade level chairs. These roles were alternated each month. The grade level chairs led the weekly grade level meeting, ensured that information was disseminated, deadlines were met and minutes were submitted after each meeting. This promoted collective work, support and a shared responsibility to get their work done.

The last and final short-term win was to develop well-defined common systems of operations which served as uniform guides for the work that was done daily. The establishment of these systems of operation helped to establish a common philosophy and communicate/model a collective philosophy that was based on high expectations for all students, regardless of their educational classifications. Teachers were expected to be consistently involved in collaborations, analyzing and utilizing real-time data. Students' authentic engagement in reading, writing and math activities from bell-to-bell with the exception of lunch and specials was a non-negotiable. The unified common systems with clear expectations based our school's philosophy helped to produce more work.

Demographics

Our school's demographics, with the exception of our special education population were comparable to the average demographics found in other elementary schools of our size within our school district. Our school's special education population was typically higher than other school's demographics, because we were one of a select group of elementary schools who provided majority of the autism and vision services for

students in need of these services in our region. This traditional neighborhood elementary school was located on the northwest side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and served approximately four hundred and thirty students (attached).

This school ended the 2013–2014 school year with a ninety-two percent student attendance rate and a thirty-six point three percent student truancy rate. The teachers' attendance rate was ninety-one point eight percent. The statistics listed above indicated that both teachers and students were generally present at school each day; however, despite these statistics, the academic data did not reflect positive results. This realization caused the staff to ponder several essential questions: What were we doing wrong; and what did we need to do to improve our academic results? After reflections of these two questions, it was concluded that the root causes of the school's problems were that teachers were working too hard and needed to learn/be taught how to work smarter.

Implementation

During the 2014–2015 school year, a Parallel Block School Scheduling System was developed and implemented as a part of this change leadership project. The research and suggestions of Canady and Rettig's were utilized to reshape the school's scheduling practices. The purpose for implementing a Parallel Block Scheduling System was to promote a school-wide improvement of the conditions, context, competences and culture within the school. This school scheduling implementation required staff to create a shared system of operation to ensure that all students learned and succeeded. Every teacher who taught at the same grade level assignments was collectively responsible for effectively and efficiently reaching and teaching all students at their grade level. In an effort to execute this implementation with fidelity, a master schedule was created for all general

education classrooms with input for revisions from the classroom teachers. In preparation to launch this implementation, information sessions were held with staff, students and parents.

For the purpose of ensuring a focus on the mission, collaboration, practicality, fairness and efficiency of this school-wide implementation, decisions regarding teacher grade, subject and class assignments were in accordance to what teachers taught best and enjoyed teaching. Teachers were assigned and required to teach two to three subjects each day, as opposed to the seven to eight subjects they previously taught. By reducing the amount of content teachers were required to teach in the course of a typical school day, workloads, stress, feelings of being overwhelmed with work and other burdens were inadvertently reduced.

A school-wide master school schedule which included the state mandated time allotment for an elementary school day was created. The revised schedule divided the school day into three equal ninety-minute instructional blocks with one forty-five minute lunch period for all general education classrooms. Each of the three instructional blocks was centered on one-two core subjects. The three core instructional blocks were as follows:

- ✓ Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP)
- ✓ Comprehensive Math and Science Plan (CSMP)
- ✓ English Language Arts Plan & Social Studies (ELA)

Students received their reading and writing instruction in their comprehensive literacy plan block, their math, science and health instruction in their comprehensive math and

science plan block, and their writing and social studies instruction in their English language arts block. Daily rotations and exposures to more than one teacher was provided for students with the intentions of proving the movement and variety were needed to sustain their attention, spark interest and engage them in their own learning journeys.

The newly revised school-wide master schedule required each general education classroom teacher to teach and be responsible for providing instruction for one to two core subjects for all of the students at their grade level. For example, the first grade CLP teacher taught the general grade level curricula and provided interventions and/or enrichment instruction for all the students enrolled in the general education first grade classes. This first grade CLP teacher was responsible for the planning, preparation and provision of the tier one lessons which were taught whole-group to all students. She was also responsible for differentiating, planning and preparing all of the tier two and three lessons which were taught during small group intervention and/or enrichment instruction in an effort to meet students' individual needs.

When the revised schedules were created, teachers were intentionally allowed time to focus on and provide deliberate intensive intervention and enrichment instruction for small groups of students. Each general education class schedule included at least two to three forty-five minute intervention and enrichment periods. Tier two intervention, tier three intervention and enrichment instruction opportunities were embedded within the core blocks with additional academic support sessions scheduled independently. Intervention and enrichment instruction time was embedded in the core blocks and expected to be provided after the whole group at-level exposure occurred for all students. The intervention and enrichment offerings were provided for all students in the top

twenty percent and the bottom twenty percent of each class for each of the three core subjects.

The revised schedule included ample time for special education teachers to deliver their services utilizing the Push-in Model, thus eliminating the use of the Pull-out Model. All special education resources teachers were required to instruct their students inside their classrooms in full partnership with the general education teacher. The general education and special education teachers' partnerships and team teaching efforts began on the first day of school and ended on the last day of school. Specialty classes were scheduled by grade level to intentionally provide time for grade level teams to meet, collaborate, examine data and plan educational activities/ assessments collectively. The revised schedules were created with the belief that teachers needed designated times to meet regularly to collaborate with peers about the effectiveness of their instructional practices and student learning.

The revised schedules required all specialty classes: physical education, gym, art and library, to be scheduled with equal time periods for classes in similar grade level. The length of most specialty class periods for general education classes were approximately forty-five minutes each for grades first through fifth and thirty minutes for four/ five year old kindergarten. In an effort to promote fairness among all teachers, each specialty teachers' individual class schedule included three to four preparation periods per week similar to that of the general and special education teachers' individual class schedules.

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Section Two: Assessing the Four C's
"Alignment is structure; coherence is mindset. Shared mindset equals system coherence."
Richard Dufour and Michael Fullan

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Our school's learning team conducted a diagnostic of our school's realities, utilizing Wagner's Four C's Assessment Tool. The process began with a critical analysis and acceptance of all of our school's data sources. We engaged in a close examination of our academics, attendance, behavior and climate data openly, reflected honestly and reported our views of our results and the perceived problems with our current instructional practices. During this process, we identified our areas of strengths and areas in need of improvement and discussed our school's disciplinary practices and/or lack thereof. The next step was to review researched-based best practices and program models that we felt would help us promote improvement. Another step in the process included reviewing our current systems' quality controls, policies and procedures and discussing the impact that both staff and students' attendance had on achievement. We reviewed our current belief, biases and value systems, and the impact they have on the overall school climate; and we used Wagner's 4 C's Analysis to determine the impact and effects all of these discussion topics had on educator effectiveness, relationships, teaching, student learning and achievement. Needless to say, we were able to achieve a bird-eye view of the root causes of our school's system-wide issues.

According to our beliefs, academic, attendance, behavior and school climate data, we discovered the following as they related to our school's competencies, conditions, culture and context. We agreed there were too many district-wide mandated initiatives. We were unsure of the true impact of these initiatives; because our school's basic foundation were not solid. We realized that there had been twenty-two initiative implementations within our school district, of which twelve were directly implemented at our school over the course of the past four years. Due to the number of initiated

implementations, our teachers spent too much time focusing on whether they were implementing the initiatives with fidelity, as opposed to looking for ways to build upon their own knowledge, pedagogy and professional skills.

The district's implementation of School-Based Professional Learning Roadmap created a dependency on the district to dictate our educational directions. The district released each month a prescribed professional development schedule for all schools to follow, regardless of the schools' individual needs. This content, expected to be covered in the professional development roadmap each month, was typically very general and was accompanied with heavily monitored accountability measures and strict pacing guides. If schools neglected to upload their monthly roadmap evidence onto the state tracking system to demonstrate compliance, their professional development sessions were supervised and or delivered by members of the central office management teams.

The implementation caused a lack of quality-targeted, professional development offerings, which were specific to the school's needs and the strict accountability measures made it difficult for us to integrate our selected professional development needs. The consistent coverage of a lot of content matter during the district's mandatory professional development offerings did not allow flexibility. In fact, many teachers complained that the rigor of the professional development sessions did not allow opportunity to practice the skills and/or acquire mastery before more information was given.

The district designation of specific meeting days and times after school made it difficult for our professional learning communities to collectively plan strategically. Since the enactment of the Act Ten Law, which abolished the union's bargaining power,

our school district mandated that teachers spend the last hour of their workday engaged in professional activities. Our students' school day ends 2:20 pm; the teachers' workday ends at 3:30 pm. Prior to Act Ten, teachers were paid, but allowed to complete their school work at home during this last hour. Now the district required teachers to remain at school and work during their last hour without students. The district designated Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays as "Teachers' Choice Days," and Tuesdays and Thursdays were mandatory professional development days. Once again, the professional development days were governed by the School-Based Professional Learning Roadmap. Therefore, the limited opportunities to strategically plan were believed to be the biggest culprit that contributed to the teachers' lack of ownership and students' poor performance.

Conditions

When the learning team examined the conditions of our school environment, we unanimously agreed that our school had several areas that were in need of improvement. First our school scheduling system was ineffective and prevented us from successfully achieving our desired goals. Second the district and state expectation to integrate all of the required instructional allocations of time for each subjects and specials into the teachers' weekly lesson plans was a major concern. Third, we believed our teachers were unsure of their professional roles and responsibilities as effective educators. We realized that our teachers often blamed their students' lack of success on a lack of motivation and/or little parental support. Fourth, our school's principal was too busy with building management issues to adequately monitor and supervise our school's progress and compliance effectively and efficiently. Fifth, there was a lack of sufficient common planning time built into the school day schedules for grade level teams to meet regularly to collectively review data, collaborate and plan. Sixth, the allotment of meeting time for

cross grade level teams to meet and discuss cross grade level curricular expectations was also insufficient. Seventh, there was a lack of a consistent alignments in teachers' lesson plans between the Common Core State Standards, pacing guides, posted learning intentions and success criteria. The final area that was negatively affecting our school's condition was our unclear and undefined transition expectations from grade to grade.

Some of the teachers at our school were unsure of their roles and responsibilities as professional educators. They blamed the students and their parents for the students' lack of learning. Some teachers neglected to use their students' data to make data-driven decisions or identify areas in need of intervention services. They did not personalize their lesson plans to meet student needs and/or provide enrichment services for students who reached mastery early. When student data was presented to and/or discussed with them, some teachers refused to own the data and denied responsibility for their results. I often overheard teachers say, "I taught it. They just did not get it!" Needless to say, some teachers failed to accept their students' real data and that data is a direct reflection of their instructional practices.

Our school, unfortunately, only had one permanent administrator assigned to assume the full spectrum of both managerial and instructional leadership. Our school was a large elementary school with more than its share of challenges. We budgeted to have to two full time administrators, one principal and one assistant principal, but each year circumstances beyond our control leaves us short of administrative staff. Our assistant principal would be pulled and sent to work at other schools. These consistent occurrences left one administrator responsible for managing, supervising and monitoring the entire school operations with no assistance. This dynamic caused a great deal of professional

pain and left me with an aggravating annoyance of constantly feeling overworked and overwhelmed with responsibility. The term "Jack of all trades and master of none" rang supreme every time I reflected on my own working conditions.

The disconnection and lack of alignment between teachers' weekly lesson planning, district pacing guides, common core state standards, desired learning intentions and success criteria was identified as an area in need of improvement in order to improve our current school condition. Most of the teachers at our school worked alone and developed their lesson plans privately. There was very little shared responsibility among teachers for teaching students that were not assigned to their classrooms. Teachers did not schedule time to problem solve for learning or collaborate about challenges. They did not establish agreed upon performance standards.

Teachers did not establish or agree upon relevant and user-friendly student data. Their assessments for each grade level varied by grade and class. The only common assessments that were implemented at the time were our district and state assessments. Other formative and summative assessments were not common within each grade level nor were they used to effectively design coherent instruction. In my opinion, with the exception of our district and state benchmark assessments, the assessment data sources that were used to compare students' academic progress were skewed and should not have be given a great deal of validity, because the content exposures for students were vastly different.

The desired instructional outcomes that some teachers' included in their lesson plans appeared to be written with no regard for student interests, rigor and relevance. Some of these planned educational activities lacked value, sequence, clarity and balance.

They at times were not suitable for all learners. They sometimes failed to engage all students in the learning process. This was evidenced by the number of students who were sent to the office with incident referrals for disciplinary action. Some students reported when they were put out of class that they were bored and uninterested in learning and school. They reported that they felt unwanted and did not experience a sense of belonging. The learning team realized during these discussions that teachers lack of coherent instruction with balanced instructional groups, sufficient learning activities proper lesson structure and effective uses of materials/ resources were causing major disturbances in any classroom environment.

Lastly, we learned during the diagnoses of our school's conditions that some students' academic progress were being stifled by some teachers' fears to challenge students with rigorous and quality instructional question technique, because of the negative reactions that they encountered when they made requests. Some teachers reported that they preferred to era on the side of caution when asking students to engage in educational activities when the students did not want to engage. Some teachers reported that they tried to refrain from engaging students in rich thought provoking discussions and dialogues due to some students' disrespectful reactions and temperaments when they were challenged. Some teachers reported that they would rather avoid instances of student tantrums, hitting, kicking, biting and other displays of unacceptable and sometimes violent behaviors, then to challenge students. Therefore, in an effort to maintain safe and respectable learning environments, many teachers refrained from challenging students with rigorous learning activities, despite knowing it would strengthen student skills and move them toward proficiency in the core subjects.

Competencies

When the learning team conducted a diagnosis of our school's competencies, we identified areas in need of improvement. We were neither strategically thinking and/or planning nor were there common measures in place to evaluate students' learning needs. We gathered and interpreted data regularly, but we did not use the data to effective make data driven decisions. Although there were scheduled meetings held regularly our collaborations were not targeted to help us accomplish our desired goals. Finally, we did not designate specific time to give and or receive critique from our teammates. All of these issues, as mentioned previously, were a result of our poor school scheduling practices.

Culture

When the learning team conducted a diagnosis of our school's culture, we were able to collectively identify several areas that were in need of improvement. We had to begin this process by reviewing our school values and agreeing to have courageous conversations. We agreed that we would bravely accept our errors in an effort to create the desired change. We did not have a clearly-defined, collective acceptance of our school's vision in place to guide our objectives. Our level of expectation for all student learning was not cohesive and we admitted that we were not operating as a functional team. There were many hidden agendas that were quietly wreaking havoc on our school environment. Another was we had poor systems of communication and many of the adult relationships with each other were dysfunctional. Lastly, the adults' views of responsibility for all students' learning was not satisfactory.

Throughout our discussions our learning team consistently reverted to conversations about our school's vision. We had a school vision in place that our staff

collectively reviewed, revised and agreed upon at the beginning of each new school year. Due to a previous implementation, we considered our school to be a fully-functioning, effective, and professional learning community, we followed the recommendations that Richard DuFour at el. listed in their book entitled, *"Leading by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work."* We had established mission, vision, values and goals on paper and in theory. We collectively reviewed, revised and agreed upon our vision statement, but we neglected to implement the action component of the framework by committing to ensuring continuous improvement. We were not "leading by doing."

Our level of expectations for student learning was not cohesive or comparable among teammates. Our school's visions reflected the notion of shared expectations, but because many teachers worked in isolation, the expectation commonalities were not mirrored by all. We had pockets of classrooms whose students made significant gains, but these teachers who experienced this success with their students rarely shared their best practices with their colleagues. In fact, the current school culture does not encourage teachers to "shine" and or take public pride in their professional abilities. When effective staffs were asked to celebrate their success, they withdrew and attempted to quietly blend into the background.

Our professional learning communities were not functioning as viable school teams. In fact, we learned that we were operating as a dysfunctional team. Lencioni in his book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable,* identified five character traits that he believed were highly visible when a team was dysfunctional. The five traits include trust, conflict, commitment, accountability and results–trust being the most

important. When our staff completed the assessment of our effectiveness as a functional team, based on our responses, we learned that we scored high in all five areas, which indicated that we were a dysfunctional team. Accountability was our highest scoring area, followed by trust and results. I learned from this experience, as the school's leader, I needed to find more effective ways to strengthen the camaraderie among my various school teams. I believed the implementation of a scheduling system that required teacher teams to collaborate and share responsibility for all students was the answer.

Our poor communication systems were caused by poor relations among the adults. We had become so busy in our own daily operations that we forgot to encourage one another. Oftentimes, there were detrimental events transpiring in the lives of adults, but they did not receive support from colleagues because no one knew. We allowed ourselves to become so engrossed in responding to our students' behavioral needs and crises that we, unwittingly, established a school culture where the educators were encouraged to suffer in silence and solve their issues alone.

There were a few veteran teachers who were totally committed to the traditions of the old regimes and refused to change their practices. As Brown and Moffett (1999) alluded in the book, *The Hero's Journey: How Educators Can Transform Schools and Improve Learning,* these teachers served as our school's Dragons in Chaos. They served as the leaders of our shadow elements. Their sole purpose in our school community was to keep our school functioning in a state of disequilibrium fully equipped with serpents in the garden and dragons at the door. These teachers caused an unsavory school culture because they were not welcoming to colleagues, students and or parents, due to their own personal fears.

Our disgruntled veteran teachers were accused being culturally disconnected. They did not appear to possess sufficient knowledge about their students to plan for instruction. Their "old school" instructional practices were not relevant and caused students to demonstrate a lack of interest in their own learning. These teachers did not take the time to build relationships which were built on foundations of mutual respect and rapport. They were not familiar with nor were they interested in students' learning styles. Most importantly, there were no clear priorities or urgency to improve student learning. Failure had become the acceptable norm.

Context

When the learning team conducted a diagnosis of our school's context, we strongly agreed that we had a few sets of clearly defined skill demands that all students had to meet in order to succeed as learners, contributors and citizens within our school community. We felt the common core state standards satisfied this requirement. We agreed that the district selected frameworks to guide teaching and learning could also be considered to be effective tools that were used to assist us with helping out students reach both their academic and behavior goals, if implemented with fidelity.

We agreed that we had a few established clearly defined common skill demands that all students must meet in order to succeed in our school. We felt that we assessed our students too much. We acknowledged that we were hindering our students' academic growth by our failures to provide adequate and sufficient instruction, due to the number of assessments. There were way too many formative and summative assessment mandates. We believed some of our assessment results were not an accurate reflection of our students' actual abilities, because students were tired of taking assessments. Many

teachers reported that some students even refused to take tests and or simply selected random answers to complete the tasks, but did not put forth their best effort. As a result of working through Wagner's 4 C's Diagnostic System, we have a collective understanding of why we need to implement a system-wide reform and the urgency in doing so.

In addition to working through Wagner's 4 C's Diagram to diagnose our current conditions, context, competencies and culture, we reflected on the works of Dufour and Fullan (2013). We believed it was the use of a combination of these two processes that helped us to identify and define many of our problematic areas. We learned from Wagner's advice how to work through our 4 C's to identify the problems in desperate need of change, but Dufour and Fullan's work helped us to dive deeper into the root causes of our problematic areas and examine our structural alignments which were preventing us from reaching our student desired outcomes.

In conclusion, we learned from Dufour and Fullan (2013) that we needed to create coherence and clarity. We needed to, as Collins (2005) pointed out in his research, get the right people on the bus. Dufour and Fullan (2013) suggested that not only do we need the right people on the bus, they suggested that a variety of drivers take turns driving the bus to guide us towards the goals. They suggested that the right drivers included:

- ✓ Capacity building
- ✓ Social Capital (The quality of the group)
- ✓ Instruction
- ✓ System-ness

They suggested in their research that the selections of the wrong drivers are not always installed by the school leaders, but by the policy makers. They suggested that the wrong drivers tend to introduce more explicit, punitive accountability and zero in on individualistic strategies to attract, reward, appraise and punish individual performance. Dufour and Fullan (2013) suggested that if organizations have a true desire to promote system-wide improvement reform, then they need to focus on developing coherence.

Section Three: Personal Immunities to Change
"People, who feel good about themselves, produce good results."
Kenneth Blanchard et al.

I have served as an elementary school principal for eleven years. My first seven years as principal were spent at a small traditional school, where after my third year, it was deemed a "High Achieving School" according to both district and state standards. During my tenure as principal, my first school received a number of district, neighborhood, city and state recognitions and awards for our outstanding instructional practices, efforts, positive school environment, student academic achievement and participation in the community. My previous school, at that time, was and still is the parent's preferred school of choice in that neighborhood. Needless to say, I loved and enjoyed serving as the proud principal of my small traditional award winning elementary school, which had a very warm and nurturing school climate that personified a "home away from home" feel and possessed a strong feeling of family, connectedness, togetherness and belonging.

At the beginning of the 2009–2010 school year, my tranquility as a school leader came to an abrupt end when my former superintendent told me that I was wasting my

talents as a leader of this small school; he determined I would be a greater asset elsewhere. I was reassigned with a resonating message, "I want you to go to your new school and do the same thing that you did at this school." At the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year, I was appointed as the new principal of a larger, more complex school. My current school, at that time, had twice the number of students enrolled in it and included a very large special education population. Parental involvement was low to non-existent. The staff was divided into distinct groups–racism and classism was prevalent. Staff, students, parents and the previous administration's morale was low. The academic achievement and attendance data was rapidly declining; the students dictated the conditions of the overall school climate. At that juncture, I suffered a loss of both my inspiration and aspirations. When I arrived as principal at my new school, I questioned my professional skills, practices and ability to lead. Needless to say, the effort to promote a positive and healthy school environment fell to me solely, as no real help appeared to be in sight.

In this section, I conducted a diagnostic of the personal immunities that might prevent or are preventing me from achieving the goals of my change project. I identified and analyzed the obstacles and barriers that could be potentially personally and professionally conflicting or that are possibly preventing me from leading my school, as a whole, to victory. I openly and honestly soul-searched, completed self-assessments and reflected on critical questions that would assist me in detailing the highlights of my personal immunities. My personal commitments (both hidden and competing) and my big assumptions are highlighted. As well, I expounded upon the things that I have done and or have left undone.

In an effort to complete this process, I took the survey, entitled, *"Claiming Your Own Strengths"* to gather information about and gain insight into my personality traits, which are an intrinsic part of my being. I utilized the works of Wagner (2006), Buckingham (2015) and Kakele (2015) to collect data and review the surface issues that cause and/or affect the development of my personal immunities. To ensure validity of the information that I reported, I planned to open-mindedly conduct and report an honest and thorough assessment of my personal immunities. In my endeavor to make a personal discovery of my personal immunities, I also solicited feedback from the individuals that I led. I conferred with colleagues and students to solicit their opinions, suggestions and feedback regarding their perceptions of my personal immunities. In essence, I planned to highlight the elements of my journey, as Brown and Moffett stated in their book, *The Hero's Journey:* How *Educators can Transform Schools and Improve Learning,* (Brown, 1999).

A couple of the hidden and competing commitments that prevented me from exhibiting my strengths, for which I had been respected at my previous school, as a resilient, adaptive leader were easily identifiable. My most prominent hidden commitment was my secret desire to return to my previous school to work in partnership with a staff that I trusted, based on experience, genuinely cared and was concerned for their students and me. I wanted to have my current school function as an effective and efficient professional learning community where we educate and treat our students like we would want teachers to educate and treat our biological children. I had a strong desire for the teachers at my new school to work diligently every day, without becoming disgruntled, to ensure that our students learn and achieve. I wanted the students at my

school to receive the same quality of care and instruction that my two sons received when they were enrolled in schools in a neighboring suburban school district.

My competing commitments were also very visible and easy to identify. I believed my number one competing commitment was my role as a building manager as opposed to an instructional leader. I struggled daily with an abundance of staff, student, parent and/or building operation problems, with an apparent lack of time to fulfill my duties efficiently. I had great difficulty prioritizing, scheduling and accomplishing tasks. This became even more difficult when all of my tasks appeared to be a major priority. I had difficulty delegating responsibilities to others and building leadership capacity among my teaching staff, due to lack of trust. My staff, students and parents were dependent on me to make the majority of the school's decisions and they, too, were very untrusting of others to help resolve issues. For example, if I am sick, I cannot stay at home and recover from my illness because I felt the staff would not work together to keeps the school functioning properly. The massive amount of daily issues served as a deterrent for others to volunteer to serve as stand-in leaders in my absence.

I discovered my most troubling beliefs about and distrust of my staff were negatively affecting my proficient judgment, stunting my professional growth and hindering the progression of my staff. I constructed my own set of preconceived notions as a way of understanding and making sense of my beliefs about the reason the conditions of my school were poor; and I realized that I held tightly to those preconceived notions from the moment I first entered the doors of my second school. However, these "feelings" were not developed entirely of my own premonitions. The reception I received from the staff upon my arrival was one of the contributing factors

that led me to form predetermined notions and help them to become engrained in my psyche.

The most significant big assumptions I identified that have hindered my work as principal and possibly prevented a successful implementation of my change leadership were closely associated with my lack of trust and faith in my staff's ability to instruct and manage our students. My big assumptions: I assumed that if others perceive that I am not an emotionally strong, highly-skilled and capable leader, they will lose respect for me as a leader and refuse to comply with my guidance and directives. I cannot trust the staff members to carry out systems of operational tasks that I believed were of great importance, so I refrained from delegating responsibilities, asking for assistance, and building leadership capacity. I have to assume full responsibility of completing most of the work, because the staff will view me as a worthless and incompetent leader who is unworthy and unqualified to successfully lead our school's constant improvement efforts. If I do not diligently supervise and monitor the work, I fear it will not get completed with the level of perfection that I personally expect. If I delegate too many administrative responsibilities, then I will eventually lose control of the school and the climate will revert to the totally deplorable conditions that were prevalent during the first two years of my stint as principal at this school.

Section Four: Research Methodology

"Our education system was never designed to deliver the kind of results we now need to equip students for today's world – and tomorrow's. The system was originally created for a very different world. To respond appropriately, we need to rethink and redesign."
Tony Wagner et al.

Wagner (2006) suggested in his book, *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming our Schools,* that there were three critical spheres of work that schools needed to create in an order to promote school-wide reform and re-interventions. Wagner referred to these three spheres of work as change levers: data, accountability and relationships (Wagner, 2006). According to Wagner, these change levers play a pivotal role in the success of a successful change implementation. He explained that when schools collect, analyze, discuss and make decisions based on data, they should utilize both quantitative and qualitative information. He stated that the data that schools choose to gather should either directly or indirectly be closely related to student success and the well-being of the schools. Schools data collections should not solely consist of only student learning, academic performance and achievement, but should also include information about the adults and the organization in which they work (Wagner, 2006).

Wagner (2006) described accountability as a set of mutual understandings that defined what all educators in schools and school districts were held accountable for and to whom. Accountabilities were the collected expectations that held educators to specific work-related standards. These standards clearly defined what educators were to do in an effort to help all students learn new skills. According to Wagner (2006), there were two types of accountabilities: vertical and horizontal. He defined vertical accountability as an accountability model that functioned on a foundation of compliance. Vertical accountability was a top-down model which described how school leaders held their staff members accountable for their required work. He admitted that vertical accountability could be essential to the functionality of schools; however, this model very seldom ever generated new knowledge and/or significant academic gains (Wagner, 2006).

On the other hand, Wagner (2006) stated that horizontal accountability was quite different. Horizontal accountability functioned on a foundation of reciprocal, relational and mutual premise. This model informed individuals and groups what they could count on from one another. There was a strong sense of shared commitment, respect and collective purpose in the work. When implemented, mutual understandings decreased the need for formal rules and lines of authority. Horizontal accountability was considered an effective model, because it allowed opportunities for on-going discussions and problem-solving to become a norm for community practices. Wagner (2006) stated, "Developing a system of who is accountable for whom and for what – having a means to track progress – are critical elements of improving any system's performance" (Wagner, 2006, p. 135).

Research Design

The experimental research conducted for this change leadership project was a school-wide implementation of a Parallel Block Scheduling System. As part of this research, all general education classes which included four-year-old kindergarten through fifth grade were required to participate. The only classes that were excluded from the implementation of this revised scheduling system were the special education self-contained classes, due to the conditions of these students and their struggles with change; however, if students in the self-contained classrooms had the capability and temperament to function efficiently both academically and behaviorally in the general education classrooms, they were mainstreamed into the general education classes and encouraged to participate. Wagner's three change levers were utilized as the foundational guide for this research, coupled with a horizontal and vertical accountability model.

The Qualitative Research Design was utilized as the research method because its use was recommended as the most beneficial approach to use to study this type of

educational problem that required an understanding of complex social environments and meanings that people within those environments bring to their experience. This research methodology was commonly used for educational research, and it uses a systematic application of a family of methods that made it more reliable to provide trustworthy information about educational problems (personal notes, *Organizational Inquiry* class). Since the desire for this research project was to create trustworthy information utilizing a system that was reliable to resolve some of my school's problems, this research methodology was chosen to help generate the findings of my change leadership project.

An experimental approach was utilized to implement and determine participants' perceptions of the quality of effectiveness of the Parallel Block School Scheduling System implementations. The philosophical roots were grounded in interpretivism, and these interpretations were integrated into the final report. The participants' responses included in the common coding's were utilized to make meaning of the participants' opinions and determined the perceptions which were developed as a result of this experiment.

The design characteristic included a school-wide implementation of a Parallel Block Scheduling System, as opposed to a single grade level focus group implementation to test its initial reliability, because the entire school was in desperate need of a transformation. As a whole, the school performed below proficiency in most accountability areas and needed to be placed on a path of continuous improvement. According to DuFour and Fullan (1998), in order to create a system-wide reform, schools must involve and include the whole system in the implementation of the reform in order to ensure its success. It was believed at that time that a school-wide implementation was

necessary in order to provide the assurance that the goals of this change leadership project blossomed into fruition.

The test of comparison design consisted of data comparisons of critical data from grade level groups from school year to school year utilizing real numbers and measurements. This experiment was conducted school-wide, utilizing teachers and students who were assigned to/enrolled in general education classrooms. The grouping of teachers into grade level teams, the expectation of shared responsibility for teaching all students at their grade level and the development of common instructional practices made the use of comparisons of similar subjects over time the most reasonable, reliable, relevant and, ultimately, the best choice of comparison test designs for this research. The teachers' delivery of instruction, selection of educational activities and administration of assessments at each grade level was identical for all students for all subjects which made the data collections credible and eliminated the potential for discrepancies.

The grounded research and appreciative inquiry strategies were utilized to help ensure the validity, dependability, credibility and trustworthiness of the findings of this change leadership project. The use of the grounded research strategy was chosen because it was well-known to be beneficial in helping schools identify pressing issues that plagued their learning environments. This research strategy was used as a guide to collect, organize, interpret and report my data collections and findings. In addition to the use of the grounded research strategy, a form of the appreciative inquiry strategy was utilized as a guide to develop the questions for both the interviews and surveys. These questions were all open-ended and were used to gain knowledge and solicit feedback regarding the most difficult data to gather, which is perception data. According to

Browne, a journalist for *Imagine Chicago,* the appreciative inquiry approach was proven to be beneficial to organizational and community development because its uses were known to successfully cultivate hope, build capacity, unleash collective appreciation, spark imagination and bring about positive changes among participants (Browne, 2008).

Surveys were administered to the participants utilizing a self-reporting method to gather their perceptions of the effectiveness of the implementation process and programmatic components of the revised scheduling system. This information was a difficult variable to measure, because it was inclusive of solely the participants' personal opinions. The feedback that participants shared on their surveys was submitted in a confidential manner. The participants were not asked to include any identifying information such as their name, grade level, room number and/or subject. The results of the surveys were categorized and coded according to similarities and reported in a narrative format during the presentation of the final report. A whole group in-person gathering with staff during professional development sessions was the teaching strategy used to disseminate information, obtain consensus and share the survey results.

The academic data collection of statistical results depicted students' academic growth and performance levels in the core subject areas. Both formative and summative academic data types were collected and included the following data sources:

- ✓ School State Report Card
- ✓ Wisconsin Knowledge and Skills Examination (WKCE)
- ✓ Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP)
- ✓ CogAt Assessment
- ✓ PALs Assessments

✓ CABs Assessments

These data types and sources were used to provide benchmark data and to monitor

students' continuous academic growth, achievement and progress towards success of the

goals outlined in this change leadership project.

The demographic data collection was used to highlight school enrollment and

define, in detail, the student population that were served during the time this experiment

was conducted. The following demographic information was included in the final report:

✓ Ethnic

✓ Gender

✓ free and reduce lunch

✓ exceptional education (EEN)

✓ non-exceptional education

✓ English as Second Language Learners

All of these data points were abstracted from the school's report card found on the

Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website. These data types and

sources were reported in a manner that made distinctions between the various groups and

subgroups of students who were enrolled in school during the 2014-2015 school year.

Finally, in an effort to take a pulse on staff/students' perceptions and potential

willingness to improve work productivity and, ultimately, overall achievement, I

monitored monthly; district restrictions did not permit reporting in this research the

following perception data types from the ESIS and district dashboard reports: attendance

and behavior data. I utilized self-reflections, self-surveys, classroom observations,

teacher interviews, teacher/ parent informational sessions, student discipline data and

teacher/student surveys as my data sources. A data continuum method was used to collect, organize, summarize, prioritize, make decisions and evoke collaborations among staff these data types and sources.

Of all the types and sources of data, perception data was considered to be the most important data. It was the data that determined individual and groups' willingness to engage and connect in an effort to get the necessary work completed. Perception data was the data that evoked collaborations and forged the camaraderie among staff. Rich collaborations and teamwork were a necessary element that was needed to form a consensus on the issues, and inspire staff buy-in to create change. Collaborations promoted the development of collective plans of action, collective improvement of staff willingness to bring to life collective efforts to see the missions, visions and goals of this change project and to collectively celebrate! Of all of the types and sources of data, the perception data was the most important data. Its uses were valuable and used to provide an accurate, more in-depth understanding of and convey the urgent need for the change project that was proposed.

Participants

The key participants used to gather data for this research project included all of the population of teachers and students who either provided and/or received educational services within the general education classrooms. These participants were chosen because they were the individuals whose workloads and instructional schedules were either directly or indirectly impacted by the parallel block scheduling system implementation. Their responsibilities included full participation in the scheduling process; however, their decisions to provide their personal feedback which was used to help determine the effectiveness, efficiency, progress and/or success of this implementation and its goals

were solicited on a voluntary basis. The teaching staff who served as participants was required to attend the information sessions and participate in all professional development offerings associated with this implementation. If the participating teachers opted to be interviewed, they were interviewed after school. The students who served as participants were required to adhere to their revised schedules on a non-voluntary basis, while the parents' participation in any and/or all components was completely voluntary.

None of the participants were asked to perform any duties that were unrelated to, in addition to and/or outside of the realm of their regularly assigned work-related duties for the sole purposes of collecting data and/or soliciting feedback. Once again, they were not required against their will to provide their personal feedback regarding the successes or failures of the implementation process. In an effort to provide adequate assurances, all participants were given a combination of both written and verbal reminders and invitations to encourage their participation.

Data Collection

My data collection process included the uses of both qualitative and quantitative data. My collections of qualitative data included self-reflections, observations, interviews, informational meetings and documented reviews of academic, attendance, behavior and climate. First, I collected my self-reflection data by conducting regular reflections of my professional and personal practices. I recorded anecdotal notes in either notebooks and or journals. I utilized this information to monitor my progress towards conquering, if necessary, and resolving my personal immunities, commitments and big assumptions, hidden and competing commitments which had the potential to prevent me from achieving the goals contained in this change leadership project.

Information was gathered related to my classroom observations by pre-planning, scheduling and writing in my calendar the desired dates, times and focuses of the classroom observations; I scheduled the Sunday before the week of the actual observations. I conducted regularly scheduled classroom observations almost weekly. Staff were provided with both verbal and written notices of my planned classroom observation times. Evidence statements were recorded based on what I actually saw and heard during the observations. I captured direct quotes as much as possible and entered all evidence statements in the required database.

Personal interviews were conducted with participants who volunteered to participate and provide feedback regarding their perceptions of the success/lack of success of this implementation. I interviewed the selected participants after school to avoid interference with their regular work day. I recorded and/or wrote the participants' verbal interview responses to the appreciative inquiry questions during these scheduled interviews.

Regular document reviews were used to gauge the effectiveness and efficiency and to monitor the progress of the implementation. I accessed data from internal district database systems for the sole purpose of creating internal notes of my school's continuous improvement efforts. (Due to school board policies, which prohibit uses of certain internal data some of the monthly data review documentation was not included in the final report). As a part of my normal professional responsibilities which were associated with serving as the school's principal, I required teachers to submit weekly student work samples/assessments to either my school support teacher or me. We reviewed the samples to examine the quality of the work productions and to track our

students' academic growth/achievement. My school support teacher and/or I provided teachers with both verbal and written constructive feedback to either celebrate and/or make suggestions for improvement.

My collections of quantitative data included a series of multiple surveys for staff, students and self. I gathered data related to self, by researching the surveys that provided me with insight related to my personality traits and perceptions of myself as an effective instructional leader. I administered teacher surveys with open-ended questions during regular staff meetings. The student surveys were administered inside their classrooms during times that were less intrusive on instruction and included a limited number of questions, which also consisted of open-ended questions. The uses of open-ended questions were used because they were considered to be the most effective way to solicit hard to measure variables which was often affiliated with the collection of perception data. Parents were informed of their children's participation in the survey with a general no-reply needed memo, which was sent home with students in their Tuesday Folders. The memo included a reminder that their children's participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis Technique

My data analysis technique included the use of a data continuum. The data continuum process requires its users to collect, organize, summarize, analyze, synthesize, prioritize and make decisions based on the data. I followed the steps of the continuum and searched for commonalities among the gathered data. I categorized and coded the common data points into similar themes and presented them in both narrative and graphic form. The common themes and triangulation of data that was reported in the final report was derived from a combination of document reviews of accountability data, descriptive statistics from interviews, surveys, classroom observations and collaborations.

During the data analysis of both my qualitative and quantitative data validity, credible, dependable, and confirmable trustworthiness of this perception data was ensured by the gathering of information from the participants who were directly involved in and affected by the implementation of this change leadership project. The findings consisted only of the participants' actual responses and concrete evidence sources. There were no interpretations made and/or conclusions drawn related to the participants' responses and/or alterations of documentations. If questions arose related to the participants' meaning of their responses, follow-up questions were asked to gain clarity and understandings of their intended messages. All participant responses were reported in their own words and language.

Section Five: Relevant Literature

"Common sense suggests that the more time students spend on learning, the more in fact, students will learn."

Author Unknown

According to information in the article, *Making Time: What Research Says about Re-Organizing School Schedules,* widespread school reform efforts sprang up all across the country after the release of the infamous report, *A Nation at Risk,* was released. The release of this report appeared to have affected every aspect of teaching and learning except one: The school calendar. Students who attended school in 2014 pretty much did so in the same manner as their parents, grandparents and great grandparents did many years ago. The academic calendars for most school districts across our nation required students to attend school one hundred and eighty days per year for six hours a day from September to May. Similar to the policy makers of the past, today's policy makers have remained deeply entrenched with the status quo of holding on tightly to the traditional

scheduling practices, despite the apparent problems and proven research on the effects of time on learning and how it could be structured to provide the greatest impact. Although some of the more innovative school districts experimented with different ways to restructure their calendar year and school days in an effort to maximize the amount of time students engaged in instruction, far too many of school districts still remained stuck in time. (Unknown, 2006).

The History of School Scheduling Practices

The conventional public school calendar was initially developed to meet the unique needs of a farm-based society. This calendar school year required students to attend school for nine months from September to June with three months of summer vacation. Students who attended schools in the south and Midwest began their school year during the latter part of August and only spent two to three weeks out for summer vacation. During this rural past time, many students were needed in their homes to assist their parents with harvesting crops. Although the days of the farm-based societies are long gone, the traditional school calendar practice of nine months on with three months off continued to exist (Unknown, 2006).

When the *Nation at Risk Report* was released in 1983, it raised an awareness of the importance of the impact that time had on students' engagement in learning. Information in this report suggested that students attend school longer hours and for more days. This report strongly urged school districts and state legislatures to implement an attendance policy that required students to attend school for seven hours per day for two hundred to two hundred and twenty days per calendar year (Unknown, 2006). The United States Department of Education reported that by 1990, thirty-seven states considered proposals to extend their school days for students, but very few states actually amended

their school calendars. Most states cited a lack of funding to support the amended

calendars as the cause of their stagnations (Unknown, 2006).

The Education Commission on Time and Learning reported that the school day

for students had progressively increased over time. According to the National Center for

Educational Statistics, the average school day had shown a slight increase from six-hour

school day to up seven-hour school days. In 1988 the average school day increased to six

point three hour days; and in the year 2000, the average school day rose to six point six

hour days. It was reported that schools in the Midwest had the longest school days, with

their average six point nine hour days. The average elementary and high school day was

six point seven hours with an average six point nine hour school day for middle school.

The average school day requirements were calculated and correlated with each state's

minimal hour requirements for public instruction.

Power of Innovative Schedules

According to Canady and Rettig (1995), uses of well-crafted school schedules

may not add additional hours to the school day, but they could be used to drastically

improve the quality of time students spend at school. Effective and efficient school

scheduling practices are valuable resources that could be used to improve the quality of

school, yet the uses of school schedules as improvement tools oftentimes go untapped.

According to Canady and Rettig (1995), well-crafted school schedules helped many

schools to make more effective use of time, space and resources. They stated in their

research that well-crafted school schedules can improve the instructional climates, help to

solve problems with the delivery of instruction and assist in the establishment of desired

programs and instructional practices (Rettig, 1995). They hold that well-crafted school

schedules are those that improve the quality of school and reduce the problems associated with pull-out programs. Well-crafted school schedules decrease class size during critical instruction times and allow for flexible instructional groupings, based on what and who are taught during the scheduled times. They stated that well-crafted school schedules provide sufficient time for students to learn based on individual needs (Rettig, 2013).

Williamson (2015) stated in his research that innovative school schedules are flexible schedules that provide opportunities for a strong instructional focus. He stated that there are many benefits for both students and teachers associated with the implementations and uses of innovative school schedules. Students benefit by having extended time to work in the content areas, which allows in-depth study of topics and more hands-on activities. Innovative school schedules incorporate scheduled time for intervention for students in need of additional support and adequate time to participate in co-curricular activities, content-area learning, service learning and student-led conferences. The benefits for teachers include extended blocks for instructional teams, built-in opportunities to collaborate with the literacy coach/other specialty teachers and power to readjust their time allotments as needed. Innovative school schedules provide teachers with the flexibility to differentiate instruction to meet their students' needs and adjust their student groupings regularly.

Uses of the Schedule as a Tool to Improve Student Learning

Williamson stated, "School schedules are one of the most powerful tools principals can use to shape their schools' instructional program" (Williamson, 2015, p. 1). He stated that school schedules could either help facilitate and or inhibit opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Flexible school schedules could assist teacher teams to lengthen classes and accommodate a range of teaching strategies. He stated that teachers'

schedules are quite often a reflection of their values and are designed to drive their

values, purpose and intentional teaching strategies. Teachers arrange their class schedules

for the sole purposes of accomplishing those things that are important to them

(Williamson, 2015).

Teachers' scheduling priorities are typically based on their predetermined goals.

For example, if a teacher's goal is to have longer instructional blocks that can be used to

teach an array of instructional strategies, then longer instructional blocks become the

priority. The best schedules are those that are based on priorities that are based on

students' performance and learning needs, while taking curriculum and instructional

requirements into consideration. The schedules in a sense become tools that teachers can

use to address learning needs and engage students in rich and meaningful educational

experiences. Williamson states, "One of the most powerful instructional tools is the

presence of longer, more flexible instructional blocks" (Williamson, 2015, p. 1).

Combinations of block schedules have become one of the most commonly used schedules

to improve instruction, especially at the middle school level.

Problems with Current Scheduling Practices

Although school scheduling issues appeared to vary by school and district, there

were three major concerns which appeared to be common for most school scheduling

practices regardless of their school level. Schools consistently struggled with providing

quality time, creating a positive school climate and providing varying learning times.

First, providing quality time for students to engage in core instruction posed problems for

many schools, especially schools at the elementary level. According to Canady and Rettig

(2013), school schedules which included fragmented instructional times made it difficult

for some teachers to provide quality for time for students to learn. They alleged that the

need for teachers to schedule time for special education pull-out programs, specialist classes and other electives oftentimes made it difficult for teachers to provide instruction for extended periods of time. Canady and Rettig (1995) report that special education pull-out programs are the worse. When students are pulled away from their general education classrooms for services, the result is lack of exposure to the general education curriculums, and their return to class tends to disrupt the instructional flow of the learning environment.

Creating positive school climates was another issue that plagued school scheduling practices in numerous schools and districts. Canady and Rettig (1995) note that school schedules could have a great impact on school climates, if they were well-crafted, effective and efficient, but ineffective school schedules were known to cause disciplinary problems among students and wreak havoc on school climates at all levels. They reported that teachers at the elementary level tended to experience the most difficulty with students behaviors as a result of poor scheduling practices. According to Canady and Rettig (1995), teachers at the elementary level, typically divided their students into small groups with expectations for one group to work with the teacher, while the other students work separately and independently on assignments. Oftentimes, instruction at the elementary level was interrupted because the teachers had to make frequent pauses during the delivery of instruction to address students' misbehaviors (Rettig, 1995).

Canady and Rettig (2013) reported that the schools at the elementary level struggled with providing varying learning time for students in need. They stated that when students at this level needed more time to learn, the teachers usually regrouped

students, slowed their learning and/or provided pull-out programs. Although teachers

continued to provide grade level exposure and instruction for students who learn quickly,

they differentiated and modified their instruction for students who struggled with

learning. The problem with this method was students who learned quickly were thrown

together haphazardly; and the students who were placed in lower groups typically fell

further behind (Rettig, 2013). Not to mention, the students who were pulled out or placed

in the "low" groups were oftentimes stigmatized by their participation in those groups.

Canady and Rettig (2013) also report that there are additional school scheduling

problems that occur when teachers were allowed to develop their own instructional

schedules. They indicated the problems that occurred when teachers developed their own

instructional schedules were:

- ✓ Inconsistent allocation of time to subjects within and across grade levels

- ✓ Difficulties providing time for interventions, remediation, enrichment, specialized services and specialists' classes

- ✓ Lack of common planning time for teachers during the school day

- ✓ Mismatches between needs and resources

- ✓ Mismatches between teaching skills and teaching assignments

The problems with inconsistent allocations of time rest in hands of teachers and are

closely aligned to the teachers' philosophies of how time should be utilized.

Six Principles of School Scheduling

Canady and Rettig (2013), stated that schools should use their Six Key Principles

of Scheduling as their guide when developing elementary school schedules. The six key

principles were as follows:

1. Focus on the Mission

2. School-wide Scheduling

3. Collaboration

4. Practicality and the Appropriateness of Teaching Assignments

5. Fairness

6. Efficiency

Evidence that school leaders are used the "Focus on a Mission" principle as a guide to create effective and efficient schedules, will be reflected in their revised schedules, as schools would create schedules that are designed to align with their respective mission. If school schedules are aligned with their missions, then sufficient time would be allotted for each activity and the activities would occur during their scheduled time periods on the days they were scheduled. The class sizes would be relative to students needs and instruction would occur in the spaces that were designated for them. Canady and Rettig stated, "… the amount of time spent in a subject, its strategic placement in the schedule, the size of the instructional group, and the space assigned to a particular activity should be guided by the school's mission statement" (Rettig, 1995, pg. 12).

School-wide scheduling can be utilized to create effective and efficient school schedules, and the evidence of this practice would be obvious when schools create school-wide schedules with the big picture in mind. They would schedule core classes, encore classes and special services effectually, proficiently and independent of each other. These schedules would be free of fragmented instruction times. The individuals or groups who develop these school-wide schedules would align the designated school periods for subjects in accordance with their school's instructional priorities. They would determine how much time should be allocated for each subject, including encore classes

and special education services, for each grade level, then schedule these periods accordingly. They would take into consideration the critical instruction students who receive special education services would miss during pull-outs, and develop a plan to address eliminate the practice or provide opportunities to make up the missed instruction. They would make the necessary correlations between core subjects, encore classes and special education services, and determine how to integrate them to make better use of time.

Staff collaboration can also be used as a guide to develop effective and efficient school schedules, then evidence of this practice would be revealed when school schedules have weekly common planning times that facilitate teacher collaborations. Schools would schedule grade– level encore classes at the same time each week, so grade level teams would have a built-in common planning time during the school day to collaborate with colleagues at their grade level. For example, I would schedule encore classes for my three first grade classes at my school at the same time on the same day of each week. While one class has physical education, another class would have art; simultaneously, the last class would have music. While the first grade students participate in their encore classes, the first grade teachers could meet during their common planning time. Canady and Rettig stated, "Research supports our belief that teachers need to collaborate with their colleagues for sustained periods of time within the context of their teaching environment (Rettig, 2013).

Practicality should serve as a guide to create effective and efficient school schedules, then evidence of this practice would be evident when school schedules include reasonable expectations that clearly outline what is required of the teachers. Schools

would assign teachers to teach courses at grade levels that closely align with their professional level of expertise. Schools would take in to consideration their teachers' specialties, experiences and skills, and then assign them accordingly. They would expect all teachers to be experts in their subjects and place accountability measures in place to provide assurances. Schools would expect teachers to be able to differentiate curriculum and instruction for a full range of abilities for at least six hours each school day for all one hundred and eighty days of the yearly school calendar. Schools would have an expectation that teachers would be able to integrate core instruction into fragmented time periods, if the scheduling of fragmented instructional time slots were unavoidable.

Fairness was another key principle that was recommended as a tool to create effective and efficient school schedules. Evidence of this practice would be reflected when their school schedules are created with both teachers and students in mind. Students at each grade level would receive equal amounts of core, non-core and encore instruction. The determination of these times would not be left to the preferences of individual teachers. All students would have equal opportunities and access to learn and or participate in all selected curriculums and programs. Students in need of special education services, intervention and or enrichment would be offered these services in the least restrictive environments and still have equal accesses to all general education amenities.

The most prevalent indicator in implementations of school schedules that reflect fairness is that teachers do not feel overworked due to unfair distributions. These fair school-scheduling practices require all teachers to work with similar amounts of students during the regularly scheduled class periods. For example, the general education teachers

and the special education resource teachers both provide instructional service to the same number of students during regularly scheduled class periods. When school schedules are fair, general education teachers would not be expected to provide instructional service to twenty-five students, while special education resources teachers only provide service for five to seven students during a regularly scheduled class period.

When school scheduling practices are fair, all classifications of teachers–general special education and encore–would be required to provide instructional services for students from bell-to-bell, each day from the first to the last day of school. Special education teachers will not be allowed to cease their students' services to complete Individual Education Plans (IEP), progress reports and or any other paperwork. The encore teachers would not be allowed to cancel their classes during the first week of school to create schedules and or set up their classrooms for the new school year, nor would end their classes to conduct inventory of their equipment during the last two weeks of school.

The last principle that Rettig and Canady (2013) suggests be used as a guide to create their effective and efficient school schedules is "Efficiency." They state that evidence of this practice would be reflective when schools create schedules with efficiency in mind. They would, for example, schedule all encore classes in the most efficient manner. They would calculate the number of homeroom classes and assign each encore teacher with exactly that number of instructional periods in the school day. They warn that this practice could potentially cause instructional fragmentations in some school schedules. They indicate that on the surface, the practice appears to be fair; however, it could potentially cause efficiency to be mute, because this practice does not

always build in opportunities for flexibility. Canady and Rettig stated, "The up-front efficiency of allocating staff by the numbers fragments the schedule and leads to great inefficiency in delivery of the core program" (Rettig, 2013, p. 14).

Types of Block Scheduling Plans

According to information found in the article, *Making Time: What Research Says about Re-Organizing School Schedules*, four types of block scheduling plans: Trimester, Four by Four Block, Alternating and Seventy-five, Seventy-Five and Thirty Plans. The use of the Trimester Plan of block scheduling requires the school calendar year to be organized in three sessions with students attending two core classes and one elective class each session. At the end of each session, students transition to two more core classes and one elective class. According to information found in these articles, there are advantages and disadvantages affiliated with the use of the Trimester Plan. The advantages include the students are only required to focus on two core classes at one time. Both teachers and students prepare for fewer classes; and teacher work with fewer students during each session. There is one disadvantage associated with the use of this plan–students may not retain knowledge after they transition to their next session. For example, knowledge gained during the fall trimester, may not be retained when the students are required to take the standardized assessments during the spring trimester.

The use of the Four by Four Plan Block Plan requires the schools calendar year to be divided into four blocks with the length of class blocks ranging from eighty-five to one hundred minutes and additional time scheduled for lunch and transitions. The use of this plan affords students with opportunities to learn in one semester, what they would have learned during the entire school year using the traditional schedules. According to

information found in this article, there are advantages and disadvantages affiliated with

the use of the Four by Four Block Plan. The advantages and disadvantages for the use of

this plan are similar to those affiliated with the use of the Trimester Plan. Advantages

include students and teachers receipt of increased instructional time. Students only

concentrate on four classes each semester. Teachers work with fewer students;

consequently, students and teacher prepare for fewer classes. There is one disadvantage–a

possibility students may not retain knowledge after they transition to their next session

The Alternating Plan is also known as the Eight Block Plan or the A/B Plan. The

use of the Alternating Plan requires schools to divide their school days into eight blocks

of classes. Typically, each block last ninety minutes. In this plan, students would be

required to attend classes over a two-day span, then repeat the process. The use of this

plan also has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include students and

students receive increased instructional time. Students have fewer classes, quizzes and

homework assignments each day. The disadvantages– teachers still have a large number

of students; they are just divided over a two-day span. Preparation time for teachers or

students is the same as the traditional models of scheduling.

The use of the Seventy-Five, Seventy-Five, and Thirty Plan requires schools to

schedule students to take three classes each for two days for seventy-five days, followed

by participation in a thirty-day intensive course and enrichment program. The plan has

some advantages and one disadvantage. The advantages include students who need

additional practice time and/or direct instruction from their teachers can get it during their

short-term sessions. Students are afforded opportunities to engage in a short-term

enrichment class that interest them. This plan has time built into the school schedules for

students to make up incomplete work. The one downside is students may not retain

knowledge after they transition to their next session.

Section Six: Data Analysis & Interpretation
"Your system – any system – is perfectly designed to produce the results you're getting."
Tony Wagner

Academic Data

According to our academic achievement data, during the 2013 – 2014 school year

many of our students continued to perform below the proficiency levels in the core

subjects: reading, math and English Language Arts (ELA). Our Wisconsin Knowledge

and Concept Examination results, which students in grades third through fifth completed

during October 2013, indicates that four percent of our students performed at the

proficient level and ninety-six percent performed below proficiency. In math, twelve

percent of our students performed at the proficient level and eighty-eight percent

performed below proficiency. In English Language Arts, thirty-nine percent performed at

the proficient level and sixty-one percent performed below the proficient level. These

dismal WKCE assessment results reflected negatively on our school's state report card

and sent an unfavorable message to our parents, district and public at large.

Although many of students did not score proficient on the WKCE assessment at

the end of the 2013–2014 school year, our school's value added data indicated that some

of our students experienced growth in the areas of reading and math in accordance to the

universal screener data. The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) was administered

three times during the 2013 – 2014 school year: October, January and May. The results of

this universal screener were considered to be an effective identifier of students who were

on track for college readiness. Students who scored in the proficiency range were believed to have possessed the academic ability necessary to be deemed on track to score at least a twenty-four on the ACT College Entrance Exam. During the 2013–2014 school year, the screeners were administered to students in grades kindergarten through fifth. Students who qualified for special education services and had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which included an alternate curriculum were exempt from these formative assessments. These students were reported as untested in the data results and were automatically included in the percentage of students who were not meeting college readiness expectations.

According to our school's spring MAP data for reading, 13% of our students made sufficient academic growth, which placed them on track to score at least a twenty-four on the college entrance examination (ACT) and 87% were not. According our spring MAP data for math, 16% of our students made sufficient academic growth and 84% were not. According to the 2013 – 2014 Students Narrowing the Gap data from fall to spring, 44.9% closed the gap in reading and 42.5% closed the gap in Math.

In November 2013, our school administered the CogAt Assessment to fifty-eight second grade students, who were enrolled in our general education classes. According to our school's CogAt assessment data, our students received the following rankings:

- seven students ranked in the first stanine

- nine students ranked in the second stanine

- eleven students ranked in the stanine

- fourteen students ranked in the fourth stanine

- eleven students ranked in the fifth stanine

- five students ranked in the sixth stanine

- zero students ranked in the seventh stanine

- one students ranked in the eighth stanine

- zero students ranked in the ninth stanine

Our school had only one of our fifty-eight second grade students identified as gifted and talented.

Discipline and Climate Data.

According to our school's discipline data, ten suspensions were issued during the 2013 – 2014 school year, which was equivalent to a 1.7% overall suspension rate for the school year. Of the ten suspensions, 54.5% were issued for disruptions of the learning environment, 45.5% were issued for weapons, 2.4% were issued to non-special education students and 0.7% was issued to special education students. There was a 10.9% overall reduction in suspensions from the 2012–2013 school year compared to the 2013–2014 school year.

Enrollment and Attendance Data.

According to our school's 2013–2014 student enrollment data, on the third Friday in September 2013, we had approximately four hundred and twenty-seven students enrolled. Our student attendance rate for this school year was 91.8%; and our teacher attendance was 90.9%. During the 2014–2015 school year, our student enrollment decreased by thirty-four students. According to our Third Friday Count in September 2014, there were approximately three hundred and ninety-three students enrolled in our

school. Our student attendance rate for this school year also decreased from 91.8% to

91.3%; however, our teacher attendance rate increased from 90.9% to 100%.

Section Seven: A Vision of Success (To Be)

"The propositioning of time is a valuable resource and school scheduling practices are far more important than the simple mechanical assignment of students to teachers, spaces and time periods."

Robert Canady and Michael Rettig

The vision of success that I envisioned as a result of a successful implementation of a

Parallel Block Scheduling System at my school, was an implementation of a school

scheduling system that gave teachers opportunities to embrace, accept and commit to a

mission of a shared responsibility for the assurance that all students enrolled at our school

were taught in a school environment that consistently promoted a strong sense of

belonging and school connectedness for all. I envisioned a school environment that

maintained a positive culture for learning with a strong foundation of mutual respect,

responsibility, safety and a genuine sense of caring for one another.

Our revised master school schedule would allow teachers to meet weekly during a

common planning time during the school day to collectively analyze data, plan, prepare,

teach, assess, rearrange groups and re-teach as needed. The conditions, context,

competencies and culture within our school would be reflective of continuous time on

task, in-depth and breadth explorations of content provide ample opportunities for

planning and professional development and produce stronger educator/student

relationships based on students' interests and culture. Teachers' daily instructional

practices would be culturally responsive and engage students in educational activities that

were rigorous, relevant and interesting. Each student would take personal ownership in

their own learning journey and willingly cooperate with teachers. They would expend

adequate effort in completing their work and produce quality work. The level of contentment for both teachers and students would be high and contagious, while feelings of stress would be nominal. Our accountability data would improve and our school would be removed from the state's list of focus schools.

My vision of success would include a renewed personal sense of importance and job satisfaction as a school leader. I would consciously build leadership capacity among my school staff, delegate more responsibilities to others and refrain from micromanaging. My overall health would improve, as stress, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed with work would diminish because I could trust my staff to use their professional skills and expertise to assist me. Equally important, the passion I initially felt for the field of education, the joy of being a school leader and the harmonious camaraderie with my colleagues would be rekindled and my desire would be to continue in my role as the principal of my current school. Teachers would take responsibility for, accept and own their students' data and make personal connections to their instructional practices. They would begin to make the correlation between their instructional practices and student learning. Teachers would collaborate regularly about the business of teaching and learning, and know their roles and responsibilities as effective educators. They would know, understand and embrace the expectations for what they know and be able to do as they perform their professional duties.

There would be a clear and well defined transition expectations from classroom to classroom and grade to grade. Teachers would not be afraid to challenge students and or their colleagues in an effort to increase academic growth. They would collaborate often, learn from one another and take charge of their own professional development needs.

Most importantly, the school would have a principal, an assistant principal and a school support teacher who collectively ensured accountability for themselves and others. The leadership team would no longer be bogged down with unnecessary managerial tasks and would have uninterrupted weekly time built into their schedules to properly monitor the efficiency, progress, compliance, success of this change leadership action plan and project.

In conclusion, I envisioned a school culture that would release the old regime and embrace the new and improved systems of operation with a willing spirit that accepts and respects individuality. Failure would never be an acceptable option! Teachers would welcome parents to the school and into their classrooms. Strong partnerships with parents would emerge and begin to learn about the cultural beliefs and traditions of the students they serve daily. Teachers would get to know their students and teach them in accordance to their learning styles. They would respect the knowledge students bring to school with them; and integrate their students' experiences into their lesson plans to make and keep learning interesting for students. The cultural connections would be viewed as positive. The building of authentic relationships would become a norm. Most importantly, there would be a clear establishment of priority and urgency to improve student attendance, behavior and academic growth/ achievement. Staff, students, parents and community members will know and feel like they are important to our school community.

Section Eight: Strategies and Actions for Change

"The school schedule is one of the most powerful tools a principal can use to shape the instructional program."
Ronald Williamson

A series of personal and professional strategies were utilized to address the specific issues identified in the four arenas of change. The following strategies were used as guides to ensure the success of this school-wide implementation:

- ✓ Wagner's Steps Toward Individual Change
- ✓ The One Minute Manager
- ✓ Kotter's 8-Step Change Model
- ✓ Six Key Principles of Elementary School Scheduling

These strategies were chosen as a means to help us to effectively and efficiently address our school-wide problems, identify possible resolutions and create the change needed to promote and sustain continuous improvement of our work conditions and accountability data.

This journey began with a focus on me, the school leader. Like Principal Kafele stated in his book *The Principal 50,* "The attitude of the leader drives the approach to inspire excellence in the schools" (Kafele, 2015, p. 3). In an effort to overturn my personal immunities, I implemented both Wagner's "Steps towards Individual Change" and "The One Minute Manager" strategy to guide and create improvements in my professional work. First, Wagner's "Steps Toward Individual Change" strategy was used to explore, discover, identify, acknowledge and address the presumptions that were oftentimes deeply rooted in my identity as a result of my past experiences. The seven steps of Wagner's strategy helped me to create an action plan to overturn the immunities that prevented me from doing my work effectively and efficiently. These steps helped me to strengthen my understanding of issues and the work that needed to be completed, by defining and developing a picture of the process.

The following steps were taken:

- ✓ Designed the metric to identify costs and programs

- ✓ Observed the big assumptions in action

- ✓ Remained alert of challenges associated with my big assumptions

- ✓ Wrote the biography of my big assumptions

- ✓ Designed a test of my big assumptions

- ✓ Ran the test

- ✓ Developed new designs and new tests as needed

After identifying my personal immunities, I created a list of my commitment, hidden and competing commitments and big assumptions. This information was used to help me work through the steps and write the narrative of my findings in the "Personal Immunities" section of this change leadership project.

In an effort to continue the work of overturning my personal immunities, improve my professional skills/craft as a school leader and serve as the type of leader my staff, students, district and community expected me to be. I, also, utilized strategies found in "One Minute Manager" by authors Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson. This resource helped to improve the accountability for work completion for myself and others by teaching me how to become a more effective and efficient manager of my time. This strategy teaches how to maximize time at work, reduce stress and feelings of being overwhelmed and overworked, by prioritizing, delegating tasks and ensuring they have been completed with accuracy in a timely manner.

The primary goal of the "One Minute Manager" strategy was to require leaders to spend as little time as possible focusing on the remedial chores that was sometimes associated with their work. It included the implementation of three simple concepts: one minute goal setting, one minute praise and one minute reprimand. The expectations of the "One Minute Manager" was to encourage organizational leaders to spend one minute setting, explaining and creating clear understandings of the intended goals, and monitoring their progress toward the set goals. If satisfactory progress towards the goals was made, then the organizational leader was encouraged to deliver a one-minute praise for the work that was well done; however, if there is no evidence of progress, the organizational leaders were encouraged to deliver a one-minute reprimand for the lack of progress and incomplete work. Adequate time was spent on the front end of this implementation ensuring that the goals and expectations were clearly defined, communicated and understood by all, so I could play the role of an instructional leader, rather than a building manger.

Kotter's *Eight-Step Change Model* was used as a guide to aid in the effort to improve my school's context, culture, conditions and competencies. This strategy was selected and implemented to ensure that the necessary work affiliated with the creation of an environmental change actually transpired. The implementation of this change model helped to motivate staff and create the buy-in that was needed by providing them with a very simplistic and comprehensive way to utilize real data and other sources with tangible evidence to complete their work. The easy to follow steps made this change model predictable and easy to manage which made it more susceptible for acceptance. It provided steps that gave clear and concrete guidance for the process. It was easy for staff

to understand and follow when all of the steps were well communicated. Kotter stated, "It fit well into the culture of classical hierarchies, and employees are encouraged to accomplish tasks collectively" (Kotter, 2009, p.1).

According to Kotter, his Eight-Step Change Model provides an organizational path to new a new way of thinking, new technologies and new operational approaches. (Conwell, 2015). The eight steps contained in this change model were as follows:

1. Establish a sense of urgency

2. Create a guiding coalition

3. Develop a vision and strategy

4. Communicate the change vision

5. Empower broad-based action

6. Generate short-term wins

7. Consolidate gains and produce more change

8. Anchor new approaches in the culture

Kotter believed change was driven by employees' ownership. If employees possessed a strong sense of ownership, then chances were they would exhibit high levels of commitment and follow through to achievement their desired outcomes (Conwell, 2015).

A few suggestions from the "Things to Consider" list that was highlighted in an article entitled, *"Making Time: What Research Says about Re-Organizing School Schedules"* was used to emphasis the urgency for this implementation. It is suggested that before schools implement a new school-wide scheduling system, they should first consult external resources. In an effort to tap into the available external resources, we visited

other schools and collaborated with staff that were implementing similar schedules. The members of my leadership and learning teams were encouraged by these visits, although we found only two schools that experienced a measurable amount of success with their academic, attendance and behavior accountability data.

Another suggestion is that schools involve all stakeholders by hosting informational/listening sessions. During my informational/listening sessions, information from my "As Is" and my "To Be" statements were shared in an effort to create urgency for our need to implement a revised scheduling system. The information presented at these sessions consisted of sharing our school's current reality–utilizing real-time data, an outline of our school-scheduling practices, and problems associated with the current practices and causes of the problems. The school's vision, mission, values and goals were also shared at these sessions. Each session ended with a Question and Answer period and a collection of either formal or informal feedback from the participants and/or stakeholders.

Schools should seek regular feedback related to the success of their implementations by offering its participants a variety of ways to provide feedback using multiple modes of media. In addition to the informational/listening session offerings, professional development discussions, surveys and in-person interviews, participants were also encouraged to provide responses, make suggestions for improvement and/or provide additional feedback related to their perceptions by letter, email, telephone, anonymous notes in my mail or suggestion box that was housed in the teachers' lounge.

Lastly, during the development of our school's master schedule, we ascertained efficiency by creating schedules that require all teachers, regardless of specialty, to teach

the same number of classes and have equal time to prepare. Schedules were created to allow all teachers to have four preparation periods of forty-five minutes each week. All teachers will have a scheduled thirty-minute uninterrupted lunch period, either proceeded or followed by a fifteen-minute duty. No teacher will be exempt from these predetermined professional responsibilities and obligations.

In conclusion, Wagner (2006) described relationships as the quality of attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of the individuals and groups that engage in the work of helping all students learn. According to Wagner, respectful and trusting relations were the essential components that were needed in order to create change, learn from one another, and remain deeply committed to students/communities and to share responsibilities (Wagner, 2006). Lack of trust by stakeholders was the primary culprit that could halt a school's success. There were four elements that encompassed trust: respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity. Wagner stated "….relational trust in schools correlates more highly with improved student achievement than any other single factor" (Wagner, 2006, p.136).

Wagner (2006) believes the three change levers: data, accountability and relationships served different, but critical roles in the change process. He stated that previews of data collections and interpretations of data ignites the change leadership process, if done properly, then explodes into the larger community. He suggested that most organizations utilize a combination of both the vertical and horizontal accountability models, placing heavier emphasis on the use of the horizontal accountability model to ensure better results. Trust and respect were keys to building, strengthening and enabling new forms of communications and professional learning to

occur. Wagner (2006) stated that if schools and districts placed strong emphasis on these three change levers within their organizations, then rightward movement should occur naturally. Wagner's three change levers were utilized as the foundation of this research project.

The decision to focus on revising the school's scheduling system was selected as the change project for a number of reasons. The current scheduling practices were not beneficial. A significant number of district initiatives and an astronomical amount of content to cover caused too many teachers to become overwhelmed by the dual responsibility of addressing behavioral issues and meeting academic needs of their students. Many of the teachers struggled with the planning and preparation process to adequately address the various instructional levels, meet the required time allotment for each subject, and provide intervention, enrichment and sufficient practice time for students to master skills. Teachers did not have built in meeting time during the school day to collaborate with colleagues, time to examine student data, make data-driven decisions, plan collectively and create a shared responsibility for all students enrolled at our school. These joint dynamics mandated that teachers work smarter and not harder.

The implementation of an effective and efficient elementary school scheduling system, which included designated weekly meeting times to discuss teaching and learning strategies, coupled with the common system of operations, was the foundation various school teams needed to design a comprehensive agenda, which would permit them to regularly review data sources, identify areas that needed improvement, identify strategies to address needs, plan collectively, personalize educational activities in order to set viable instructional outcomes, determine professional development needs and ensure proper

diagnoses of data with accountable collaboration. Coupled with the common system of operations, the scheduling system empowered school leaders to ensure accountability by providing time to regularly monitor the work and track progression toward goals. Wagner stated, "Teaching and instructional leadership in many schools – both public and private – is often mediocre, and this is the central problem that must be addressed if we are to improve student achievement (Wagner, 2006). The recognition that there was truth to Wagner's statement served as a testament that prompted the staff at this school to begin to take the necessary steps to implement the changes necessary to improve their school's reality.

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