

5-2018

High School Redesign and the Senior Year

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HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN AND THE SENIOR YEAR

by

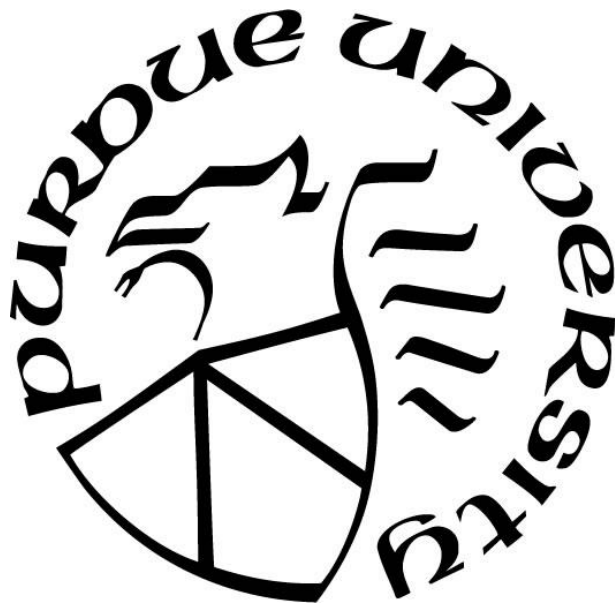
Park D. Ginder

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



Department of Educational Studies

West Lafayette, Indiana

May 2018

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents who provided the love and structure to launch 5 kids into the world that became 5 incredible families of achievers in their own right, and to my wife Gabrielle who is the embodiment of all God's gifts to me on this earth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have found in life that I am less likely to understand the things I might be good at than other people, and more inclined to pursue things that others encourage me to see in myself. As I say to our students at Homestead, “I am 53 years old and I still don’t know what I want to do when I grow up.”

The completion of this work then is the direct result of so many others who at one time or another saw the makings of “something” in me. To Mr. Tom Swihart I say thanks for stopping me in the hall during my 14th year of teaching and telling me to take a couple of graduate classes in administration because I was “going to be a principal someday.”

To Dr. Steve Yager, Dr. Phil Downs, Dr. Lynn Simmers, and Dr. Sherry Grate I say thank you for your leadership and encouragement over the last 16 years. Your example and the freedom you gave me to fail have been invaluable...that and Dr. Yager’s gentle reminders asking how I was “coming along on my book report.”

Special thanks to Dr. Marilyn Hirth and Dr. Jim Freeland who helped us all navigate the Ph.D. process. You are both great leaders, shepherding us thru our fields of study to fresh water. Thank you to Dr. F. Richard Olenchak whose kind words and direction concerning qualitative study was right on time.

God’s timing is always better than ours, so when I got cancer late in year 3 of the Ph.D. process I “lost” a semester or so. It was during that time that I was most blessed by the team at Homestead High School, the teachers, the students, community members, and the administrative team of Jennifer Bay, Lindsay Lackland, Susan Summers, Chris Johnson, Jeff Kintz, Joe Updegrave, and Scott Zvers who kept me straight. Finishing this project would never have happened without you.

I think all creative endeavors in my life have been a direct reflection of the support and love I have received from my parents Phil and Carolyn Ginder, and over the last 30 years from my mother and father-in-law, Dr. Howard and Carlota Marraro. I have the best parents and best examples to follow in you.

Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Heavenly Lights, and my biggest gift is Gabrielle. As I studied, you studied, completing your second master’s degree at the same time I worked on this project. Are we not blessed? You are the best.

All things formative seem to harken back to the times of our youth, even as we age. My best, most important friends are still my brothers and sisters, Tammy, Amy, Dave, and Dan. Watching you build your families and move through life has all been a part of my story too, and even though it may not seem connected, your lives are in this paper and in every moment of my day.

Lastly – to my kids and their spouses: Your love and tolerance of a fallen man like me is humbling. Each of you in your own way has a part in the completion of this degree. Editing, laughing, belittling, cajoling, tolerating, and encouraging all the way. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

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Degree Received: May 2018
Title: High School Redesign and the Senior Year
Committee Chair: Marilyn A. Hirth

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how high school principals in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences as a means to increasing student engagement and making the senior year more valuable for students. Using an exploratory multiple-case study design, three high school principals serving in high performing high schools in Indiana (as defined by the Indiana Department of Education rating each school an “A”) were interviewed, with interviews recorded and transcribed, then coded for item analysis. The participants’ commentary, outlined themes, and sub-themes from the case study provide insight into the experiences of high school principals as they work to create site-specific redesign solutions for their schools. Themes from this study are: (a) rigor, (b) relevance, (c) freedom, and (d) increasing post-secondary opportunities for students, supported by the subthemes of (a) physical plant structures, building projects, and building design have direct impacts on how redesign of educational programming is structured, (b) local stakeholder desires help shape changes, (c) communicating change, (d) perceived student needs, and (e) the individual strengths and dispositions of school leadership personnel. The themes identified through data analysis have been assessed leaving three assertions for principals to consider when seeking to create site-specific school redesign solutions in their own settings: (a) Principals must have a clear vision for the need to change; (b) Principals must communicate clearly with stakeholders; (c) Principals must embrace the uniqueness of their school and create redesign solutions specific to their schools. The results of this study are intended to provide insight and ideas for other high school principals pursuing high school redesign ideas in their school setting.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

A high school education prepares students for post-secondary education or employment. Students typically spend four years in a high school environment with the senior year being one of the most critical to their future success. Observation suggests that the senior year of high school is often a lost time for students who have taken accelerated coursework despite increased expectations at the state and national level. Many high school students do not understand that postsecondary success is linked to their personal academic preparation while in high school (Bowen, Kurzweil & Tobin, 2005; Geiser & Santelices, 2007), and as a result many students choose to “ease off” during their senior year rather than pursue a rigorous course of study. Other high school students become disengaged cognitively, or behaviorally, while losing interest in “school-related challenges” (Tuominen-Soini & Salmela-Aro, 2014) becoming cynical or burned-out and withdraw from paths which might lead to success.

Early access to challenging course work can also play a factor in creating an environment that encourages students to do less rather than more during their senior years. Just as failure to recognize and develop gifted and talented students can lead to long term consequences for learners, educators are finding that over exposure to high levels of expectation, heavy work load, and intense levels of academic intensity can lead students to withdraw from challenging academic experiences. Wang, Chow, Hofkens, and Salmela-Aro (2015) found that students in grades 9 thru 11 in the Finnish school system experienced a diminished level of “emotional engagement” with school as they matriculate despite high levels of academic performance. Yang and Chen (2015) identify varying levels of learning burnout associated with academic stress, including negative emotional state, negative external evaluation, poor teacher-student relationships, and poor life quality. In addition, Parker and Salmela-Aro (2011) termed school burnout as a student’s inability to handle

the pressure brought on by high levels of pressure created by the perceived need to excel, and that these pressures increase over time. Bask and Salmela-Aro (2013) found that the impacts of school burnout increase over time, and noted three parts of school burnout including cynicism towards school, feeling inadequate as a student, and exhaustion at school.

Although there is little in Indiana state policy determining whether students can earn high school credits while still in middle school, acceleration of high school course work is permitted and the increased level of rigorous study in middle schools is typical. Consequently, more difficult course work, once saved for high school, has been integrated at earlier and earlier ages. High school transcripts now routinely include the presence of high school credit earned in middle school in subjects such as Algebra and Geometry, but also in fields of study such as business courses, Biology, Health and Wellness, Family and Consumer Sciences, world languages, agriculture, fine arts, as well as other courses. There is a significant trend in many communities to push more high school credit earning courses down into the middle school level, such as Algebra in 7th or 8th grade, world languages such as Spanish, French, Arabic, or Mandarin, Biology courses, and any number of courses deemed appropriate locally. This trend has accelerated the rate at which students move toward post-secondary schooling (Shellenbarger, 2012). The political pressure applied at the national and state level to accelerate the level of academic intensity (increasing academic rigor) has been pursued by both political parties and is evidenced in comments made by President Bush in 2006 and President Obama in 2008 and 2011 (Long, Conger, & Iatarola, 2012). Speaking before Congress, Bush (2006) proposed to train more than 70,000 high school teachers to teach Advanced Placement courses, and to add 30,000 additional math and science teachers. Implied in his State of the Union address was that more math, and more science, combined with increased rigor would provide “high-wage jobs.” Following the Bush administration and as early as 2008 campaign

documents show that the Obama administration would shift gears moving away from charter school legislation, while adding to the rhetoric pertaining to access to college-level course work in high school through a program initially entitled “Make College A Reality.” (Obama, & Biden, 2008). The increased desire for rigorous course offerings caused by the accelerated nature of education in the 21st century has subsequently led to higher levels of study during the high school years, which in turn has opened a door for rapid student access to post-secondary educational options before students graduate from high school, or for matriculation to post-secondary options long before the traditional four-year high school career is over (Adams, 2012). This trend is not new, and can be seen in the dual enrollment practices in the states of Florida and New York. (Hoffman, Vargas, & Grier ,2008).

If accelerated learning options are the norm, are students taking fewer and less demanding courses during their senior years? Kuh (2007) states:

The senior year in particular seems to be a wasteland: the overall engagement of high school seniors is much lower than that of any previous year. In fact, student engagement declines in a linear fashion between the first and the last year of high school (p. 5).

The contradiction is alarming. Seniors often have their college choices decided before the first semester of their final year is over, their SAT and ACT scores are solidified, their credits needed for graduation are nearly all earned, and have chosen an academic load that is less rigorous than any of their three preceding school years. Solid time for growth is lost in “seat time” and minor academic pursuits causing the senior year to be little more than a place holder for “near graduates.” Seniors who are old enough to vote, fight and die for their country, quit school, or find full time employment are treated much like 15-year-old freshmen and not like the young adults that they are. (Adams, 2012; Bailey, Hughes & Karp, 2002; Dreis & Rehage, 2011; Karp, 2012). The senior year should be more than a victory lap around the school.

The opportunity to improve the senior year experience in Indiana is available now. The State of Indiana eliminated seat time requirements and provided options for creativity in scheduling in 2006 when the definition of credit changed with the passage of Indiana State Code 511 IAC 6-7.1-1(d) which became the law for all students when the previous code expired in 2011. This new statute eliminated the need to spend a specific amount of time in study before being granted credit or allowing students to graduate. It became possible to demonstrate proficiency without meeting seat-time requirements and allowed schools to begin thinking creatively about how they meet the educational needs of students. Other sections of the same code change under 511 IAC 6-7.1 created clarity on early graduation, credit accrual, and the use of college course work to earn high school credit.

Portions of Indiana State Code 511 IAC 6-7 provide a structure within which students have the flexibility to take high school courses before entering grade nine. The practice of having middle level students take high school credit earning courses before 9th grade was not new to schools in 2006. The new Code (Code 511 IAC 6-7) and attending guidance from the Indiana Department of Education created a framework within which schools could increase the rigor of all of their programming while requiring that accelerated learning opportunities provided in middle school not be used to finish entire courses of study (Culhan, 2015). Middle school students can earn credits toward high school graduation, however, coursework in mathematics does not supplant the need for 6-8 credits in mathematics during the high school years. Students choosing to leap forward by taking credit earning courses while still in middle school are allowed to advance to higher level courses later in high school, but this acceleration caused students to need courses that were not yet available at the high school level when students arrived. I have observed that this

situation created a vacuum within which schools were incentivized to think and plan anew in order to meet the educational needs of students needing advanced coursework during their senior year.

In addition to changes in the state requirements for length of time in study, university and community college norms have been changing as well. All states provide mechanisms for dual credit and dual enrollment with all but four states having at least one program like Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College partnership that is designated specifically as a dual credit partner (Zinth, 2016). Across the state of Indiana, public postsecondary institutions that saw an opportunity to recruit and entice students to matriculate to their colleges began pursuing relationships with high schools through the use of "memoranda of understanding" that partnered local high schools directly with their neighboring colleges and universities. For example, in the Fort Wayne area Indiana Tech pursued memorandums of understanding and reciprocal agreements specific to computer science, computer programming, and business courses, and Trine University, Indiana Wesleyan, and Saint Francis University pursued agreements which were specific to curricular offerings at their schools. At the same time schools such as Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne created an entire department called the Collegiate Connection dedicated to developing relationships and building partnerships with high schools. These agreements provided for the growth of hybrid educational opportunities for students and increased both the number of students leaving the high school facility to take college level courses on campus, but also brought new dual credit earning opportunities to the high school campus where college professors visited the high school, or high school faculty were given adjunct faculty status and taught in the name of the postsecondary institution as both high school and college instructors (Cassidy, Keating & Young, 2010). Again, these dual credit opportunities were not new to the 2000s; rather, the potential to grow these

programs increased exponentially as the overall educational landscape was given room to change because of statutory, legal, technological, and political changes (Andrews, 2000).

Questions regarding the relevance of the senior year are a consistent concern for educators in all areas of the world. In Indiana we have been provided avenues within which to create change for students in the senior year. This study investigates how high school principals are redesigning the senior year for students in their high schools. This study identifies difficulties high school principals face in implementing redesign initiatives. The study of the implementation of redesign efforts in three specific high schools in Indiana provides guidance for others attempting redesign in their own local high schools.

Statement of the Problem

The senior year (4th year) of high school is frequently less rigorous than the preceding three years of secondary school study and often serves as a place holder rather than a continuation of appropriate academic rigor (Dries & Rehage, 2008b, 2011; Kuh, 2007; Patton et al., 2001). A portion of the problem appears to be related to the fact that states have increased the level of academic expectation in the elementary and middle school years. By accelerating the level of expectation for learning (e.g. Algebra in 6th grade, Geometry in the 7th grade, Algebra 2 in the 8th grade) in all grades we have inadvertently created a vacuum in the final year of high school. Just before releasing students to postsecondary school opportunities, expectations for academic intensity are often lessened and schooling becomes secondary to activities, rites of passage, and filling the academic day with less, rather than more valid academic pursuit (Sizer, 2002). Of course this is not true for all students, however, this end of secondary school problem is so pervasive that it is often called “senioritis.” Whether known as senioritis or another name, the problem persists across demographic lines and supersedes students’ individual post-secondary goals. It is both

predictable and avoidable (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). This lack of rigor and relevance to the immediate educational needs of seniors must change.

Increasing the necessary number of credits to graduate has done nothing to increase the relevance of the senior year (Dreis & Rehage, 2011). Student course demands are highest in the freshman and sophomore year as a hedge against failure (Clune, White, & Patterson, 1989). Students who struggle do so early and still have time to make up lost credits in the last two years of high school.

Increased requirements for high school credit accrual in Indiana were first phased in during the 1980s and 1990s (511 IAC 6-7-1), and continued into the 2000s when the minimum number of credits needed to graduate was increased again (511 IAC 6-7-6.1). As a result of requirements that necessitated all students to earn 40 credits, most school districts chose to adjust the length of school days, the number of class periods offered per day, or the way the daily schedule was designed to create space for all students to have an opportunity to earn credits. For many of Indiana's better students, an extra period in the day was filled with unnecessary electives because achieving the increased number of credits for graduation was easily attainable for them.

This study focused on the experiences of high school principals as they work to create site-specific solutions to improve the senior experiences of the students in the high schools they serve. This study is by extension also about the experiences of students, and how school leaders place them at the forefront of the learning process eliminate seat time, and offer students real life learning in the senior year. At the very least, administrators can honor the fact that in many cases high school students are ready for college and postsecondary experiences, instead of needing to sit in a traditional high school environment. The literature suggests school leaders are considering changes to the entire high school curriculum, with changes specific to the senior year including accelerated

3-year high school programs, increased dual enrollment programming, more adult contact through internships, the use of placement exams, and changes in academic advising programs (Dries & Rehage, 2008a, 2008b, 2011, Kirst 2000, Kirst 2001). Examples of accelerated or individualized learning programs for students are increasing, some in the public school realm and some in the private sector. Schools such as the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and the Humanities on the campus of Ball State University offer high school students a residential learning experience that accelerates learning opportunities for students. Online schools allow for personalized accelerated programming that allow students to access their education at times and places that meet the needs and desires of the learner. A question for current school leaders serving in public education in Indiana might be “how might public high schools individualize educational practice for our students in the local setting in a similar manner to those schools who cater specifically to the gifted?” Why can’t public high schools create site specific solutions that replicate the depth and breadth of a private school experience for our students? More of our students? All of our students?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe how high school principals in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences as a means to increasing student engagement and making the senior year more valuable for students. Principals have many options available to them for improving the experiences of seniors in high school. These alternatives include the use of creative scheduling, redesigning physical plant construction, increasing dual credit opportunities or Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate course work, providing access to internships and work experiences, partnering with outside agencies to develop certification programs, creating access to online and alternative school courses, accelerating the possibility of

early graduation, and utilizing changes in seat time requirements to accelerate credit accrual. This research study provides insight into forms of redesign while furthering the conversation about what a valid high school experience in the 21st century should look like for students.

This study explores the lived experiences of high school principals in Indiana who are leading the ongoing change of redesigning the senior years their schools. As a high school principal who has first-hand experience, my own perspectives shaped the design of the study. This study provides some guidance by sharing the experiences of high school principals who have led their schools in a redesign of the senior year.

Research Questions

1. What types of changes are high school principals implementing when redesigning the senior year experiences for students?
2. How are high school principals making decisions about their high school redesign initiatives?
3. What difficulties do high school principals face when implementing their high school redesign initiatives?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is directly related to how current principals are leading change while redesigning educational experiences for seniors in high school. This study started by looking at the structure of traditional high school models and how those models impact the learning experiences of students. The literature suggests that adults have long thought that there is a need for change in how secondary education is provided and structured in schools, but many “reformers” followed the familiar path where adults determine what is most expedient rather than what might be best for students (Dreis, & Rehage, 2008a; Kirst, 2000). This research has the

potential for significance in providing perspective and possible solutions for practicing principals considering unique ways to create programming specific to students in their senior year of high school. Because building principals are often a leading voice for change in their schools and because they are in a position to help structure change, the nature of their work must be shared. It is essential to learn more about how principals are approaching the nature and direction of change in their schools.

There are many topics and a wide range of solutions that high school principals can consider in their work redesigning site-specific solutions for educational options for students in their senior year. In the broadest sense, Dries and Rehage (2008a, 2008b, 2011) addressed senioritis, suggested changes to guidance structures, and allowance for senior leadership in their work at New Trier High School in suburban Chicago. Sizer (2002) also addresses senioritis, however she concentrated her writing on redesigning the senior year by noting how schools might make course work mean more, rather than less, both to the student and to educators. Sizer writes that an evolving set of circumstances and the changes in the world our students live in requires that we reshape the educational experiences our students receive. DuFour and Eaker (1992) gave school leaders pause to look at how school improvement should include a sustained improvement process, reminding readers that what was once successful may no longer be a good idea. Daggett's work (2008, 2014) defining a rigor and relevance framework may be helpful to school leaders wanting to begin the work of high school redesign, and school reform in general. Henriksen, Stichter, Stone, & Wagner (2008) provide insight into the senior year specifically and suggest options to meet the challenges required to provide a stronger academic experience for students. There is no single set of answers for school leaders.

Much of the literature specific to high school redesign and the role of the principal concerns the work of leaders who are attempting to improve “failing” schools with significant achievement gaps as defined by various metrics and markers (Kowal & Hassel, 2005; Evans 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2010, 2012). Although ideas specific to the senior year can be found (Dries & Rehage, 2008a, 2008b, 2011, Kirst 2000, Kirst 2001; Sizer 1992; Sizer 2002, 2003), they tend not to provide much more than what principals already understand intuitively. This should not impede the rate of change or the creativity of those at the building level seeking to improve learning environments in high schools. School leaders should look generally to the body of literature suggesting a need for change while perceiving the work of redesign as a relatively blank slate needing leaders to begin the process of writing new, site-specific solutions that serve their community of students. One of the potential outcomes of this study is to encourage the work of redesign and school change by telling the stories of high school principals so that other high school principals can replicate successful practices, strategies, and techniques in the high schools they serve. The decisions and plans created by high school principals can take many forms. As such the school leaders interviewed for this paper help to inform new frameworks for change and provide consideration for change.

Limitations of the Study

This research study examines the work of principals leading change at three high performing high schools from three different school districts in the state of the Indiana. In general, each of the high schools may have similar demographics and populations, however, each has its own unique setting and culture. My intention is to have three principals who are leading high performing high schools to participate in this study.

The study was limited from the beginning by determining that only high performing schools of similar demographics would be included in interviews. This decision was made based on of how the State of Indiana determines “A” graded schools, and how those “A” schools have statutory freedom to do things other schools cannot do. For example, under Ind. Code 20-24.2-4-2 a qualified high school (an “A” school) is not required to provide at least 180 days of instruction, thus allowing that school freedoms that other schools do not have.

Other limitations may include the interviews themselves. As self-reported data, the responses during interviews from participants may reflect selective recall leaving out portions of information that may well have influenced the findings. Attempts are made to mitigate these possibilities by having participants read all initial findings, and have the chance to comment or suggest changes before the research is complete. In addition, interview results are also subject to exaggeration and potential bias that is unseen by the researcher. Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge my own work in high school redesign, and to acknowledge my desire to remove myself from the findings and let the data speak for themselves, no less so if I find the results comforting or disconcerting to my own work.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used throughout this study to ensure a common vocabulary amongst the researcher and the readers.

Dual Credit: In Indiana, “dual credit” is the term given to courses in which high school students have the opportunity to earn both high school and college credits in the same course. Dual credit courses are taught by high school faculty, college faculty, or adjunct college faculty either at the high school, at the college or university, or sometimes through online courses or distance education. Dual credit is offered by both state and independent (private, regionally accredited) colleges and universities. (IC 21-43-1-2.5)

Dual Enrollment: Interestingly the state code has a header which says “Dual Enrollment,” however, the term itself is not defined in the statute. For the purpose of this dual enrollment is defined in the same manner as dual credit is defined above.

Early College: In Indiana "early college" means an academic program consisting of a series of dual credit courses or concurrent enrollment courses, or both, which allow high school students to earn both a high school diploma and: (1) an associate degree that has been approved by the commission for higher education; or (2) up to two years of academic credit toward a baccalaureate degree. (I.C. 21-43-1-2.7)

Summary

The senior year of high school should be a time of meeting the learning needs of students. Over the last several decades, the senior year has become a time of decreasing depth of study even though overall standards and expectations have increased in lower grades. A students’ senior year should be a rigorous and relevant ending to 13 years of schooling that prepares students for postsecondary opportunities. Current options for creative solutions specific to the needs of seniors in high school are already in place in Indiana. The options tend to exist in a vacuum, however, with little sharing of information, success, difficulties, or failures. The purpose of this study is to describe how principals in high schools in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences for students in order to increase engagement and make the senior year more valuable for students. Hence, this research project serves to encourage creative solutions at the local level by engendering collaborative conversations that will empower leaders to increase the relevance of the senior year by increasing options for students.

Educators in Indiana have freedom granted by recent changes in state statutes that allow for increased creativity in meeting the needs of students. Indiana Code defines instructional time (IC 20-30-2-1) as well as the number of instructional days in a school year (IC 20-30-2-3). The length of the student instructional time for students in grades 7-12 is six hours (IC 20-30-2-2(a)). Instructional time requirements apply to seniors; however, the state has created significant room

for creativity for seniors in ways it has not for underclassmen. Effective January 2011, the Indiana State Board of Education repealed “seat time” requirements for awarding high school credit that previously required students to be in class for specified lengths of time or that credit only be awarded after students had participated in a class for a given length of time per semester. With the repeal of required seat time, schools were given the opportunity to look at alternative programming with a new lens. Indiana Code 21-43-1-2.5 provides further guidance about what constitutes dual credit, early college credit, concurrent enrollment, and other postsecondary and secondary partnerships that provide relative flexibility for school leaders. In addition, IC 20-30-2-2.2(a)(7) & (b)-(d), addresses school flex programs, which provide greater flexibility in scheduling by creating provision for senior students who have been determined by their principal to benefit from a shortened school day. Students participating in a school flex program may attend just three hours of instruction per school day, so long as they pursue a timely graduation and provide evidence of college or technical career education enrollment. Lastly, and most importantly for this study, IC 20-24.2.2.2(a) & (b) provides guidance for the definition of “performance qualified” schools. In order to receive the designation as a performance qualified school, the corporation or school “must be placed in the highest performance and improvement category or designation by the” Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). The stated purpose of this designation is:

to provide flexibility in administration and instruction to school corporations and high schools that meet certain established performance criteria so that [they] may provide curriculum, instruction, programs, and educational *innovations* (emphasis added) designed to engage students in achievement greater than the achievement required for [them] to be placed in the highest category or designation by the department (IC 20-24.2.2.2(a) & (b)).

Taken in their entirety, these recent changes in Indiana state statutes have created a “fresh canvas” on which school leaders at high performing schools can create student friendly solutions for implementing a more relevant senior year experience for students in high school.

The end of a student's high school career need not be approached as if it is a terminal experience. The senior year can be redesigned to represent what it truly is: an opportunity to treat students as partners in their own educational goals. According to McCarthy and Kuh (2006) "the benefits of student engagement are compelling. Students who devote more time and energy to various educationally purposeful activities in high school get better grades, are more satisfied, and are more likely to graduate and go on to college." Others have illustrated a need for more academic rigor and that in time things will change. David Conley, CEO of the Center for Education Policy at the University of Oregon stated:

I think in a few years from now the senior year will be far more challenging – equivalent to the first year of college. I think it will largely be driven by economic reasons, but it will also be good policy because it will get our students more involved and focused (as cited in Puente, 2012, p.42).

The question, then, is why wait? To that end educational leaders must be willing to take bold steps to make change at the local level that works to empower learners, educators, and community leaders to better meet the needs of students in the 21st Century. Most importantly, this study aims to focus on the experiences of high school principals of as they work to create site specific solutions for the students in the high schools they serve.

The literature on high school redesign, dual credit, dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, and other senior year and first year college experiences of students reiterates a need for changing the current paradigm. The first requirement before actual redesign is a common understanding for the need to change content delivery in schools to increase the relevance of the learning experience. A review of the literature in Chapter 2 is a clear indication as to why this research is needed and may be of great value to practicing principals seeking to design change in the schools they lead.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature pertaining to the changing educational needs of students in our schools created by general changes in society, to high school redesign specific to the senior year, and the principals' role in leading change in schools. The purpose of this literature review is to closely examine the literature related to school reform specific to the senior year and to ascertain what the various frameworks for change have been or might be in the future. The literature examined provides insight into the generally accepted need for change and the various proposed paradigms and structures for change.

The Senior Year Conundrum

A cursory investigation into the literature on high school redesign specific to the senior year suggests that the senior year is problematic on a national level. School leaders are in search of new and flexible educational models that will better engage high school students while allowing for more student control of their time and course schedule. There is a need for structure that also allows for flexibility if high school redesign is to be successful. Eaton and Nelson (2007) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development suggest flexibility across a range of school design items that may help school leaders rearrange work and school schedules, provide flexibility to create internships and work experiences, and create activities that students are interested in to keep them engaged. The potential options for redesign are far more diverse than many educators realize. School leaders are looking, however, for ways to better engage and support students through a major transitional stage in their lives. The literature suggests that schools should look for ways to use creative scheduling, redesigned physical plant construction, increase dual credit opportunities or Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate course work, provide

access to internships and work experiences, partner with outside agencies to develop certification programs, creating access to online and alternative school courses, accelerating the possibility of early graduation, and utilize changes in seat time requirements to increase educational relevance for students (Adams, 2012a, 2012b; An, 2015; Dreis & Rehage, 2011; Henrikson, et al. 2008; Kirst, 2000; Patton et al., 2001; Sizer, 2002, 2003). One thing is clear: following the “proven model” is not working.

Chester E. Finn Jr. the President of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation has said, “It’s like saying we have to fix global warming or obesity. From 30,000 feet, you can easily agree there’s a problem, but the closer you get to it, the more you can see that different people’s views of the essence of the problem and the solution are very, very different” (Olson, 2005, p.1). Whether one asks a group of seniors, watches the effects of “senioritis,” or reads through the literature, it is apparent that the current mode of presenting high school courses to students in their last year of high school is not effective in high school or in preparation for postsecondary opportunities (Adams, 2012b; Adelman, 2006; Eaton & Nelson, 2007; Kirst, 2004;). Nancy Faust Sizer and her husband Theodore R. Sizer have approached this subject for many years, publishing many papers that have influenced the field of high school redesign specific to the senior year (Sizer, 1992; Sizer, 2002; Sizer, 2003).

In 2003, Sizer stated that:

After their formal record or college applications had been sent to other places, it was as if their lives had also flown out the door. Their purposes for the academic part of high school were declared to be over, and that included all other people in high school except their closest friends. They avoided classes that were likely to be demanding, and even if they took demanding classes, these seniors were listless, bored, unprepared for class, and, if asked about it, downright rude (p. 24).

In their work as guidance counselors at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, Dries and Rehage (2008a) found a similar theme. The themes in which they embedded their work were

that students were bored, desired independence, required a voice in what they learned, a need for more interaction with adults. Dries and Rehage's findings led them to create a site specific solution based on what the research suggested would be best at their school.

Student disengagement is not limited to a specific demographic of the population; rather, senior students in general struggle to stay engaged. "Even the students most committed to the system, the college-bound, often view the senior year, particularly the second semester, as a 'blow-off' time" (Conley, 2001, p. 27). In addition, those students who are the highest achievers often take course loads which "recreate" the first year in college, require 180 six-hour school days, and in some cases still require four years in high school which does little more than frustrate students, and form a "high achiever" disconnect from the senior year.

In addition to being an American problem, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2003) reported that student disengagement is an international problem (Mitra & Gross, 2009). The problem of high school disengagement isn't just for rich white kids in the United States, it's for everyone. Educators must be aware that students across the academic and socio-economic spectrum are disengaged, not just those who are routinely labeled "at risk." Schools must be aware that the problem of academic disengagement is as much a part of the lives of the best students as is often treated acceptable among the least successful students.

There are many things which cause students to lose interest in school. Among the somewhat tertiary items which impact engagement are losing opportunities to participate on competitive athletic teams, or to have access to voluntary participation in clubs. There are also more significant examples of things which cause students to lose interest in school, such as, dangerous hallways, a lack of safety in the school setting, poor student and teacher interactions, poor facilities, insufficient access to technology, or even disinteresting curricular choices. Some

of these items can be mitigated however, by allowing for, and providing access for students to participate in the life of the school by listening to their ideas about the school. Mitra and Gross (2009) found that students “not only wanted to be heard as individuals, but also as a group” (p. 526) and that students can easily describe learning experiences that they value the most. When students are not given valid opportunities to participate in the life of their school, and then are not given opportunities to help improve the school problems of disengagement are exacerbated. Mitra (2008) posits that high that high schools continue to isolate, alienate, and disengage students and proposes that educators listen closely to what students say about their school experiences. This process of listening can benefit the work of school leaders as they work to understand topics or problems when working to redesign schools.

The idea that student voice should influence school leaders is somewhat new to the work and planning done in schools. In general, teacher’s associations, school boards, chambers of commerce, and school administrators leave out the ideas of students. Smyth and McInerey (2012) emphasized the contradiction school leaders expose themselves to when making decisions about schools and students, comparing schools to a court room where the most important witnesses are ignored, rather than allowed to give witness to needed change. It is important to understand the ideas that students have for our schools and allow for sitting juniors and seniors, as well as recent graduates, to help create a vision for local decisions and options for high school redesign.

When Dreis and Rehage (2008b) asked students at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois about the things they were experiencing, they found that students were “bored with familiar school routines” while acknowledging “uncertainty and confusion about their future.” Seniors had a desire for “greater independence, new experiences, a voice in what they learned, an opportunity to lead and give back to the community, more interaction with adults, and connections with the

real world” (p.17). It is within the realm of influence for school leaders to create avenues for students to develop unique education plans which lessen this sense of boredom, and allow for independence, yet are still manageable in their structure.

In a chapter entitled “Senioritis,” Sizer (2002) shares the stories and ideas of several students who give in to feelings of victory or defeat depending on the arrival of college acceptance letters in the fall of the senior year. Students stop applying themselves to academic endeavors as their feelings concerning the irrelevance of their high school responsibilities increase. Many college going seniors have their college decisions made before the fall semester of their senior year is over. Students without postsecondary plans disengage over unease about life after graduation, while others are even fearful about what lies ahead. Sizer writes that student opinions vary from feelings that they “deserve a break,” to feeling “just worn out,” to even being disappointed with themselves (p.137).

The National Commission on the High School Senior Year (Patton, 2001) agrees that the most common definition for lack of academic intensity in the senior year is “senioritis,” and that “there is little sense of the final year as a time to strengthen skills, enhance preparation for postsecondary programs, broaden experiences to include service or demanding work-based learning, or culminate earlier classroom experience” (p. 28). Because of senioritis during the senior year of high school, and witnessed in vignettes presented by Dries and Rehage (2011), Kirst (2000), Sizer (2002), Patton (2001), and others, high schools are looking for ways to improve engagement during the final year of high school.

This truth is based in part on a lack of academic intensity in the senior year (and some would suggest, the entire high school experience) in what Kirst calls “a disconnect” between high school and postsecondary opportunities (Kirst, 2004, p.52). Students see neither the value in what

they have done, nor what they are doing, and fail to see how what is happening in the high school classroom will pay dividends beyond graduation. Informal conversations with recent graduates and current seniors from Homestead High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, suggest that the findings by Dries and Rehage (2008a, 2008b, 2011) are not stand alone comments. The writers continue to report that:

Seniors did not just gripe. They had some pretty compelling ideas about what would make senior year more meaningful. Many expressed interest in learning about topics, issues and concerns that were relevant to the adult world they were about to enter...seniors shared the concern that they might not be prepared to interact in the diverse society that awaits them beyond high school (Dreis & Rehage, 2011, p.10).

Similar thoughts written by Henriksen, Stichter, Stone and Wagoner (2008) suggest that there are three major concerns about the traditional senior year: the “senior year lacks rigor, it fails to provide students with clear pathways to work and postsecondary education and it doesn’t prepare students for a successful transition from high school to post-secondary experiences” (p.34). Among the findings published by Bottoms and Young (2005) include the negative impact created by increased content level expectations that now require schools to offer Algebra II for all students, mandate four years of English with a researched paper in each of the four years of high school, and fully aligned mathematics curriculums that tie math concepts to real world applications. By accelerating the level of academic intensity, and by trying to create high schools that are more rigorous than ever before we have inadvertently turned a large number of students off to academic pursuits. A simple example of this accelerated learning experience can be seen in the expectations and requirements in content-area writing. There was a time when the high school experience included a written composition in the senior year. Later, the expectation for written work became a significant written research paper in each of the four years of high school English. Today it is not uncommon for high school students to complete more written essays, and research papers in a

combination of science, social studies, and English courses during their freshman years than what their parents completed in an entire high school career during the 1980s and 1990s. The authors suggest that the senior year be used to transition students to postsecondary educational opportunities and the world of work, but now schools require “college-ready seniors to earn college-level credits in academic and career/technical courses to jump start their postsecondary studies” (Bottoms & Young, 2005, p.4).

Options for change

Bill Daggett, Founder and Chairman of the International Center for Leadership in Education, is quoted as saying:

The nature of change for school improvement is that it must be unique to local needs, forged through consensus, and built upon the unique strengths of each school. There is no one single solution to improving all schools, no recipe with a list of ingredients or simple steps. The goal is not to make every school the same, but to enable each school to construct its own solutions (Daggett, 2008, p.6).

There appears to be no best solution even with the current trend toward “best practice.” That said, Daggett has crafted a rigor and relevance framework and definitions of such that are useful for schools when defining who they are at the local level. Among Daggett’s (2014) important definitions are the categories of evaluation, synthesis, analysis, application, comprehension, and knowledge awareness that include increasing levels of thinking, with descriptions of increasingly complex applications of knowledge. Although Daggett’s categories are useful, they do not solve the problem of poor student engagement. At many high schools, opportunities for rigorous study are not lacking. It is apparent, however, that the individual relevance to students is lacking, and that their senior year often lacks academic intensity because the courses students are taking no longer have relevant connections to student’s lives after high school (i.e. the world of work, college or university study, etc.).

Some of the most important recommendations made to educators related to the senior year can be found in the final report by Patton, et al. (2001) for the National Commission on the High School Senior Year. This 56-page document makes many suggestions for improving the senior year and how high schools can be changed to meet the needs of graduates. Included in the Commission's recommendations are the use of alternative schedules, expanding opportunities for high school students to experience college-level work, creating virtual high schools, provide service learning and/or internship experiences as well as other suggestions. All of these proposed options for change come in the form of broad suggestions with a good deal of room for local decision making. "The Commission also believes there is a great deal to be said for creating multiple new structures for the last two years of high school, developing demanding mechanisms to help students prepare for further learning or work" (Patton, et al., 2001, p.31). Creativity at the local level is retained, and even encouraged. The commissions list of possible solutions is not exclusive, nor is it inclusive of potential combinations and permutations which may serve to be viable solutions in local school settings.

Many states looking to make changes have followed Patton's ideas. Among other changes, many states have mandated access to dual credit courses. Adams (2012b) cited many individual changes in state statutes that include increased access to dual credit or early college options. In 2008, Iowa passed the Iowa Senior Year Plus Act, which was designed to fund and encourage dual enrollment options. In 2011, Washington state passed the Launch Year Act which provided high school students with opportunities to earn a full year of postsecondary credit that can be applied toward a range of options including certifications, apprenticeships, technical degrees, associates', or bachelors' degrees. In 2010, Idaho created the Mastery Advancement Pilot Program, which incentivised students in select districts to graduate early by offering students \$1,500 for each

semester they graduated early, with the money to be spent at a public college or university in Idaho. (Adams, 2012a). In 2011, both Indiana and Minnesota initiated early graduation scholarships (Adams, 2012a) called the Mitch Daniels Early Graduation Scholarship and the Early Graduation Achievement Act respectively. These legislative initiatives served to accelerate the rate at which high school students leave school before the traditional senior year is over.

Consistent with my earlier discussion, many students want to experience changes in the way the school day looks and functions for seniors. Some schools have capitalized on gaps in programming and have already started making changes. Hendrikson et al. (2008) write about Malcolm Price Laboratory School's Northern University High School in Cedar Falls, Iowa, which has specific options available to seniors that give them more autonomy than under classmen. Examples include flexible scheduling, dual enrollment courses, internships, and service learning opportunities. These options, along with others, permit students to personalize their learning experiences and the shape of their school day mirroring "the schedule flexibility of most postsecondary experiences and gives them the opportunity to develop and refine their time management skills, organizational skills, and independent decision making skills" (p.37). Wade (1999) reported that Woodlands High School in Hartsdale, New York, had created a program called the Woodlands Individualized Senior Experience, known as WISE. This program was designed to allow students to replace seat time with student designed learning opportunities as a part of students' senior year. Interestingly, WISE started in 1971, suggesting that the supposed "senior slump" of today is no new thing, but rather likely to be something that each generation experiences.

"In the agricultural age, postsecondary education was a pipe dream for most Americans. In the industrial age it was the birthright of only a few. By the space age, it became common for

many. Today, it is just common sense for all” (Patton et al., 2001). The 2001 final report from the National Commission on the Senior Year cites some very interesting things regarding the need for change. In that report, the Commission wrote that dual enrollment options “should be encouraged” and went on to suggest that:

One of the paradoxes with which the Commission struggled is that K-12 and postsecondary education institutions frequently find themselves doing each other’s job...in effect, the Commission believes it is time to accommodate institutional theory to institutional reality. If students are ready for post-secondary work by the age of 16 or 17, they should be encouraged to pursue it (Patton, et al., 2001, p.33).

So what might this look like for students and for schools? Bailey and Karp’s (2003) review of credit-based transition programs for the U.S. Department of Education creates a rationale for “credit-based transition programs.”

- Prepare students for the academic rigors of college.
- Provide more realistic information to students about the skills that they will need to succeed in college.
- Help high school faculty prepare their students for the college experience.
- Expose traditionally non-college-bound students to college.
- Provide curricular options for students
- Improve motivation through high expectations.
- Lower the cost of postsecondary education for students.
- Promote institutional relationships between colleges and high schools. (p.3-4)

Robertson (2005) suggests that ideas such as Bailey and Karp’s “reflect a growing consensus: Rather than sorting college-bound students from the non-college bound, as they traditionally have done, high schools ought to prepare each and every student for postsecondary education and training” (p.48). If it is true that students who earn 20 or more college credits by

the end of their freshman year in a postsecondary institution are demonstrably more likely to graduate, then why not accelerate the process, with high school support, during the high school years (Adelman, 2005)?

Improving College Preparation by Changing the Model in High School

Conley (2007, 2010, 2012) provides a framework for defining what college readiness means. The schools studied for this paper have chosen to pursue change in curriculum delivery by offering courses and frameworks specific to the senior year as a means to meet immediate building level secondary educational needs. These changes provide an additional benefit to students by preparing them more sufficiently for life in the world of work or at postsecondary institutions. Conley's framework of expectations defines whether a student is college or career ready and consists of four "keys." Students should have key cognitive strategies that are required to do college level academic work. Students need key content knowledge that Conley refers to as foundational content, as well as technical knowledge and skills which lead to careers. Students must also have the ability to set goals, manage their time, show persistence, be self-aware, be able to monitor their own progress, collaborate with others, and possess certain study skills. Conley refers to these abilities as learning skills and techniques. Lastly, Conley speaks specifically about students needing the transitional skills that will place them in line for higher education or specific career pathways. These key transition knowledge attributes and skills are the aptitudes and abilities students need to take courses in high school that will prepare them for college level academic life, focus on a major in college, understand college-level norms, and learn how to advocate for themselves (Conley, 2012).

There are other ideas and frameworks that define college and career readiness that school leaders may consider. The College Readiness Indicator Systems (CRIS) initiative (Barsato,

Nagaoka & Foley, 2013) claims to link “a vision for college readiness” to a multi-layered tool for measuring indicators of readiness, support available for students, and potential interventions to support students (p. 29). CRIS suggests that academic content preparation alone is not enough to project success in postsecondary education. The CRIS model includes student attitudes “necessary to access college and be successful once in college” (p. 30).

Barsato, Nagaoka, & Foley (2013) discuss a three-part design element unique to CRIS and explain it as the individual (student) setting, the setting (school), and system (district) setting. On the individual setting level, student success indicators measure students’ “personal progress” toward college readiness. Setting level indicators measure “resources and opportunities for students provided by their schools.” The system level focuses on district level policy, funding, and the availability of academic supports such as access to guidance counselors and professional development for teachers (p.32). The CRIS framework ties all of the items above into a “cycle of inquiry” process, which ostensibly identifies students who need help, enables stakeholders at the setting and system level to promote college readiness, and helps leaders create effective ways for using data and indicators. The CRIS model promotes itself as being adaptable to the local setting, making it unique in each instance.

It must be explained that any framework claiming to predict postsecondary readiness, college or otherwise, cannot measure all that determines student success. There are many factors that cannot be measured with test scores or other metrics. College and career readiness assessments, regardless of design cannot take into account the varied circumstances and dispositions that affect student’s success or lack thereof. Institutional factors, non-academic factors, and financial factors impact whether a student is “ready” for postsecondary life (Camara, 2013).

Understanding Conley's (2012) college readiness framework, influenced by Camara's (2013) notions that tests do not easily predict student postsecondary outcomes, and applying Christensen's (2013) understanding of frameworks for change led me personally to look at dual credit options where students earn college credit. At the same time, students can earn high school credit as a way to enhance their knowledge acquisition, increase the level of academic intensity experienced, improve the student's sense of relevance for their future, and boost the high school student to be better prepared for the academic intensity and needs of postsecondary education after graduation from high school.

The literature on dual credit (also known in various forms as co-credit, dual enrollment, or early college) is abundant and consistently finds the benefits for students to be significant (Allen & Dadgar, 2012; An, 2013, 2015; Andrews, 2000; Bailey & Karp, 2003). Dual credit courses require a memorandum of understanding between schools and higher education, and are often used to promote academically challenging course work to students who might otherwise not consider themselves potential college students. Dual credit can refer to courses taken on the high school campus or to courses taken on a college campus during the high school day. Dual credit can also include an exit exam that verifies the college credit earning potential of a course taken or the grade the student earned serves as the determinant for earning college credit (Cassidy, Keating, & Young, 2010). Pursuing the framework provided by Conley (2012), there appear to be several themes that suggest dual credit arrangements improve student learning. The first of these is increased engagement during the senior year of high school.

As noted above in the work of Dries and Rehage (2008a), Sizer (1992, 2002, 2003), and Hendrikson, et al (2008), the level of engagement in the senior year must be addressed. This level of engagement/disengagement and the term "senioritis" is not new in our educational vocabulary.

It is safe to say that nearly all educators, and nearly all Americans who are in high school, or have graduated from high school understand the term.

In addition to addressing the level of engagement in the senior year a second emerging theme is that of the transition from high school to college. Students making the transition from high school to college often leave their high school environment with little understanding of what it is they will encounter in college. Students participating in dual credit programs are provided opportunities to transition from high school to college more smoothly and have a better understanding of what the academic life will be like in college, compared to their peers who have not been in dual credit programs (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2002; Karp, 2012). In addition, An (2015), citing Mortimer and Simmons (1978), writes that as a rule, high school student's perception of what a college student life is like does not always square with reality. An continues by positing that dual credit courses taken in high school help students learn normative rules and behaviors for what it means to be a college student, thereby improving potential outcomes upon matriculating to postsecondary opportunities. Students taking dual credit courses in high school receive an additional benefit in that they "have the opportunity to replace their vague notions of college with a more realistic set of expectations" (An, 2012, p.411). Writing extensively on the topic of dual credit, An (2015) cites multiple sources related to the benefits of dual credit (An calls it dual enrollment) in helping students improve outcomes in college by helping them understand the social systems, academic dynamics of higher education, and moving away from home.

Dual credit programs also have been linked to academic success once students begin their college studies. An (2012), citing others (Allen & Dadgar, 2012; Karp, et al. 2007; Swanson, 2008) states that studies show "that students who participated in dual enrollment are more successful academically in college than those who did not participate in these programs. Researchers find that

participation in dual enrollment is positively related to college GPA, persistence, and degree attainment” (p.411). If the goal of high school is preparation for college or life after high school, then a program that does exactly that must be addressed.

Clearly there are significant opportunities to create a new and more vibrant senior experience. There are high schools creating changes in the senior year that can benefit the local school community (thus informing options for change among a wider range of possibilities), while meeting the educational needs of students more effectively. This review of literature helped to solidify a desire for further study encompassing the need to make the final year of high school more rigorous and relevant, providing an appropriate level of academic intensity for all students.

The results of this study have provided insight into the range of desired changes in the education of seniors in high school, but also have provided a new understanding of what a mature student is looking for in his or her educational experiences. If time is truly being wasted how are high school principals adjusting content delivery and educational experiences to better meet the needs of students? There are undoubtedly difficulties in creating effective change in local schools. Why are principals choosing (if they choose to make changes at all) the processes and strategies they are using at the local level?

The Principal’s Role in Reform and Redesign

An (2013, 2015), Allen & Dadgar (2012), and Adelman (2006) have shown that offering dual credit can improve outcomes for college bound students. There is a gap, however, because those are all content based improvements. Yes, students earn college credit. However, students are still in class 180 days a year. One essentially takes academically challenging high school courses and earns college credit. This is an improvement for students, but is not a cure. Dual credit is not drastically different than what students already have access to. In most cases students can already

take academically rigorous courses if they want to. Dual credit helps incentivize taking rigorous course work but it does not change the senior experience itself. The next step in that line in thinking should focus on how principals can reform the senior year, building on dual credit, dual enrollment, internships, vocational training, work experiences, etc., to move beyond mere curriculum based improvements, making the goal improvement of the whole student as opposed simply as an academic student.

Principal leadership in instructional improvement and change has been found to be key to the long term success of change within schools (Neumerski, 2013). There is a great deal of literature on how successful principals lead and assist students to achieve and teachers to improve instruction. Robinson (2010) identified interrelated skill sets that are essential for school leaders to exhibit in order to be successful: Using deep leadership content knowledge to solve complex school-based problems, while building relational trust with staff, parents, and students. A similar set of understandings is presented by Fullan (2014) in his three keys to maximizing the principal's impact on a school. These three keys are leading learning, being a district and system player, and becoming a change agent. In addition, many writers have approached the topics of improving classroom instruction through the notion of the principal as instructional leader. The term "transformational leadership" is often used to describe traits and dispositions of the best leaders' schools have to offer, but transformational leadership is largely about how leaders influence others to during the process of leading, and is not specific to a time or place, or item to be influenced. Hallinger (2003), citing Edmonds (1979) and Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) writes that strong directive leadership focuses on "curriculum and instruction." Hallinger states that "transformational leadership focuses on developing the organization's capacity to innovate" (p.

330). Innovations, or what I would call redesign, are not mentioned outside of curriculum and instruction.

Other writers will build their work around the necessary skill sets principals need to be effective, routinely coming back to the important elements of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. But there is more to school leadership than just these elements of work. The literature leaves out the very real need for creative principals to innovate, and to create new forms and structures of content delivery. There is a big difference between modifying a curriculum and redesigning an entire senior experience, and here the literature is lacking.

Scribner and Crow (2012) remind us that the skills and dispositions stated by Robinson, Fullan, and others come to bear in a work environment where “schools have become more complex...requiring rapid responses to individual problems and the ability to address constantly changing demands from a diverse, dynamic environment” (p.245). Maintaining momentum while creating change can be difficult and must be done with care. Levin and Datnow (2012) found that data driven reform efforts initiated by principals often lead to some early changes in schools, however, the culture of the school and the power of individuals within the school often fight against such changes. Consequently, the institution “self-repairs” over time, leaving only minor lasting changes. Although Levin and Datnow’s work speaks directly to data driven reforms, their findings have application across the field of school reform, with extensions to how leaders successfully redesign the work done in schools in general. Among their findings, Levin and Datnow state that “while principals play an active role in site leadership, there are also other actors who play important roles in the co-construction of the reform” (p. 12). Finding themselves sitting directly between district level administrators and teachers, while simultaneously answering to a Board and functioning under state mandates, administrators attempt to create new contexts for students

learning. Knowing this, principals must understand that their work in redesigning new options for students will come under scrutiny from many sectors. Levin and Datnow (2012) found that principals work in relationship to others and influence student learning while “mediating” policy, influencing teaching and learning, setting school specific policy and practice, not all of which is supported by stakeholders of various kinds.

Principals also struggle against a political and media machine that demands “accountability” and has over time created a structure within which principals have multiple layers of constituents to please in order to maintain their positions as school leaders. Cohen (2014) identifies some of the conflicting goals that leaders must work to meet: state-mandated performance targets, school rankings, the call for continuous improvement, and college and career readiness (among other things). The different objectives often leave principals unwilling or unable to see how creative thinking approaches can improve the learning environment for students, which Cohen calls “the less measurable dimensions of schooling” (p. 2).

The presence of an effective principal or other school leaders in leading site-specific redesign directed specifically at improving student engagement in the senior year is largely left unmentioned in the literature. The literature reinforces the overwhelming importance of the principal as leader in general, while noting the disincentives to working as a change agent created by potential failure (Cheng, 2003; Hallinger, 2005; Harris, 2013; Starr, 2011).

Summary

After reviewing the literature, questions arose as to why the literature does not address the change that is already happening in schools across the country, and specifically in Indiana. The role of the principal in driving paradigms of change appear to be missing from the literature on high school redesign and the senior year. In fact, informal conversations with school leaders

reinforce Schlechy's (1990) thoughts about change when he said "schools are organized to maintain and defend the status quo; school systems, at least most school systems, are not organized to insure continuous improvement and development" (p. 96). Principals and school leaders have not traditionally been set loose to create systems of change or to look for new and better ways of doing things. Recent school reform movements reinforce a lack of creativity and unique solution ideation by trying to standardize procedures, curriculum, content delivery. Adherence to federal and state mandates such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Adequate Yearly Progress, or PL221 have increased testing at every level of schooling and the use of data to determine whether schools pass or fail (Cheng 2003; Hallinger 2005; Harris 2013; Starr 2011). In addition, teacher practice and individual teachers, often band together to slow change, rather than allow for change (Cuban, 2013).

The purpose of this review was to closely examine the literature related to school reform specific to the senior year. Common themes found throughout the literature focus on student attitudes about the relevance of their high school studies, students' desires to be treated like older adults, students' desires to study rigorous and useful material (as measured by their postsecondary goals), as well as the way adult educators view student work ethic and buy-in during the senior year of high school.

School leaders must see themselves as change agents placed in a position to create better learning environments for their students, in site-specific ways, within the means of the local community. Creative solutions to ongoing problems must be addressed. If not given "free reign" to truly be disruptive and create on a "new canvas," then school leaders must find ways to create models for change with sustainable futures within the constructs of their local framework. It is not important that all schools remodel their buildings, eliminate successful existing programs, or do

things that the local community will not support, but rather schools can create new models of the senior year that better meet the educational realities our students face in their futures beyond high school.

To understand the role of the principal one must be vigilant in asking questions and studying what is happening in local schools. The principal must take the lead in asking the right questions, connecting the right dots, and placing the right people in places where change will work for the local school, while enhancing student experiences. Studies with respect to the role of the principal and the role of student voice in creating change to improve educational outcomes will become more and more important in public education.

This study presents the idea of the principal as one who leads redesign efforts relative to the senior year and site specific decision making processes that may work locally, but not necessarily at all schools. By site-specific, I mean that leaders must look at the talents available within the school, the dispositions of potential leaders, the availability of partnerships, physical plant constraints, the availability of student voice, and board approval and trust, to create new paradigms for learners and school communities. If schools are to better meet the needs of students, we must move beyond mere changes in curriculum and provide principals with the tools to fight through the political machine to create real change. In future studies, sustainability of change will be an issue that will need to be addressed.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This qualitative study investigates the lived experiences of high school principals as they work to create site-specific solutions to improve the senior experiences of the students in the high schools they serve. It is my hope that this work will also encourage creative solutions at the local level by engendering collaborative conversations that will empower leaders to increase the relevance of the senior year by increasing academic options for students. The specific characteristics of the study encompass the experiences of principals doing the work of high school redesign and studies the similarities and differences between school locations to better understand the options principals are pursuing to create improved learning experiences for students. Using the work of Clayton Christensen as a framework, this study assesses principal perceptions as to whether the changes made in their school are truly disruptive innovations, or rather sustaining innovations as suggested in the work of Christensen, Horn, & Johnson (2008).

Research Questions

1. What types of changes are high school principals implementing when redesigning the senior year experiences for students?
2. How are high school principals making decisions about their high school redesign initiatives?
3. What difficulties do high school principals face when implementing their high school redesign initiatives?

This qualitative study includes the identification and interviews of three current high school principals in Indiana who have completed or are in the midst of high school redesign, specific to the senior year. Each principal was interviewed two times with initial interviews completed on-site, and secondary interviews completed electronically. Initial interviews were constrained by a

structured interview guide limited to a 40-minute time period. Interviews consisted of a question and answer format, using a multiple-case study report broken down to single cases, presented in separate sections (Yin, 2014). Secondary interviews were three questions in length and completed to enhance reliability of final reporting by asking probing questions to create clarity and elicit detail not evident in the initial interview. Participants were also provided the opportunity to read and verify initial observations and transcribed notes after each interview. High school principals were selected using purposeful sampling (Yin, 2011) by looking specifically at whether or not the principals are leading the work of redesigning the senior year, or have done so at the schools they serve. This information is detailed below in the Research Design, Participants, and Outcomes section of the paper. Results from this study provide guidance for current and future school leaders considering high school redesign projects for their schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how high school principals in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences as a means to increasing student engagement and making the senior year more valuable for students. Among the mechanisms expected to be reported as used by principals to create change were the use of creative scheduling, physical plant construction, dual credit opportunities, internship and work opportunities, other curricular program changes, and changes in seat time requirements created by changes in state law to better meet the needs of learners. The research in this study resulted in providing insight and furthering the conversation about what a valid high school experience in the 21st century should look like for students in Indiana.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this research study is based on Christensen, Horn, Johnson, and Staker's work that separates the innovative nature of change into two forms: disruptive innovations and sustaining innovations (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008; Christensen, Horn, & Staker, 2013). Nearly all people are aware to one degree or another that education in general has been under great scrutiny from politicians, the business community, the news media, or from community constituents for a number of years. An overview of the literature on the subject also shows that a great deal of time and energy has gone into looking at, and for, models of change. Whether we choose to make changes that are truly innovative, or merely adjust the norm to give the appearance of significant change is important.

Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2008) created a framework for understanding change in all forms, but they also narrowed the topic to the work done in schools. In his most recent work, Christensen et al. (2013) write on the difference between sustaining innovations and disruptive innovations, stating that both kinds are valid, serve a purpose, and lead to differing results. Disruptive innovations fundamentally change the way products or educational experiences are developed or presented. An example of a disruptive innovation might be an alternative school that provides learning experiences in an experiential manner, where seat time is not a factor, and course "classes" are completed upon mastery of content and skills, rather than when the traditional semester calendar says so. A sustaining innovation is any new process, procedure, hardware, or idea that "tweaks" an existing school such that the organization functions much like it always has, looks much like it always did, and the school remains basically unchanged, with the same calendars and processes as always. According to Christensen et al., truly disruptive innovations create new markets (schools), which tend to remove or take over existing structures, eliminating that which was once dominant. In contrast, a sustaining innovation is one that does not make new markets

(or models of schools), but rather takes existing structures and makes changes that create better versions of existing paradigms. The changes we see in the majority of schools today fall into Christensen, Horn, Johnson, and Staker's sustaining innovation paradigm because schools seek to serve existing customers (students, communities, and teachers) with a better product, not by completely disrupting the nature of content delivery and education of students.

By its nature, change requires a move away from an old form of being, to a new form of doing. This research project uses Christensen, Horn, Johnson, and Staker's definitions for innovation types as a guideline for developing the interview protocol and as a lens through which to analyze the data, looking at the nature of change principals in Indiana are creating. Using an interview protocol with participants helped to determine whether principals have harnessed frameworks for change that can be characterized by Christensen, Horn, Johnson, and Staker's description of a disruptive innovation or if their work could be more easily described as being a sustaining innovation.

Research Design, Participants, and Outcomes

The research design for this project was an exploratory multiple-case study design, using interviews with three high school principals who are leading change in their schools at high performing high schools in Indiana. Multiple-case study design was chosen because it allows for both individual case studies and cross-case comparison (Yin, 2014). The multiple-case study design allowed the researcher to study cases to learn more about the issue and draw conclusions that help inform the work of others (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The exploratory nature of this study allows the researcher to explain how principals working to redesign the senior year experiences for students arrived at decisions. Initial interviews were constrained by a structured interview guide (Appendix A) during 40-minute interviews with each principal. Follow-up

interviews consisting of 3 questions (Appendix B) were completed online to bring clarity to initial responses. The purpose of this design is to gather as much data as possible while providing a consistent framework to structure findings around while creating a validating procedure whereby the participants in the study reviewed draft findings, providing “member checks” to enhance validity. Completed interviews demonstrate how high school principals use site specific constructs and information to implement locally successful high school redesign initiatives for the senior year. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The use of exploratory multiple-case study design as described by Yin (2014) was used and is a viable research method when: (1) the main research questions are “how” or “why” questions; (2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events; and (3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon (p.2). Interviews concentrated on principals working within local constructs and limitations and how those constructs and limitations do or do not (did or did not) limit the level of innovation created, whether sustaining or disruptive in nature. Post interview processes included the coding of individual responses on their own merit, then moved to a process whereby each response is analyzed to determine how the response relates to a disruptive or sustaining innovation framework. After coding all sets of individual principal interviews cross case analysis of the principal interviews was completed. After both interviews were completed a validating procedure occurred whereby the participants in the study reviewed draft findings, providing “member checks” to enhance validity. There are challenges to the usefulness of applying member checks in qualitative research (Thomas, 2017). Kornbluh (2015) asserts that member checks increase researcher trustworthiness by detecting biases, increase the accuracy of participant narratives, and provide additional opportunities for the researcher to gather additional results while developing deeper understanding of respondent

responses. In addition, Lo (2014) maintains that member checks can be used to enhance the conceptual accuracy of a study.

An abridged outline of the methodology as described in Yin (2014) can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Outline of methodology for multiple case study design with individual and cross-case comparison

Order of operations	
1.	Purposeful sampling to determine participants
2.	First round of interviews of participant's audio recorded
3.	Interviews transcribed
4.	Open coding of individual participant responses
5.	Responses analyzed to determine how response relates to disruptive or sustaining innovation framework
6.	Participants given opportunity to review draft findings, providing member checks
7.	Second round of interviews used to clarify findings
8.	Final findings published

Site and Participant Selection

High school principals were selected using purposeful sampling by looking specifically for three current high school principals in Indiana who have completed or are in the midst of high school redesign, specific to the senior year. Purposive sampling techniques (Coyne, 1978; Harsh, 2011, Patton, 1990) were chosen to ensure the schools selected met the prescribed criteria. The method of purposeful sampling popularized by Patton (1990) provided “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p.169). Names of potential participants were elicited with the help of the Indiana Association of School Principals, information from personnel working with the Indiana Educational Service Centers, and by networking with peers and superintendents in the state. Only high performing schools of similar demographic backgrounds were included in the purposeful sample. This decision was made because of how the

State of Indiana determines “A” graded schools, and how those “A” schools have statutory freedom to do things other schools cannot do. For example, under Ind. Code 20-24.2-4-2 a qualified high school (an “A” school) is not required to provide at least 180 days of instruction, thus allowing that school freedoms that other schools do not have.

As stated above, three high school principals in the state of Indiana were identified for interview purposes concerning high school redesign and the senior year. Written permission to conduct the research was obtained from each individual principal. Purdue University IRB approval was obtained prior to starting the study. The principal interviews involved three high school principals from high performing Indiana high schools of similar demographics. The guided interview approach including scripted questions allows the research to enter the interview with a “plan to explore specific topics and to ask specific open-ended questions of the interviewee” while providing the opportunity to have a “relatively unstructured interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p.233).

The contribution this exploratory multiple-case study makes toward high school redesign and the senior year in Indiana is to the extent that it is able to inform creative, site-specific solutions for high school seniors, encourage high school redesign in general, and help high school principals consider options for local change in their communities. The hope is that individual case-studies and multiple-case study and ideas specific to the principals interviewed can engender new ideas and help illicit planning and changes in other Indiana high schools.

Data Analysis

The purpose of open coding is to find common themes in the open-ended responses of the principals. Explanation building techniques were used to compare the three cases. Using Yin (2014) as a guide for this multiple case study, developing themes and consistent responses from

the interviews led to assertions regarding the role of the principal in site specific high school redesign and the senior year. The result of this study is a general explanation “that fits each individual case, even though the cases will vary in their details. The objective is analogous to creating an overall explanation, in science, for the findings from multiple experiments” (Yin, 2014, p.148). The main objective of finding the common themes in qualitative analysis is to identify similarities or differences, developing themes as one works the process. “With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns, or wholes” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 107).

Transcribed interviews were created as a tool to assist with text analysis (see below for details about the transcription process). Once meaningful patterns emerged in the data, descriptions and more complete explanations were made. An inductive strategy as described by Yin (2014) was used and then organized around the conceptual framework provided by Christensen et al. (2008, 2013) as defined by disruptive or sustaining innovations, as well as emergent categories found while coding.

Summary

The findings in this multiple case study can be used to show commonalities and differences in how high school principals are doing the work of high school redesign in Indiana, which in turn, can create opportunities to demonstrate transferable behaviors and decisions in non-participating Indiana high schools. The goal of this study was to describe how high school principals in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences as a means to increasing student engagement and making the senior year more valuable for students.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The research for this study was conducted in September and December 2017 by interviewing three high school principals who lead high performing high schools in Indiana. To maintain confidentiality, each principal was given a pseudonym for his or her name and high school.

Qualitative Analysis

Participants were interviewed about their work redesigning students' experiences specific to the senior year. The interview was scripted; no participant had the questions before the interview. Each interview was recorded, and after the interviews were complete, the recordings were professionally transcribed. The transcriber who transcribed each interview signed a confidentiality agreement.

After the interviews were transcribed, each participant was given the opportunity to review the interview transcript and make suggestions and clarifications. Doing so ensured that each participant's words were interpreted correctly and that each participant was satisfied with the answers provided. Once interviews were complete and the transcriptions were finalized, the interviews were coded. Qualitative analysis of each interview was used that allowed common themes to emerge, as well as to allow for variations in response and school redesign efforts to become evident through the coding process.

Over multiple readings during the coding process, transcribed copies were analyzed and data organized. The interview process was limited to the scripted questions; however, the participants' answers varied in the depth of response and the areas of interest based on the interviewee's personal experiences. Despite the differences in answers, the qualitative analysis

performed allowed common themes to develop. The qualitative analysis also allowed variations in answers to shed light on the senior year redesign process. Figures 1 through 3 below represent initial interview responses, as well as a narrative concerning the interviews that follows.

Chapter 4 of this paper is a record of the interviews and conversations completed with participants, and is dedicated to labeling concepts, observing and categorizing commonalities and differences, and developing themes evident in the success and struggles of high school principals leading the work of high school redesign specific to the senior year. As written previously, the purpose of this study is to describe how principals in high schools in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences to increase student engagement and to make the senior year more valuable. This research project thus encourages creative solutions at the local level by engendering collaborative conversations that will empower leaders to increase the relevance of the senior year by increasing options for students.

Open Coding for High School Principal Interview 1

Table 1 represents the open coding for Question 1 of the first interview, which asked participants: (1) “What specific changes have you made to your school in the process of redesigning senior year experiences for students?”; (2) “How have you altered the daily schedule or individual schedules for students?”; (3) “How have you enhanced academic offerings?”; (4) “Have there been changes to rules and expectations specific to seniors in your school?”; and (5) “Have there been changes made to the physical plant in any way that have augmented redesign efforts?” Following each table is a synopsis in paragraph form of the items contained within the table.

Table 2

Open coding chart for Principal Interview Question 1.

Principal #1 Mr. Butler	Principal #2 Mrs. Ireland	Principal #3 Mr. Meyer
<p>Specific changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building added onto in 2009-2010 -Plans changed over time, eliminating expected partnerships, eliminating senior only library, staffing -School within-a-school -1 to 1 computing -physical space...teachers stay there...senior focused -Senior wing “ramped up” the Advanced Placement and dual credit -Over 30 AP courses now -Increased “rigor” -Increase in Academic Honors Diplomas - “two thirds” of students’ matriculate to four-year college -Add in “two-year trade” school and “85-ish percent” of students move on to “some sort of post-secondary” -The culture leading up to the senior year influences the “senior year experience” -Emphasis on academic guidance and communication with parents -Emphasis placed on blended learning classes of Econ and Government and creative scheduling related to students coming and going freely if they are in those classes 	<p>Specific changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal felt behind on some options for change because they had not qualified for high-performance waiver. -Focusing on internships - “Life-ready initiative - “a career with employability skills” - “big push right now has been in the career realm” -Increased internship experiences -meaningful and rigorous experiences - “creative as you can be within the realms you’re given” -Looking for creative ways to change the schedule for senior students -reoccurring theme of being unable to be creative due to legislative requirements, seat-time, length of day, etc. 	<p>Specific changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building a College and Career Academy (a senior wing) -Other schools had done it, and created senior only wings -Freedom created by the High Performing Schools Bill -Wanted to build a 3rd high school, but couldn’t fund it -Could have added in a traditional manner -Sought stakeholder input -Teachers least influential -Parents and community members drove curricular changes -School had been AP driven -School had been teacher, content, and test driven -Parents recognized student need to “manage their own independence” -Seat time was an obstacle -Law changed -Incentivize a more rigorous senior year -Students with four college-level classes would be considered a full day -Partnerships with post-secondary institutions -Expanding dual credit to add rigorous choices

<p>-Freedom for students to come and go differently -Flexibility for students during study hall</p> <p>Daily Schedule -No changes specific to seniors -Unique rotating schedule based on a 7 period day -Aware of unique schedules and flexibility options others are experimenting with, but not focused on it for his school -Seeks growth in CTE and internships</p> <p>Enhanced academic offerings -Springboard from the College Board to improve teaching in Honors and pre-AP courses. -Junior year is the key because of choices between AP US History and Dual Credit US History - Introduction into “what you have to do in a college-level course to be successful” -No dual credit in the junior year</p>	<p>Daily Schedule -School schedule is based on trimesters -Senior Seminar, specific to seniors. Pass/Fail course -Senior Seminar is either 1st or 5th period, thus students can come in “late” to school, or leave “early” -Senior Seminar allows students to structure their own time better, giving them freedom to make decisions</p> <p>Enhanced academic offerings -12 years ago 12 AP classes, today 32 - “Kids deserve rigor” - “I have zero prerequisites to taking an AP class” - “I don’t buy into high ability; I don’t buy into any of that stuff” - “AP for the prepared, not the elite” -Building the culture and the idea of challenge</p>	<p>parallel to existing options of AP and IB -increasing vocational options for students at regional vocational center -Flex Schedule to incentivize a more rigorous senior year. - “then alongside that is the instructional delivery piece” - “It is more project based”</p> <p>Daily Schedule -Flex Schedule: a student can “be a fully-enrolled student with just four classes” - Increased internship opportunities</p> <p>Enhanced academic offerings - “greatly expanded our college-level academic offerings” - Identifying students earlier through guidance department - Expand rigor to more than AP</p>
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<p>Rules and expectation changes - “Can’t say we’ve loosened up much”</p> <p>Changes in physical plant - “building on and the (senior only wing) helped create that school-within-a-school” idea - “physically we would not have been able to produce</p>	<p>- “the only way we know you are prepared is if you have an experience here” -Trying to build dual credit but issues of the HLC impeding progress -Thinking “curricularly” all classes support a locally created pathway -Capstone courses that lead to college credit -Working with local business partners -Does not trust the State to make appropriate changes to the diploma without damaging it and making this worse -Certifications for students in partnership with local needs -Building post-secondary opportunities -Site specific solutions -Partnerships with post-secondary institutions</p> <p>Rules and expectation changes - “Not so much rules, but definitely expectation” -Mentality change, away from entitlement</p> <p>Changes in physical plant - Currently preparing to build -Planning ahead for learning 5, 10 years from now</p>	<p>Rules and expectation changes - Treating students with more trust - There is an “internal struggle” for administrative personnel because the students have more freedom - “A lot more movement in the building now”</p> <p>Changes in physical plant - “key piece” - Changes to the physical plant are driving curricular changes now</p>
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<p>something like that (school-within-a-school)”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “All of our senior teachers are down there... (in the senior only wing)” -Not all changes well used - “project rooms” not well used -Some furniture changes -Some technology for teachers and 1 to 1 computing for students -because there a spaces available for students’ administrators are more likely to allow students to “hang out” before and after school in the senior wing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Would love the new additions to the building to allow for different scheduling, year round approaches, earlier and later days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes in the “physical environment (do) bleed over and even into your traditional environment” - Teachers approaching the principal with help designing projects, and teachers want project spaces -Increased authentic performance tasks - “Physical environment has had a nice instructional impact throughout the building” - because of the changes in the physical plant teachers and administrators see possibilities that they couldn’t see before - Changes “can’t be scripted” and you are “going to fail too”
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Responses from participating principals provide insight into how individuals assess redesign efforts (or simple change) within their schools. To varying degrees, each principal either reported making changes to the daily schedule at their school or voiced a desire to change how student schedules work within the school day. Ireland believed that her school did not qualify as a high performing school and thus had not pursued some of the options that Meyer had. And Butler had chosen to make minimal schedule changes while still emphasizing student freedom as both Ireland and Meyer have. As to the options that seniors have, all three principals described enhanced academic offerings—including Advanced Placement and dual credit offerings for seniors—while emphasizing the need to improve internship opportunities for seniors. And although none of the

participants could point to specific rule changes, all three discussed varying levels of student freedom and flexibility within the school day and promoted individual solutions built into their school culture. Finally, both Meyer and Butler acknowledged that physical changes to their school buildings were key elements in fostering change in their schools, while Ireland described changes that she hoped would grow out of a future building renovation and architectural plan. No matter the changes implemented, all three participants communicated the need to be flexible and understand that plans change over time. And because change is inevitable, all three principals emphasized that communication with community stakeholders, parents, and students is imperative in an effort to inform change.

Table 2 represents the open coding for Question 2 of the first interview, which asked participants: (1) “How did you make decisions about high school redesign initiatives in your school?”; (2) “Participants were also asked to describe their decision-making process.”; (3) “What resources and research did you consult when deciding on your high school redesign initiative?”; and (4) “Based on your experiences, in hindsight, what changes to the decision-making process would you make?”

Table 3

Open coding chart for Principal Interview Question 2.

Principal #1 Mr. Butler	Principal #2 Mrs. Ireland	Principal #3 Mr. Meyer
<p>How did you make decisions about high school redesign initiatives in your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those decisions pre-dated Mr. Butler - Influenced by another large comprehensive high school in central Indiana - Changes driven by a guidance counselor who 	<p>How did you make decisions about high school redesign initiatives in your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Stay in alignment with how do we best serve kids, what’s going to best prepare them?” - talked at length about managing student stress 	<p>How did you make decisions about high school redesign initiatives in your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “that is a wide-open question” - “you think from a vision aspect” - “I think the decision making is shaped by vision.”

<p>came from a neighboring school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I know there were teachers and there were parents, and those types involved in that decision making” - Individually, once he became principal he had conversations with others doing the work of high school redesign, however he hasn’t visited anywhere to actually see or experience the changes in place in other schools. - Relies on conversations with his own assistant principal - “the assistant principal, those teachers down there (senior teachers), I would say are the core group” - “have we had great conversations? We have not.” - Concentrating on career exploration experiences and internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talked at length about how the administrative team meets, discusses, plans - Team approach - Freedom within the team to create, and the principal oversees it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “How do we make it a more relevant and rigorous senior year for students?”
<p>Resources and research No responses</p>	<p>Resources and research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A professional learning community school - Dufour and Marzano - Accessing community stakeholders and resources - Trusts others on her team to make good decisions - Although open to “canned” programming and potential solutions, is more interested in site specific solutions - Excited about the direction and possibilities 	<p>Resources and research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Stakeholder input has been huge” - “working with (the) college community was really good in just understanding credits”

<p>In hindsight, what changes to the decision-making process would you make?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “we haven’t done a very good job at all is, what is an ongoing review of it?” - expressed need to go back and look at the “original intent” of the senior wing and determine if they need to “change and adjust with the current needs of students” - “maxed out on Advanced Placement options” - “maxed out” on offering dual credit because of teacher credentialing issues created by the HLC 	<p>of where her school is headed, but worried about political workings in pathways that “are going to jack it all up.”</p> <p>In hindsight, what changes to the decision-making process would you make?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No responses 	<p>In hindsight, what changes to the decision-making process would you make?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial plans included a stand-alone early college high school - “hit more of a sweet spot with what we are doing now” - “I think we have great room to expand and maybe, you’re never ready for things. You know, one thing I’ve learned from this is you can PD all you want to, you can vision all you want to, but unless you create the environment, it’s just like one to one devices, you can do all the PD you want, but until the kids have it in their hands, it’s not the same.” - “Until we took that leap, I don’t think we’d ever have been ready.”
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Responses from participating principals to Question 2, and clarifying questions helped provide insight into how leaders can affect the rate and direction of change. Ireland and Meyer spoke to the vision and freedom necessary to lead change. Butler, however, had not been involved in initial changes so he spoke primarily about leading from within the process. According to Butler,

the ability to effectively implement change is largely a function of assistants and other administrators in his school. Ireland and Meyer also mentioned the importance of leading others involved in the process as both referenced the need to get stakeholder input and the need to access community resources to make changes in their schools. The key response from this series of questions came from Principal Meyer when he stated that “One thing I’ve learned from this is you can PD [professional development] all you want to, you can vision all you want to, but unless you create the environment [for change] ... it’s just not the same.”

Table 3 represents the open coding for Question 3 of the first interview, which asked participants: (1) “What challenges did you encounter when implementing your redesign initiatives?”; (2) “What specific changes required promoting the idea to multiple stakeholders?”; (3) “As you have encounter difficulties which influence decisions related to redesigning the senior year, how have you adjusted processes and initial strategies for change?”; (4) “What are the most significant threats to the sustainability of your changes in senior year programming?”; (5) “How disruptive have the changes you have made in senior year programming been to the life of the school?”; and (6) “What have been the most positive and least advantageous reactions to the changes made in your school?”

Table 4

Open coding chart for Principal Interview Question 3.

Principal #1 Mr. Butler	Principal #2 Mrs. Ireland	Principal #3 Mr. Meyer
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “the haves and the have nots” created by the senior wing teachers having access to new things, better things, the “bells and whistles”, and taking a number of years to “catch up to it (the senior wing)” 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Rules, regulations, policies, one-size fits all mentality, politics, funding” - Parents - Four years ago “I learned very quickly the 140 people at the Chamber 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They were not ready to have dual credit partners like Ivy Tech at the table initially - Teacher resistance - Helping teachers be comfortable with learning on display

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal “angst between faculty and staff about what they got versus what others got” - Community very supportive of what has been done - Results have supported the focus (for change, of change) - Anecdotal data has been positive 	<p>meeting didn’t want to hear their high school principal say every kids don’t need to go to college”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breaking down misconceptions, the need for communication - “We have to get out of this notion of us telling kids what is acceptable or worthy or honorable or relevant” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Meyer himself had to get used to seeing kids “lounging in chairs and not necessarily automatically making this something that they’re not doing” - Not a lot of parent “pushback” - Helping students understand that there can be more than one answer, and more than one form of assessment - Helping parents and students understand how assessment isn’t fill in the blank or multiple choice. “If we are a risk-taking culture, if we’re a failure culture, if we’re a culture that allows teachers to teach for their strengths, then two classrooms aren’t going to look the same” - “as the leader in the building I have to be able to explain” issues related to a “guaranteed curriculum”
<p>Promoting ideas to multiple stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mentions assistant principal again and the work she does with students - “I have been meeting each month first semester and each month second semester...with a broad cross section of our class (juniors)” to get the perspective of students at his school 	<p>Promoting ideas to multiple stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be clear with your message - “Three or four talking points” - “All roads lead to careers” - Culture - Communication - Clarity 	<p>Promoting ideas to multiple stakeholders</p> <p>Response embedded in other answers</p>

<p>Encountering difficulties and making adjustments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidance counselors helping students understand “we are building toward the senior year” - Beginning presentations in to students and families in the 8th grade year - Being very intentional with conversations with families and students so they understand the impact of decisions made even in middle school - Being very intentional with “small group meetings” for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors “and what the focus and the priority needs to be with them ...each year” - “those are things that didn’t really exist in a systematic way here, that has happened really over the last five years” - “We give the PSAT to sophomores and juniors. We give the pre-ACT to our sophomores, and we get the PSAT 8/9 to our Freshman” - Trying to expose students to assessments, give practice opportunities, and keep parents informed 	<p>Encountering difficulties and making adjustments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “We have bent the rules” - Doing what is best for kids - “if it makes sense to do it, my job is to finesse things, remove obstacles” - “I’ll be held accountable” 	<p>Encountering difficulties and making adjustments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Originally considered senior capstone projects, “we just punted on that” - The senior capstone would “have gotten bogged down and not produced a senior experience with the relevance and rigor of what we are doing now”
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<p>Significant threats to sustainability</p>	<p>Significant threats to sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The Department of Ed.” - “The Department of Workforce Development” “Business thinking they can run schools” - Lack of clarity on mission and who should be educating kids - “My job is to get kids on a pathway that leads to a sustainable career that ties with their passion and purpose, not to give you workers right now.” - “I want more for our kids” - Potential loss of CTE dollars 	<p>Significant threats to sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Our threat is always size” - “How do you articulate a clear instructional language, vision in a school our size that continues to grow?” - As the school pursues increased internship opportunities “how do you keep that rigorous and relevant?” - Department Chairs as “gatekeepers of tradition”
<p>Disruptive changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “blended learning” - The use of a school wide Learning Management System (Schoology) - Flipped classrooms 	<p>Disruptive changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced Placement (AP) as an “incredibly positive disruption” - Being purposeful with change - “I do think that for the most part the script has flipped with teachers and believing that all kids are capable of doing rigorous work” 	<p>Disruptive changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I don’t think we’ll ever go back” - Student centered instruction and authentic assessment - “Once you see how students are more confident in their core academic skills and their reading and their writing and their presentation skills because you’ve given them independence, you’ve given them choice, you can’t go back” - He would “get rid of” department chairs if he had “the guts”

<p>Most positive and least advantageous reactions to change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “from a logistics standpoint” having a senior only wing created communication issues for guidance and administrators - Culture and climate is impacted because “there is not a lot of co-mingling” (because of the size of the school building and the senior only wing) - Because of the senior only wing “our seniors are not as visible to lead the rest of the building because they are down there” - Schedule impacted because it segregates teachers causing “some barriers and hurdles that we have with the schedule: - “Advantage-wise, the culture, the climate, the focus in the senior wing is definitely better able to be...felt and realized as a result of having their own space, and their own staff.” - 	<p>Most positive and least advantageous reactions to change</p> <p>No response</p>	<p>Most positive and least advantageous reactions to change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “As always, just kids coming back again and saying ‘I stood out among my peers.’” - Students learning to manage time - Significantly increased the number of students earning dual credit - Senior Flex Schedule - Ongoing need to keep the Board informed and understanding why AP scores at the school have changed in relationship to their county neighbors
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Of all interviews, the principals’ answers were the most divergent for Question 3 of the first interview. Although participants were provided identical questions, each interpreted the questions quite differently, most likely influenced by the unique situations and problems inherent in their school environments. When asked about challenges specific to redesign efforts in his school, Butler suggested that the results support the focus on seniors and that the community has

supported changes in place. Meyer explained that teacher resistance to change was problematic, although he had not experienced much parent “pushback.” For Ireland, politics and misconceptions about the purpose of high school came to the surface. As was true throughout the interviews, all participants emphasized the need for consistent communication with all stakeholders. But in this series of questions, Butler focused on communication more than the others. Ireland’s and Meyer’s responses to questions regarding threats to sustainability made it apparent that they each had thought a good deal about the problems they face in innovating the senior year. Ireland understood her job to be to “finesse things and remove obstacles,” and Meyer understood the specifics of his setting, noting the size of his school to be a threat to innovation, as are the teacher-leaders in the school who work against change.

Table 4 represents the open coding for Questions 4, 5 and 6 of the second interview, which asked participants to: (1) “Describe how your work in redesign has increased (or not increased) student engagement in the senior year.”; (2) “How do you see current successful changes providing a platform for further change?”; and (3) “Using Christensen’s definition of disruptive innovation as a lens (that truly disruptive innovations fundamentally change the way products or educational experiences are developed or presented—think: analog to digital, rotary phones to cell phones, horses to the Ford Model T, or Taxis to Uber) what are the most powerfully disruptive innovations you have put in place?”

Table 5

Open coding chart for Second Principal Interview Questions 4, 5 and 6.

Principal #1 Mr. Butler	Principal #2 Mrs. Ireland	Principal #3 Mr. Meyer
Changes in student engagement - The power of change is in “cumulative effect of everything”	Changes in student engagement - “The whole point of redesign is to increase	Changes in student engagement - Increased graduation rate to 97.5% from 93.8%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior year is “about connecting/bridging to the next stage - Not a year for coasting - “Not an ending but a beginning and setting stage for next steps” - Physical plant changes matter. Student “proximity” to guidance and office staff is important - Expanded opportunities for “rigor and engagement” through AP and dual credit - mentioned the value and importance of the guidance counselors and communication many times here - Programs and activities specific to seniors - Non-traditional study hall expectations. “Trust within given parameters versus compliance, constant supervision, and consequences” - “Senior Spotlight” in the hallways to highlight seniors, their goals and accomplishments 	<p>engagement in the senior year”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “It’s more the emphasis of what we’re trying to put the engagement on...instead of the books and worksheets...we’re trying to do with this redesign of the senior year is open up opportunity for different types of engagement...more of an application of skills, where it’s more an exploration of passion and purpose and interest” 	<p>before the advent of senior specific redesign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased College and Career Readiness Rate to 74.4% from 59.3% before the advent of senior specific redesign - 200 +/- seniors on Flex Schedule during the 2017-2018 school year. - Students participating in vocational classes has doubled over the last three years
<p>Current Successful Changes Providing a Platform for Further Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More “career-oriented focus and authentic learning” - “Senior projects” - Increased access to internships and work-based learning - Increased blended learning classes 	<p>Current Successful Changes Providing a Platform for Further Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “All roads lead to careers” - “We focus on preparation the day after graduation” - Want students to have a roadmap for their two years after high school 	<p>Current Successful Changes Providing a Platform for Further Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “We should see our building impacted in two major ways:” - 1. Continued growth in student-driven instruction in all areas of the building

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senior advisory time used for grade checks - Partial day option for students who qualify based on AP and dual credit courses taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “so, my answer is yes, like the whole point is to build upon momentum” - “Engaging kids and their purpose and their passion” - “Something that has really influenced my thinking about redesigning the senior year and all roads lead to careers is return on investment...helping kids” - Not just “where they are going to college but flipping the script as to why they are going to college” - “The more we learn, the more we know, so it’s not so much of a change in the platform but it’s just an evolution of the platform as we get better at doing what we are doing” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2. Continued growth in experiential opportunities for students
<p>Most Powerful Disruptive Innovations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering blended learning opportunities in Government and Economics classes which introduce students to college-like course work, and combines class time with virtual learning - Offering a “less structured” study hall environment or seniors based on trust and following expectations. - Using the space in the senior wing with less adult supervision for study time - a dedicated staff and space specific to seniors 	<p>Most Powerful Disruptive Innovations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “I think that it is not going to sound very powerful, but it’s going to be” - “Understanding that innovation and creativity is important in schools” - “Innovation is all about looking and doing something different or asking a question that has never been asked before” - Giving staff permission to be creative and look at things in different ways to find their passion and purpose - That is “when you kind of get those disruptions to the 	<p>Most Powerful Disruptive Innovations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Our staff thinks much differently about their role and the learning experience” - Performing arts play created completely by students - Student Choice Day...a learning conference for all students - Department structure of assigning rooms by common discipline which resulted in more team teaching

	<p>status quo” ...when you get “very passionate about something and am (are) willing to drop everything else and spend my time and effort and energies moving, harvesting, growing, developing this notion”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “It’s not enough to have an idea” - Connect people to what they feel passionate about - Give people permission to disrupt - “I guess that disruptive innovation, you’re going back to it is if people aren’t given permission to be innovative with an idea that aligns with the mission and vision to see and can ask the question, but once they have a great idea you’ve gotta give them permission to be disruptive” 	
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The researcher’s goal during the second round of interview questions, numbers 4, 5 and 6 found in Table 4, was to provide clarity to earlier questions. Question 4 asked participants how their redesign efforts were affecting student engagement. Butler answered that the power of change is in the “cumulative effect of everything.” Butler’s comment ties indirectly to an earlier comment made during the first interview, when he stated that “the culture leading up to the senior year influences the” senior year experience. Ireland was adamant that redesign efforts must “increase engagement in the senior year.” Butler and Ireland also reiterated previous responses concerning the career oriented nature of the redesign efforts in their schools. When answering about the most powerful disruptive innovations happening in her school, Ireland remarked that

“innovation and creativity” are important in schools while citing the need to give staff permission to be creative. The most powerful outcome of redesign efforts at Meyer’s school was that “our staff thinks much differently about their role and the learning experience.”

Observations from Open Coding of Principal Interviews

Participant 1: Mr. Butler

Butler is a Caucasian male in his mid-40’s. Butler has 24 years of experience in education. Butler was a classroom teacher for 5 years and has been an administrator for 19 years, serving 14 years as a principal, the last 5 years in his current school. Butler holds a master’s degree and a license in Secondary Administration.

While answering the first question—“what specific changes have you made to your school in the process of redesigning senior year experiences for students” and the following-up questions—several themes developed and I was able to learn about each principal’s unique experiences in redesigning high school programming specific to the senior year. Butler immediately emphasized the significance of physical changes to his high school as a driving force behind redesign: in 2009-2010 his school corporation completed a building addition at the high school that was designed specifically to serve students in their senior year. Butler also remarked how changes in the original plans for the facility (a media center distinct to the senior setting and space for post-secondary partners to work in the high school building) changed or never materialized due to lack of use, changes in financial conditions, and the inability to allocate staff to those areas. Butler also commented about how the building project was the “forerunner” to the school’s 1 to 1 computing initiative and how decisions related to computing have also affected student learning.

The faculty and students in the senior wing of Butler's school are primarily working and learning in a space dedicated to seniors, and Butler said that "we try to keep it as pure as possible" even though there is "some cross-pollination" with students from other grades. Academic rigor is encouraged and supported by offering an extensive list of "over 30 Advanced Placement courses" and "a number of dual credit courses" through a local community college.

Butler emphasized the value of communication with seniors and their families prior to the senior year. Butler explained the work guidance counselors do in preparing students prior to the senior year. According to Butler, that level of communication does not stop once the students start their senior year: guidance counselors are also a part of ongoing communication with families and students about post-secondary opportunities.

During this segment of the interview, Butler emphasized how blended learning in the 1 to 1 computing environment has allowed the school to offer students a level of freedom during the senior year. For example, Butler's school offers seniors a course in Economics and Government that is scheduled during the first or last hour of the school day. After an initial time of orientation, students in these classes come and go from the building with relative freedom. This program option has been available to seniors at Butler's school for 3 years, and he would like to see this expand in the future.

In follow-up questions about specific changes made to the school relative to seniors, Butler remarked about the recent expansion of vocational programming available to students. Butler also expressed a desire to expand a relatively small internship program that currently serves "30 to 50 students," and a plan to consider flex scheduling for students as seen in some other central Indiana schools. Butler's responses concerning enhanced academic offerings were instructive in that his school [corporation] has devoted a great deal of time and resources to training staff in the College

Board's SpringBoard program. Butler believes the professional development provided in SpringBoard methodology has positively affected the level of academic expectation in all courses and has positively influenced students' decisions to take Advanced Placement or dual credit earning classes in the senior year.

Butler answered the follow-up question about physical changes to the school very similarly to how he answered the broader question about specific changes to the school's process for redesigning the senior year. "There is no doubt that the building on and the [addition of a senior only wing] really helped created that school-within-a-school kind of idea. Otherwise, physically we would not have been able to produce something like that. So that really made it possible." Butler understood the history of change at his school, curricularly and culturally, to be tied directly to the addition of a senior only wing.

As the conversation moved to the second major area of questioning, Butler was asked to describe his decision-making process. Specifically, Butler was asked what resources or research he (and his team) consulted to help make decisions, and looking back, what changes to the decision-making process would he make. Because Butler was not at his current school when the process of designing changes began, he spoke at length about other staff members who helped to facilitate change. In terms of networking and collecting ideas, Butler had not visited other schools, but was aware of two schools in particular whom he thought had "taken the lead on this", as well as another local school where redesign preceded the work at his school. Butler had delegated a great deal of the work of planning potential changes to assistant principals and stated that "[the assistant principal], myself, those teachers down there [in the senior wing], those are the core, I would say the core group, and have we had great conversations? We have not. I think like I said earlier, our conversation is how can we move forward with those career exploration experiences?"

If there is a next step, that's it. I think we've done a great job on the academic side. It's the career piece that has to be in those internship experiences is what has to happen next."

Butler was asked to consider the process of change, and based on his experiences, consider potential changes he would make concerning the decision making progress as it developed. Butler was very self-reflective on the need to evaluate the progress of the senior wing and whether it was "living up to" the "original intent" of the concept. He was pleased with the level of rigor afforded students in AP and dual credit courses, but felt those options were "maxed out" and that the next step was "going back to that career component. That is where I see our next step to go because we have such a small internship program that can really grow."

While responding to the last set of questions regarding the challenges encountered in implementing redesign initiatives, Butler explained some of the difficulties inherent in teacher perceptions. According to Butler, teachers are acutely aware of workload differences, access to the "bells and whistles" when one area of the building is newer, or different behavior patterns. These difficulties however, were balanced by community stakeholders being "very supportive of what we have done." Butler also spoke about the challenges of being "very intentional in our core areas in meetings that we have with families at the middle school level about decisions that you are making at the middle school level and how they impact [high school] ... the communication process and helping them see how those decisions matriculate to high school."

The final two follow-up questions asked for a response to how disruptive changes had been to the life of the school (sustaining or truly disruptive innovations) and to shed light on the most and least positive reactions to changes made in the school. In answering the disruptive question, Butler explained that the addition of an electronic learning management system (LMS) from Schoology had allowed his teachers to create the blended learning Economics and Government

classes for seniors, and has also precipitated experimentation and change in flipped classrooms in some science and math classes. The addition of an LMS has been a catalyst for changing curriculum delivery not just in blended learning courses, but has impacted course work across the building. The least advantageous aspects of change have been created by the physical separation between sections of the building which makes “communication an issue whether it’s guidance-wise, whether it is administratively, from a culture and climate standpoint, there is not a lot of comingling that always happens, and we’re a big school, so that kind of happens, but I would say that is maybe a disadvantage that has happened as a result of this.” Butler quickly flipped the question and noted advantages to the geographical separation between seniors and underclassmen as well. “Advantage-wise, the culture, the climate, the focus (of the senior wing) is definitely better able to be, I guess, felt and realized as a result of having their own space and in many ways kind of their own staff, whether it’s administrative, secretarial, guidance...much easier for everyone to kind of be on the same page because they’ve got their team, so to speak, down there.” Butler’s response is consistent with his ongoing emphasis on communication and having conversations with students about post-secondary preparation starting in high school.

A second set of interview questions (Questions 4, 5, and 6) were provided to all participants almost two months after the first round of questions. The first question asked participants to describe how their work in redesign increased (or did not increase) student engagement in the senior year. Butler’s most powerful response of the entire interview process drew on an answer to a question in the first interview. In stating that “it’s not one item that creates the engagement ... it is the cumulative effect” Butler harkened back to a comment from the first interview where he remarked that the power and strength of the school “culture leading up to the senior year influences the” senior year experience. Butler also reiterated that physical plant changes affected the work

done to redesign the senior year, as well as expanded academic options, programs and activities specific to the senior year, and “trust within parameters versus compliance, constant supervision, and consequences.” Creating space, enhancing academic guidance communication, and changing academic program improved the culture of his school thus improving outcomes for students that include more freedom for students and a broader understanding of post-secondary realities.

Question 5 concerned how the principal viewed the current successful changes and how those changes might provide a platform for future change at Butler’s school. Butler indicated that he wants to include more of a “career-oriented focus and authentic learning” experiences through increased access to internships and work-based learning. Butler also hopes to increase blended learning opportunities for students and to offer a partial day option for students engaged in dual credit and Advanced Placement course work.

The final question in the second series of questions asked participants to build on previous responses related the potential disruptive nature of the innovations in their schools. When asked what the most powerful disruptive innovations were in his school, Butler stated that he believed offering students an opportunity to take a class specific to seniors in Government or Economics presented in a blended learning format (where students do the majority of the work on their own and online), providing a “less structured” study hall environment for seniors based on trust and maturity, and having a dedicated senior wing were the most disruptive and innovative elements of the redesign efforts in his school. This set of responses regarding the potential disruptive nature of redesign at Butler’s school were largely the same as the first time the questions were asked in the first interview.

Participant 2: Mrs. Ireland

Ireland is a Caucasian female in her mid-40's. Ireland has 21 years of experience in education. Ireland was a classroom teacher for 5 years and has been an administrator for 16 years, serving 13 years as a principal, all 13 years in her current school. Ireland earned a masters degree in business administration and her PhD in Education. Ireland is a licensed secondary administrator.

While answering the first question, — “what specific changes have you made to your school in the process of redesigning senior year experiences for students”— Ireland’s responses demonstrated a completely different level of energy and thought pattern as compared to her peers. From the outset of the conversation, Ireland talked passionately about expanding internship possibilities for her students and “preparing kids for the day after graduation,” despite explaining that her school had limited options compared to others doing the work of high school redesign. At the time of the interview, Ireland’s school did not qualify for the State’s High Performance Waiver, so she did not have the freedom that the other participants did in restructuring the senior year. Her work thus centered around being “as creative as you can be within the realms you’re given, but when it comes to instructional minutes and instructional time, man, they can really cripple you.”

Even within apparent limitations, Ireland has found ways to create scheduling options that create freedom for seniors. Not unlike Butler, Ireland has created a curricular option for seniors where they can take a “senior seminar” that falls during the first or last hour of the day. Students must qualify for the class through GPA and diploma track requirements; however, they can move freely through their day if scheduled into one of these seminar classes, arriving “late” to school, or leaving before the traditional end of the day. Ireland believes students “need to structure their time better. I think that’s the biggest thing with the transition ... from high school” to post-secondary life. In high school students “go bell to bell ... and they eat [when the bell rings] ... and all this

stuff, then you're putting them on a campus of 40,000 and say, 'you're on your own, good luck.' So we are just trying to find some ways to give seniors a little bit of flexibility."

While discussing curricular changes, Ireland shared how all of their work as a school is designed to support students for the "day after graduation." Twelve years ago, Ireland's school had just one Advanced Placement course. Today, they offer 32. "All kids deserve rigor And changing that mindset. And all kids are capable of rigor" In both word and tone, it was apparent when talking with Ireland that creating a learning culture is one of her most important focuses, followed closely by increasing the relevance of the learning experience for students by creating what she calls "pathways." "The whole point of thinking curricularly across the building is every class we offer should funnel or support some sort of pathway." Ireland's design for pathways at her school includes a certification or dual credit capstone at the end of a series of courses, which may or may not include an internship, but are designed to help students make informed decisions about post-secondary options.

Working with post-secondary and community partners, Ireland and her staff have been able to expand opportunities for students that relate to the pathways that specifically serve their community. Ireland talked at length about how the relevance of the opportunities provided to seniors can help when reaching out to the community at large. According to Ireland, creating opportunities that are specific to the resources in the community create strong connections with active community stakeholders. Conversely, accessing the strength of their business partners highlights the school's ability to create educational solutions for students that are specific to their community.

Ireland is convinced and convincing in her enthusiasm about the need to communicate that there are multiple pathways to success after high school. "You know, ... I do think we are expecting

more of them, like this notion of building skills, this notion of taking care of yourself, this notion of what's your passion and purpose, don't just do something because that's what everybody else is doing ... I think it is more of a mentality change about trying to help kids ... We have got to do something to get them to be independent and get this entitlement mindset knocked out of their heads." As stated previously Dries and Rehage (2008a) voiced similar themes. Student independence, the opportunity to learn and not be bored by it, and to understand the value of work are nearly universal themes in education.

Like many "A" rated suburban schools, Ireland's school has either just completed physical plant improvements, or is about to. "We're doing a \$42 million renovation and we're in planning meetings now." Ireland mentioned "thinking about what learning is going to be in 5-10 years from now, hoping to get to the point where, again, seniors, maybe juniors aren't coming in all the time, that some of the delivery of instruction or lecture is more on the computer or a laptop that you can access any time and when you are in the building it is about *doing* something." While her school's current structure may not affect learning in new ways, Ireland and her team are planning to make changes to the physical building that will shape learning in the future. "So we're designing the building to be able to kind of lock off, you what I mean, instead of having the whole building accessible and open but almost having various pods and different things that you can have going on, smaller cafeteria, smaller...like different things."

As the conversation moved to the second major area of questioning—on how decisions are made about redesign initiatives— Ireland was asked to describe her decision making processes. Ireland stated that each decision is made with the school's primary focus, preparing kids for the future, in mind: we "just always trying to stay in alignment with how do we best serve kids, what's going to best prepare them" and how it fits into the school's "life ready initiative." She went on to

describe the team of administrators and their individual roles in decision making related to redesigning the senior year. She also described how the administrative team meets regularly to attend to both the day-to-day struggles of running a school and for long-term vision planning. Ireland spoke about her school being a professional learning community based on the work of Rick Dufour and Robert Marzano, which she described as being embodied in her leadership and leadership team as well as in the faculty of the school. At the same time Ireland described the necessity of extending conversations to create change by reaching into the community to gain the support of stakeholders, community members, and the chamber of commerce. The leadership team, led by Ireland is not looking for prepackaged decisions to provide to students; rather, they are looking for things that fit the mission, vision, and abilities of the people who work to make the lives of students better. “Every now and then we might find a canned program that works really great – Project Lead the Way, AP. So those are great canned programs that we will go and implement, but there are also other things where if we don’t like how it works we are going to do it our way.”

Ireland’s responses to the final set of questions about the challenges in redesigning the senior year included a list of frustrations: “Rules, regulations, policies, one-size fits all mentality, politics, funding. Again, for some of the things we’re doing, quite frankly, parents.” It is apparent from her responses that how communication is perceived, how misconceptions are created, and how well phrases are created all create the framework within which implementing redesign must be considered. “I went to the Chamber [of commerce] four years ago, and I have since softened my message, but I wanted to be a little bold talking about some of these things, and talking about, you know, it’s not just one pipeline. You know, and this one pipeline that goes ... and its four-year college to a career and trying to blow it up. I was trying to explain that ... We have got to get

out of this notion of us telling kids what is acceptable or worthy or honorable or relevant ... we have got to quit looking down at some of the other career options and pathways.” Communication continued to be a theme, as Ireland talked about being concise with her messages. “I think it’s really, really important that you get three or four talking points over any big idea, and those are the ones that you and your team go out and say the same thing all the time.” The tagline for her and the team? “All roads lead to careers.”

The biggest threats to the sustainability of redesign at Ireland’s school? “The Department of Education. The Department of Workforce Development. Businesses thinking, they know how to run schools. If they would just partner with us and listen. We could be excellent partners.” As evidenced by recent diploma and graduation proposals presented by the Indiana Governor’s Pathway Panel (finalized 11/7/2017), the state and business partners are unwilling to engage educators in constructive conversations about what it means to be a high school graduate. Ireland states “I wish they could just let this grow organically” as she feels she has strong plans in place that will benefit all students, but she has worries about the direction political leaders may go.

When considering the power of positive disruption caused by changes she has had a hand in orchestrating, Ireland immediately mentioned Advanced Placement courses. This “has been an incredibly positive disruption with the notion of getting rid of no prerequisites, that if you want to take a class and you’re willing to work, you can do it.” She continued by saying that “I do think that for the most part the script has flipped with teachers and believing that all kids are capable of doing rigorous work.”

When presented with the second set of interview questions, Ireland’s energy level and interest in the topic of high school redesign came through immediately. Questions 4 asked participants to describe how their work in redesign increased (or did not increase) student

engagement in the senior year. Ireland's immediate response was that "the whole point of redesign is to increase engagement in the senior year." Ireland made it clear that the emphasis is more "what we are trying to put the engagement on ... instead of books and worksheets ... we're trying to open up opportunity for different types of engagement ... more of an application of skills, where it's more an exploration of passion and purpose and interest."

Ireland reiterated her previous answers when asked how current successful changes provide a platform for further change. As stated in the first interview, Ireland was adamant that "all roads lead to careers" and that we should be providing students more than just one option to higher education, or post-secondary opportunities. "Not just 'where are you going to college' but flipping the script" and asking why "are you going to college?" Ireland spoke about how she views change and that she doesn't just "change to change." As she explained her philosophy on "all roads" leading to careers, she said: "The more we learn, the more we know. So it's not so much of a change in platform but it's an evolution of the platform as we get better at doing what we are doing." For Ireland and her school change is ongoing, but all change has to be purposeful, and that purpose is to serve the lives of students.

Ireland makes it evident that she believes innovation, whether disruptive or not, is about "doing something different." She also understands that innovation is important in schools and that leaders must empower the faculty by giving them "permission to be creative and look at things in different ways to find their passion and purpose." "It's not enough to have an idea" but rather leaders "connect people to what they fell passionate about" and "give people permission to disrupt."

Participant 3: Mr. Meyer

Meyer is a Caucasian male in his mid-40's. Meyer has 20 years of experience in education. Meyer was a classroom teacher for 4 years and has been an administrator for 16 years, serving 11 years as a principal, all 11 years in his current school. Meyer holds a master's degree and a license in Secondary Administration.

Meyer's answers regarding specific changes made at his school about redesigning the senior year began with physical plant changes completed two years ago. Those changes coincided with ideas about creating a college and career academy at his school. The physical space was changed, and curricular offerings were affected as well. The process of redesign began—years before the new wing was completed—when the superintendent at the time helped craft the State's high performing schools bill. Parents, students, and teachers were assembled in stakeholder interview groups and asked, "If you could redesign the high school, what would you do differently?" Parents and community member conversations centered on curricular offerings, and student responses "focused on physical spaces."

Meyer's school was, by his own admission "AP driven." "And you know, we were putting kids in classes they had no desire to be in, like AP US and AP World. These students were going to study math and science in college. Our parents were telling us, you know, one, it's probably not that relevant to our students, and, two the instructional delivery in those classes really didn't prepare students for their next in the sense of very teacher driven, very test driven, very content driven. So our students were standing out as far as content, but where our parents and community recognized the struggle was their ability to manage their own independence." Meyer spoke honestly about his self-reflection on how content was delivered in his school, how traditional it was, and how his team might "utilize the physical redesign [of the building] to leverage student-centered instruction." The administrated decided to expand curricular offerings beyond Advanced

Placement and International Baccalaureate courses to include dual credit offerings by partnering with three local colleges and universities. Curricular redesign included expanding relationships with Indiana University, Purdue University, Ball State University, and eventually Ivy Tech. English, mathematics, sociology, engineering, and anatomy and physiology programs flourished. Parallel to those decisions ran a plan to change how seniors accessed the school day if they chose to take four or more college level courses. As stated in Ind. Code 20-30-2-2(a) students who are enrolled in at least twelve hours of dual credit are not bound by the same attendance requirements as their peers. Meyer has taken advantage of that statute to create a learning environment specific to seniors in his school which he believes has increased the level of academic intensity pursued in the senior year, while increasing the relevancy of the course work and school day for students.

Soon after the expansion of academically rigorous course work, “the next piece then to come was the career piece.” The leadership team at Meyer’s school could see that students would not leave their home school to travel to study at a regional vocational center. Meyer surmised that offering traditional “vocational” programming at his school would see more students take advantage of certification programs. Programming changes in Meyer’s school lead to course offerings which doubled the number of students involved in Career and Technical Education (STE) courses. Students are now able to become Certified Nurses Assistants, or Emergency Medical Technicians. Other students now earn sound production certifications, or study pre-pharmacy programming which has increased academic options for students across the academic spectrum. “So kind of going back to that senior year, making it more rigorous, more relevant senior year. Because really what had happened before was again you had seniors taking classes that probably weren’t in line with what they were studying in college or preparing them for their career.” At

Meyer's school, redesigning the senior year isn't just for students who expect to attend a four-year institution; rather, changes to the senior year can help all students with a variety of futures.

The vision for curricular change tied directly into Meyer's vision for creating a more relevant senior year by developing the flex schedule to "incentivize a more rigorous, relevant senior year, bring more students into that. We have about 200 seniors doing that now." The flex schedule that Meyer's school offers takes what other schools are doing to create student freedom and extrapolates it out much further. Students taking four or more college level courses are not required to fill their schedule with unwanted and unneeded courses. "I feel like we are starting to hit that spot where we have enough breadth in our curriculum offerings that we are really making it more relevant for each senior." Meyer is not unaware, however, that there is a great deal of work to do: "alongside [the flex schedule] is the instructional delivery piece, the whole physical (plant) piece that you've seen with our environment - it is more independent in nature. It is more project based. It is more student driven. Again, kind of feeding into what our stakeholders told us 'you gotta give them more confidence in their ability to handle their own independence.'"

As a part of the redesign process, Meyer and his team have "greatly expand internships" and the assistant superintendent of the district talks about a "community-wide campus that might be an expectation for every senior that they have some kind of experiential opportunity in high school." Meyer discussed local obstacles to expanding the internship program. These navigable obstacles include the large size of his school (over 3000 students), maintaining rigorous and worthy internship opportunities, and competition from neighboring schools for limited business partnerships which might lead to viable internships. Despite an awareness that increasing experiential learning opportunities brings difficulties, Meyer was able to redirect the conversation

back to “really trying to allow some customization in that senior year, but in a way that’s still rigorous and hopefully a lot more relevant than what we were doing prior.”

When speaking about enhanced academic offerings, Meyer reiterated how important the guidance counselors are in identifying students who could thrive in advanced courses earlier and how structural changes were needed to ensure that as many students as possible would be eligible for dual credit course work. Among other challenges is how increased student freedom changes the nature of the work for adults. “We’re giving them [students] more projects and saying ‘go.’ So that’s tough for Deans to just kind of even get their heads around. Our Deans see students working independently without an adult around. They (the Deans) want to make a blanket rule that ‘you can’t do this.’ [I say] No, it goes against the spirit of what we’re trying to do. So that is an interesting administrative struggle.” Meyer has asked the Deans at his school to “approach our students with the assumption they can handle independence, and correct the ones that don’t meet our expectations.”

Questions about how the physical plant changes made curricular and school culture changes possible elicited responses that took Meyer all the way back to the design stages of the building. “In [the designer’s] mind, it was a diagram of a circle around the CCA, our College and Career Academy, and then one around the rest the building. The circles would, in time, overlap causing an environment of student-driven instruction to spread in new areas of the building. Eventually, this experience will become the norm everywhere (in the school) creating just one circle over the entire building. I think we are starting to see more of that now. That if you change the physical environment then that does bleed over and even into your traditional environment.” Meyer continued, saying that “[the new building] opened a whole new avenue of authentic performance tasks for our students. They [teachers and students] are starting think of authentic

audiences. They are starting to think of ‘what can we do in the community’ now that we have these relationships. They have played very well, very nicely to help teachers see the bigger picture. So I think even that physical environment has had a nice instructional impact throughout the building.” Meyer concluded quite powerfully by saying, “they see possibilities they didn’t [before]. We see possibilities on the administrative team that we never did before.”

The second major area of questioning sought insight into how decisions are made concerning redesign initiatives. Meyer remarked about the wide open nature of the question and settled on “vision” as the basis for decision making. “You know; vision should drive decision making. How do we make it a more relevant and rigorous senior year for all students?” Continuing with his understated, yet confident responses, Meyer made the following powerful remark: “You know, one thing I’ve learned from this is you can PD [professional development] all you want to, you can vision all you want to, but unless you create the environment, it’s just like one-to-one devices, you can do all the PD you want, but until the kids have it in their hands, it’s not the same. The staff can’t see the possibilities until you’re there ... Until we really took the leap, I don’t think we’d ever have been ready. I say that because I’m not comfortable with where we’re at yet. I think we have a lot of room to grow there.” This attitude, or ability to linger in ambiguity appears to be a strength of Meyer. It also appears to serve him well as he leads his school through the entire redesign process as opposed to a specific decision making process. It’s the end goal that drives his decisions: how do we approach X problem to meet Y goal?

Challenges encountered during redesign efforts including developing a better understanding of “how we can really get these students college credit.” Additionally, Meyer included the human element of teacher resistance as a key obstacle and challenges of leading change. Not one to avoid his own need for reflection, Meyer stated his personal need to see the

changes, the freedoms, alterations in content delivery, and teaching as positive things. Change is no easier for Meyer than it is for others. It is quite obvious that Meyer's vision for change is far greater than just some course offering changes and a new physical plant. Meyer's desire to improve the senior year has changed the way he leads: "I've told my staff, ... let me handle the questions on guaranteed curriculum because ... if we're a risk-taking culture, if we're a failure culture, if we're a culture that allows teachers to teach to their strengths, then two classrooms aren't going to look the same. As the leader in the building, I've got to be able to explain that. Send those to me. Because one teacher's experience is going to be different than the other one, especially in the phase we're in right now."

Question 4 of the second set of interview questions elicited descriptive statistics that demonstrate the number of students who have benefitted from the programmatic changes at Meyer's school. In five years, the graduation rate in Meyer's school when from 93.8% to 97.5%, and college and career readiness indicators improved from 59.3% to 74.4% after the advent of senior specific redesign. Students participating in vocational courses has doubled and over 200 seniors in a class of 800+ are participating in courses designed specifically for seniors. These numbers suggest engagement has improved and that redesign efforts have improved outcomes for students.

It is interesting to that Meyer is the only principal in this group to describe repeatedly how redesign efforts have affected the teaching staff. In answering Question 5, about how current successful changes are providing a platform for further change, Meyer mentioned how student-driven instruction is happening in all areas of the school and that there is room for growth in experiential opportunities for students as well. This response was echoed in the final answers

provided about the most powerful disruptive innovations in the school. Meyer stated “our staff thinks much differently about their role and the learning experience” than they used to.

Emerging Themes

After analyzing the transcribed interviews three times and listening to the recordings twice, several themes became apparent. Despite several consistent themes, however, one element that influences the findings is the lack of commonality in responses among the individuals. Meyer and Ireland clearly see themselves as agents of change, while Butler lacks a singular inner vision for change and relies heavily on the administrative team in his school to create or direct changes. Moreover, Butler appears to be comfortable with knowing little about the history of his school, or how programming decisions are made. Meyer and Ireland, on the other hand, may delegate elements of the vision and implementation of change to individual administrators but are fully engaged in the ideas and energy created in their school. Nonetheless, similarities exist. Throughout the data analysis process there was one overarching theme with supporting subthemes. The major emergent theme of this study is that solutions for redesigning the senior year can vary significantly even in high performing high schools. One might characterize this by noting that site specific redesign decisions do not include one-size fits all solutions and that supporting organic local decision making is advantageous when working to redesign senior year experiences. Principals interviewed clearly understood their school’s cultures and determined the appropriate way to drive change within that culture

Regardless of their personal engagement in the process of driving change, the responses of the principals interviewed largely align to the following themes: (a) rigor, (b) relevance, (c) freedom, and (d) increasing post-secondary opportunities for students. As one might expect, each theme overlaps with others, simultaneously and in various ways. Participant responses also echo

the calls for increased rigor, improved relevance, and improved post-secondary opportunities for students (Dries & Rehage, 2008b, 2011; Kuh, 2007; National Commission on the Senior Year, 2001).

Rigor

Calls for increasingly more academically challenging study in high school to better prepare students for post-secondary opportunities are not new. (Adelman, 1999; Daggett, 2008; Patton, et al. 2001). Participant responses were consistent in suggesting that combinations of Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses had increased the level of rigor in their schools and in the senior year specifically, with student's reporting that they were well prepared for post-secondary study (An, 2013). Although Butler's school had not widely adopted dual credit as a platform for redesign (citing licensure issues created by changes in certification expectations promulgated by the Higher Learning Commission), the school uses dual credit offerings to increase rigor in selected study areas where teachers were appropriately licensed while continuing to use AP courses to support rigorous study across the senior curriculum. Butler's school began the process of increasing access to internships and work experiences for students in 2016, however, not to the extent or with the philosophical underpinnings that Ireland or Meyer had in their schools. Just as AP and dual credit course work is not for every student, not all students will benefit from internships and work experiences. These options taken together better increase the probability that schools can increase the level of engagement students desire, while increasing the academic intensity of their course work.

Increased rigor is linked closely to improved relevance in Ireland and Meyer's schools as will be demonstrated below. Both Ireland and Meyer have eliminated artificial barriers to students taking AP courses. Both cited variations on desire not to serve as gate-keepers to the

most rigorous courses; instead, each has embraced the notion that AP courses are for students who are willing and prepared and no longer for the “elite.” In both schools, students are encouraged to challenge themselves while having experiences that will ultimately cause growth rather than high score acquisition. Ireland’s comment that “the only way we know you are prepared is if you have an experience here [in school]” is followed by the statement that it is “better to be more difficult now and fail and learn some things to help you before you’re paying for it.” Increased access to rigorous coursework serves that goal, whereas in the past AP courses might have been saved for already high-performing academic students.

For Ireland and Meyer, dual credit opportunities are a significant part of the intentional process of increasing rigor. This feeling is consistent with prior studies that support the benefits of dual credit course work for high school students (Allen & Dadgar, 2012; An, 2013, 2015; Andrews, 2000; Bailey & Karp, 2003). As stated above, the use of dual credit in redesign efforts in Butler’s school where dual credit course work is not as widely available to students. Each school has made site specific decisions that best meet the needs of their community by partnering with post-secondary institutions based on geographic location, or ease of access to support from post-secondary partners. Butler’s school has targeted specific courses to teach as dual credit that lead students a more rigorous learning experience, however he is not pursuing the addition of more dual credit agreements due to teacher credentialing issues created by mandates from the High Learning Commission and will continue to stress AP options for students. Both Ireland and Meyer see a direct correlation between dual credit and improved relevance in the senior year experiences for students and have thus connected the option of increased dual credit access to the curricular offerings in their schools. Increasing access to dual credit course work also appears to have a post-secondary benefit. According to An (2015), “dual enrollees tended to be more academically

motivated and engaged than nonaccelerators” [students taking dual credit in high school] when they studied in college (p. 115).

Ireland and Meyer have also reshaped the notion of rigor in their schools to include a significant increase in the number of work experiences, internships, and vocational training that their students have access to. As the three participant’s schools sit largely in college going communities, this move to include non-college preparatory course work in the discussion inclusive of rigor requires ongoing and consistent communication with stakeholders, parents, and students. As noted previously in the comments made by Ireland when she spoke with the local Chamber of Commerce, not all people want to “hear their high school principal say every kid doesn’t need to go to college.” She went on to describe the need to break down “those misconceptions.” Communication is vital to the success of these types of experiences because internships, pathway programs, and work experiences have often been viewed as non-rigorous in the past.

Participant responses varied in intensity, but each has found that rigor in the senior year makes a difference. Meyer commented on how students previously “filled a sheet,” choosing less rigorous course work than what their post-secondary goals suggested they needed to take. Ireland described a general trend in her community to decrease rigor in the middle schools, thus eliminating the very things which help to prepare students for difficult situations. By eliminating rigorous expectations “you’ve just equated a very natural thing that kids ... are going to have to do the rest of your life...and made the notion that it’s stressful.” Ireland is making a connection between the need for rigorous study and academic intensity with life after high school. Adelman (1999) found that the quality of academic intensity in high school has a stronger correlation for student completion at the post-secondary level than any other factor, and is a better predictor of success than test scores or class rank. Reducing expectations and academic rigor doesn’t just hurt

academics, it hurts kids when they get into real life and everything is stressful and hard. Ireland wants her “life-ready initiative” to include rigorous study. Butler’s AP program is providing a “great experience in regards to what you have to do in a college-level course to be successful.”

Relevance

Whether a course of study or an experience is truly relevant is ultimately determined by the end user, the student. Relevance is also deep and wide in terms of how it affects the learner, the pedagogy, and the community. As noted previously in the work of Dries and Rehage (2008a), Sizer (1992, 2002, 2003), and Hendrikson, et al (2008), the level of engagement in the senior year can be improved by increasing the connection between content learning and real world application.

An area that all three participants discussed as providing relevance for students in their schools was increasing the opportunities for internships, work experiences, and other off-campus learning opportunities. Hendrikson et al. (2008) state that internships are planned and supervised activities with coordination between the school and primarily businesses, while Patton et al. (2001b, p. 5) call for “meaningful internships” which move students away from seat time requirements. Meyer said his district had hired an internship coordinator, and they had greatly expanded internships, which has “opened a whole new avenue of authentic performance tasks for our students. Ireland described partnerships with post-secondary institutions and businesses that now provide 215 seniors in a class of 587 the opportunity to enhance their educational experiences outside of the school building. Although not fully engaged in the development of programs of study, Butler was aware of a need to “move forward with those career exploration experiences ... if there is a next step, that’s it. I think we have done a great job on the academic side. It’s the career piece that has to be in those internship experiences is what has to happen next.” Ireland articulated a clear vision for what a relevant senior experience and course work looks like. “The whole point

of thinking curricularly across the building is every class we offer should funnel or support some sort of pathway.” The pathways that Ireland describes are a series of classes that include dual credit or a capstone experience, but all pathways are based on the student’s passion and purpose in life. When the passion and purpose can be matched to specific jobs, internships, college course work, or class requirements, Ireland suggests that engagement increases and relevance is improved: “I do think we are expecting more of them, like this notion of building skills, this notion of taking care of yourself, this notion of what’s your passion and purpose, don’t just do something because that’s what everybody else is doing.”

Meyer’s work making learning experiences relevant for seniors also centers on dual credit and increasing opportunities for vocational, work related experiences, and internships. As the principal at a high school with a college going culture, Meyer was aware that “you had seniors taking classes that probably weren’t in line with what they were studying in college.” The course work wasn’t relevant to the students’ needs or desires. Creating partnerships with businesses to find internships, however, has “opened a whole new avenue of authentic performance tasks for our students.” This, in turn, has helped the community and teachers to see how these relationships can shape instruction through assessment with authentic performance tasks. Taken together, one can see a cascading effect: Students feel the opportunities are relevant, so they are more engaged. In turn, the community leaders and teachers see how important these opportunities are, and as a result, work to improve the experiences. Which in turn makes the seniors more engaged yet again and the cycle repeats itself.

To varying degrees (with Meyer being the most aggressive and Butler being the least aggressive), participants in this study have increased student independence during the day through the use of creative scheduling. Increased student freedom in turn allows for the customization of

the senior year. This freedom will be addressed in the next section of this paper, but it must be mentioned here because that freedom has helped the principals in this study create learning environments that improve the senior year. Unfortunately, Indiana law favors high performing schools in this regard—limiting the ability to be creative with scheduling to schools that qualify as “A” schools under Ind. Code 20-24.2-4-2. Looking beyond this one restriction is possible and must be encouraged in all schools, regardless of “grade”.

The theme here is that “relevant” isn’t just about college, even though the schools in this study reside in communities with strong college going cultures. The wider picture developing from interviews with the participants of this study is that building a relevant school culture must include all students. This coincides directly with the work of Daggett (2008) and the building of his rigor/relevance framework. Including all students means improving student engagement by improving the relevant connections between the content being taught and the world in which students live (Conley, 2001; Daggett, 2008; Dreis, & Rehage, 2008b).

Freedom

The term “freedom” is a simplification of a broader concept that engenders independence in students. Independence can be fostered in a number of ways. It serves to build student autonomy, and can improve their ability to plan and use time wisely. The freedom created by reshaping the school day can allow for more time during the day for authentic learning, internships, and work, as well as create space in student schedules to better replicate the college environment. Freedom as a theme must also be seen from an educator perspective, as participants reported how redesign efforts in their schools have led to greater freedom for teachers to teach in new ways.

As noted previously, the State of Indiana eliminated credit earning seat time requirements in 2006 with the passage of Indiana State Code 511 IAC 6-7.1-1(d) which allows schools greater

flexibility in awarding credit. As can be seen in participant responses, Butler's school exhibits a less aggressive mode of change than his peers. Whereas the other participants have either altered their daily schedule or allowed seniors greater autonomy, Butler reported that "we have not experimented with kind of the flex schedule" that other schools have implemented. Butler did acknowledge that the school has loosened behavioral expectations throughout the day and created a more "student union" feel in optional study hall environments intended for seniors. In addition, the blended learning courses in Economics and Government serve to provide additional freedoms and reshaping of required student time at the school building. Butler couldn't "say we've loosened up much else in regards to expectations of kids during the daytime." Butler was aware that neighboring schools have created flexible senior schedules and his school was "looking to do something in that range" although, it "is not something we have focused a lot on."

Ireland's approach to create freedom within the school day is limited by her reading and understanding of what the law allows. By reading the statute it appears that Ireland and her school have more leeway within the law to restructure the day than she or her superiors understand. Within these constructs Ireland is "as creative as you can be within the realms you're given." The school offers a senior seminar, which allows students to take a course in a pass/fail format that does not count toward credit accrual. Students who qualify for the seminar must have a specific GPA, be on track to earn a Core-40 diploma, and spend their time in directed activities related to jobs, post-secondary education, scholarship preparation, job applications and interview preparation, which are "all things you'd be doing your senior year anyway." This class is scheduled at the beginning or the end of the school day, thus allowing seniors to arrive after their younger peers in the morning or to exit the building earlier than their peers. Whether used for internships,

work experiences, rest, or independent study time, this seminar is a creative way of providing students with time that can be used in a non-traditional manner.

Comments made by Ireland and Meyer both suggest the need for seniors to have “a little bit of flexibility.” Both principals share concerns over students living in a society that has taken more and more responsibility away from students—Ireland refers to it as “entitlement kids”—often placing them in post-secondary environments without the skills to navigate them without parental oversight. Ireland stated that “we have got to do something to get them to be independent and get this entitlement mindset knocked out of their heads.” Meyer was able to articulate how changes in the senior year at his school elicited comments from graduates. He said that he has heard from recent students that “I stood out among my peers ... I was so much more prepared ... I’ve learned to manage a study group.” Students suggested these things were true because they had already been given independent time during their senior year.

Redesigning programs of study to allow students to individualize academic programming was studied extensively in Patton et al. (2001a) and suggested specifically in the Commission’s design for a “Triple-A Program” designed to “improve alignment, raise achievement, and provide more (and more rigorous) alternatives” (pg. 4). Meyer is the most aggressive of the three participants in making multiple changes that have affected student engagement through changes in academic scheduling, daily freedom, and the learning environment. Although not identical to Patton’s “Triple-A Program”, one can see elements of improved academic alignment, improved engagement leading to new levels of achievement, and a wide range of alternatives for students to pursue their individual educational goals.

As a precursor to change, Meyers’ school completed a major building project that resulted in a senior wing, just as Butler’s school did. However, the resulting school culture changes are

much more evident in Meyer's school and have brought on more substantive changes as well. Dual credit opportunities for seniors coupled with AP courses have enabled the school to create a senior only program that takes advantage of high performing schools legislation. Students in the senior program are required to take only 4 courses during the 7 period day. They come and go freely, and they are experiencing more internships, work experiences, and authentic assessment opportunities than their peers in neighboring schools. Before creating the senior wing and senior academic program, Meyer says students at his school "were standing out as far as content, but where our parents and our community recognized the struggle was their ability to manage their own independence." By combining physical plant improvements with content and pedagogical changes Meyer has created a framework where all the pieces come together. By increasing the availability of AP and dual credit courses, as well as increasing access to work and internship experiences Meyer has been able to capture the academic rigor, scholastic relevance, and freedom in scheduling, which leads to greater student responsibility and improved engagement in school, with stronger post-secondary outcomes for students.

As Meyer says: "then alongside that is the instructional delivery piece." The most important changes caused by the addition of the senior wing and the change in student schedules is that the learning is now more "independent based." Content delivery has moved from traditional methods of instruction and assessment to project based learning that is more student driven, which was all a result of "our stakeholders [telling] us you got to give them more confidence in their ability to handle their own independence." This independence, designated as freedom here, is not releasing students from responsibility, but rather shifting responsibility to students, while under the watchful eye of educators and parents. Principals interviewed had not formally collected data from graduates, however Meyer did note anecdotal conversations with graduates and community

members that suggested this newly instituted approach to allowing students more independence was having positive results on students after high school as intended.

Increasing Post-Secondary Opportunities for Students

The most consistent theme that emerged from participant comments is that each incremental change made in redesigning the senior year leads to the most important outcome: Increasing post-secondary opportunities for students. Without question, each principal interviewed serves a school and individual community that has a college going culture. To varying degrees, each participant is attempting to honor that history while broadening their scope to better serve individual students.

The most obvious way these principals are meeting the needs of students is by offering a broader array of learning experiences that take students out into their communities for internships, vocational training, and job-related programs, which previously had not been emphasized in their schools. Butler addressed this very well in his second interview by stating that “[s]enior year is about connecting/bridging to the next stage ... post-secondary, career, etc.... the senior year is not a year for coasting. It is not an ending but a beginning and setting the stage for next steps.” Butler stated that current successful changes implemented at his school will lead to “more career-oriented focus and authentic learning.” Because post-secondary success is directly linked to the individual academic preparation each student receives in high school, it is imperative that students understand the link between school and their future (Bowen, Kurzweil & Tobin, 2005; Geiser & Santelices, 2007). Butler would like to see more senior projects, increased internships and work-based learning opportunities for the students in his school, and even apprenticeships for seniors who qualify.

Ireland's entire redesign effort is built on post-secondary pathway creation that builds on local needs and resources to create "capstone" experiences that include partnerships with post-secondary institutions and local business. As written previously, this work was not readily accepted even by the local chamber of commerce when it began, and it must be noted that one of Ireland's biggest fears is that recent state changes in diploma expectations is "going to jack it up" and cause the creative local solution to be lost. "I think the state is going to...completely jack it up by forcing these pathways and forcing these certifications and tying our hands, but I wish they could just let this grow organically." Nevertheless, the work Ireland and her school is doing is changing the shape of the senior year for students in her school and impacting post-secondary opportunities as she engages the school and community in conversations about individual students. "When the parent hears what you're saying, 'my kid's not smart enough to go to college?' No, ma'am, I'm saying your kid is so flipping smart you don't need to sink \$128 grand into an education right now. Let them get out. Let them go get some experience. Let them go try something, you know what I mean?"

Meyer's approach to providing students with better outcomes after high school by increasing post-secondary opportunities began in 2015 (which followed a large building project for a senior wing in 2010) when he started a project related to college and career preparation. Meyer reported that parents were key in informing the school that it's focus on being "very teacher driven, very test driven, very content driven" wasn't preparing students for their "next." Meyer used the building project and senior wing to ask teachers "to do more student-centered instruction...but we utilized the physical redesign to leverage student-centered instruction." In addition to changing the instructional model to make it more relevant while maintaining academic intensity, Meyer increased access to dual credit courses and internship opportunities for students.

Meyer has approximately 200 seniors participating in their dual credit program that allows students to take just 4 courses, and has increased the number of students in vocational programming from 10 in 2015-2016, to 40 in 2017-2018. He also expects internship participation to increase as the district has hired a full time internship coordinator.

Supporting subthemes revealed in the study included: (a) physical plant structures, building projects, and building design have direct impacts on how redesign of educational programming is structured, (b) local stakeholder desires help shape changes, (c) communicating change, (d) perceived student needs, and (e) the individual strengths and dispositions of school leadership personnel, create a framework for site specific solutions which can vary significantly even in high performing high schools.

Physical Plant

When addressing why redesigning the physical plant benefited the redesign of the senior year, all three participants clearly believe that physical changes to the school building can hasten the level of change school leaders can leverage. Each participant spoke about how the physical plant has—or in Ireland's case how she perceives a future building project will—affected redesign efforts. Although research on how physical plant construction influences school culture and curriculum is limited, Woolner, Hall, Higgins, McCaughey, and Wall (2007) state that there are aspects of school building construction that “can be part of a catalytic process of school development and improvement” (p. 47).

Moore and Lackney (as cited in Tanner, 2008) predicted the kinds of educational spaces one sees in new school construction today. Among the items predicted were workstations for each student, rooms that are similar to studio spaces, common gathering places, presentation areas, and quiet smaller spaces for students to work independently in. Weinstein (1981) posited that physical

space can improve or inhibit learning. He also accepted that the teaching and learning classroom should match the learning outcomes required, student learning styles, and the setting's culture. Weinstein suggested that learning is increased when the physical plant receives as much planning and care as curriculum and teacher preparation.

Ireland is in a different position than the other two interviewees because her school has not yet been renovated. Because renovations to the physical plant did not precede changes in curriculum or instruction, Ireland is excited about the possibilities a physical redesign presents. She paints on a clean canvas without regard to the physical structure, knowing that changes to the building are coming. Ireland said that, "we are ... designing the building a little bit differently to have much more open, flexible spaces and then really thinking about the [structure and design of the] school day." While the physical school redesign did not precede the senior year redesign, Ireland intends to use the coming building project to augment current redesign initiatives.

The school that Butler oversees seems originally to have staked all changes on the structure and layout of the building itself. The school began its one-to-one computing initiative in its senior only wing, practicing with the devices and how they would work in the classroom. Butler stated that the addition of a senior only wing helped create the "school-within-a-school kind of idea ... otherwise, physically we would not have been able to produce something like that." The new building "really made it possible." Many of the successful changes associated with renovations in the physical plant are related to new furniture, LCD projectors for teachers, enhancements brought on by the one-to-one computing initiative and the senior wing teachers being "the hub for that for quite a while." Recently, changes and access to improved technology and one-to-one computing for the entire school have followed the changes in the senior wing. Not all new spaces have functioned as intended. Butler stated that "project rooms" that opened during the 2009-2010

school year originally designed “so kids could break off and work in those rooms and work on individual projects” are lightly used. “I would not say that they are used that much ... Great concept, but they are not necessarily used that much.”

Apart from the new technology and resources the physical redesign brought, the actual space created has been as important as anything in driving the senior year redesign. It is apparent that the senior only wing in Butler’s school is viewed as an advantage from a culture standpoint. “The focus in [the senior only wing] is definitely better able to be ... felt and realized as a result of having their own space.” Students are made to feel special as related to their peers and have the advantage of creating mature relationships with a small cadre of teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators.

Like Butler’s school, the changes at Meyer’s school included the building of a new senior only wing from the outset. The most pointed difference between Meyer’s and Butler’s schools, however, is that Meyer’s school planned from the beginning to create schedule changes for students, provide curricular enhancements, improve course rigor and relevance for students, and make day-to-day behavioral expectation changes related to the new wing. These were intentional changes from the very beginning of the planning process for the building project. In contrast, it seems as though plans for a separate physical space for seniors at Butler’s school was an end unto itself, with little planning for the curricular changes that the building might have facilitated.

Beyond the simple fact that moving the seniors to their own dedicated location appears to naturally change a school culture, Meyer “utilized the physical redesign to leverage student-centered instruction.” A facilities audit solidified the need for more space in Meyer’s school as the student population grew. School administrators considered opening a new high school as one way to alleviate space problems; however, community input dictated that no new school would be

built, and plans to renovate proceeded. At the same time, an Indianapolis based superintendent was working with members of the Indiana General Assembly to craft a bill that would allow high-performing schools to have more leeway in designing academic and scheduling solutions for students. As the building project and High Performing Schools legislation converged, new ideas for the school took shape. Meyer said, “I think we’re starting to see more of that now ... If you change the physical environment, then that does bleed over and even into your traditional environment.” This can be seen in the work of Tanner (2008, p. 327), which speaks to a learning environment’s “overall impression” that creates personality within the space. Although not explicit in his reply, one can hear the echoes of disruptive innovation in Meyer when he stated, “I think even the physical environment has had a nice instructional impact through the building. They [teachers] see possibilities that they didn’t. We see possibilities on the administrative team that we never did before.”

Based on the interviews with Butler and Meyer, it seems clear that the physical plant can have a direct effect on how one approaches redesign efforts. Dudek (2000) reported that environmental psychologists have studied how people respond to physical space; however, little research has been done concerning physical plant structure and how people react in schools specifically. Dudek (2000) has also noted that school design and curriculum are all part of creating a fully integrated learning scheme. Meyer has been able to leverage the new space provided at his school to create a completely different teaching and learning culture than existed before the senior wing was built. Ireland’s experience, however, would suggest that principal’s need not wait for physical building improvements to cultivate change.

Local Stakeholder Desires

Each participant in this study values the community within which their school resides and the stakeholders who have a vested interest in the decisions that are made concerning the school. Although the level of integrating local stakeholder input varies from school to school, each principal remarked about student, parent, community, and post-secondary communication, and in each case for the need to network with local business leaders. Each participant in this study has been able to develop community support in unique ways, which has aided in redesigning the senior year.

Based on Butler's responses, it appears that he has not had to deal with community resistance to change. This may be true because his school has largely maintained a traditional high school schedule, curriculum offerings have changed slowly, and the focus of the school remains significantly college preparatory in nature. Butler stated that he believes the results, focus, energy, and emphasis placed "on what is happening at the senior year" has garnered a great deal of support. "I would say from a community perspective they've been very supportive of what we have done." Students, teachers, and families in the community have supported the school-wide changes, which Butler suggests could lead to further experimentation with a Flex schedule. "We have not experimented with [a] flex schedule [like] the state allows. That is something we are considering on how to open that up ... that is not something we have focused a lot on. [We haven't] had a lot of questions about it." Butler does see a growing need and support in the community for more internship opportunities for students. "We do have internships, but it is a very small program. It is something we are looking to possibly build, but that is certainly one option for kids to go out in the community."

Ireland's work varies from Butler's in that the pathway programs she is developing require a great deal of community interaction and commitment. Ireland's commitment to communicating

with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses has allowed her to grow site specific opportunities, which are likely not to be seen in other schools. Ireland explains her vision for pathways as growing “organically” where leaders in her school network continually communicate with local organizations and business leaders. Her community sees the value in getting seniors real life experience, and as a result, Ireland has “very invested” business partners, and named specific partners and their immediate relationship to the success of specific education pathways created at Ireland’s school. Working with the local Chamber of Commerce has enhanced Ireland’s ability to match educational programming with local business needs. Ireland provides a positive example of how businesses and communities become equally invested in the education process when they see that new programs benefit themselves personally and the community in which they live.

Meyer and other school leaders used the process of talking with stakeholders from the outset of redesign “to say, what are our obstacles?” From the beginning of the planning process, Meyer and his school completed “stakeholder interviews.” According to Meyer, parent and community member input “drove” changes in curricular offerings as well as building design. Initial conversations and ideas for a new high school experience for students whereby the entire high school looked and felt like college was rebuffed. Meyer stated that parent’s still “wanted the high school experience. They wanted band. They wanted to be in the high school.” Changes were acceptable, but not to the extent that the high school experience would look drastically different. Because they consulted with stakeholders, Meyer and his leadership team were able to design within accepted boundaries. “I think we’ve hit more of a sweet spot with what we are doing now.” In addition, it was stakeholders who “told us” that the school needed to “give [students] more confidence in their ability to handle their own independence.” No matter the direction taken by

principals, it is obvious that meeting the needs of local stakeholders and including their desires for the school greatly influences the direction of and chances for success.

Communicating Change

Directly related to the success of including stakeholders in the process of high school redesign is the ability of school leadership to clearly communicate. As with each of the previous themes and interviews, each participant's view of the need to communicate varied based on his or her individual situation. Each emphasized the importance of communication, but each participant's sense that communication matters differed in the way that each approached communicating change. Even so, there was one consistent communication item that each participant spoke of: the need for excellent academic guidance counseling communication.

Butler primarily spoke about the need to have consistent communication from academic guidance counselors to students and parents. As one might expect from Butler's indirect involvement in high school redesign, his focus is on helping students and families hear the important message of what courses to take, when to take them, and how decisions made even in middle school affect student outcomes after graduation. Butler expressed that being intentional with academic guidance communication to students and parents in a systematic way has happened "over the last five years." Butler also expressed an awareness that each successive academic year builds for the next by saying that student and parent communication has to include the middle school families, "helping [students and parents] to see how those [academics] matriculate to the high school, [and] being very intentional about that." Butler recognizes that redesigning the senior year, both academically and experientially, is only as effective as students and parents want it to be. By communicating at an early age the benefits and opportunities a redesigned senior year provides, students are more likely to buy in and maximize opportunities.

Ireland also discussed her views on whether each student in her school needs to go to college after high school. Conversations with parents and students includes helping them see that “your kid is so flipping smart you don’t need to sink \$128,000.00 into an education right now.” Ireland states that, “when the parent hears what you’re saying, [their natural response is to question] ‘my kid’s not smart enough to go to college?’” Ireland cited instances in her school where students are foregoing immediate post-secondary education and forming successful careers in areas her community might not historically viewed as viable. Of course, Ireland and her leadership team have to explain this to students and families. As success has become evident to individuals, communication among stakeholders has helped to support the idea that not all high performing students need to go to college. “We have to get out of this notion of us telling kids what is acceptable or worthy or honorable or relevant [after high school].” Given Ireland’s unique ideas—perhaps the most aggressive of any participant in this study—communication has been vital to the success of the senior year redesign.

Meyer’s view is quite comprehensive as he describes the need to communicate effectively with constituents. Meyer is aware that at one time his school and counseling staff didn’t do a good job of counseling students and parents from the beginning about expectations, options, and the need to build an academic resume. Echoing points that Ireland made, Meyer emphasized that the senior experience is improved if students know what they are working towards from day one. Meyer stated that “I think we have grown tremendously in guidance on how we start earlier in identifying [students].” As conversations with students and parents improved at Meyer’s school, the school has been able to improve the relevance of the senior year by looking at students individually and asking, “does an internship make sense for this senior[,] ... does the [community college] route make more sense for this senior[,] ... is an elite college what this senior is looking

for?” Each participant in this study gave a strong sense that each was willing to meet the needs of individual students much more effectively than they may have in their past.

Importantly, Ireland and Meyer highlighted the need to communicate in other contexts as well. Both reported that communication includes all facets of school leadership. Ireland said that she leaves “space and time” for planning sessions with her leadership team in an effort to create and build a “consistent vision” that forms the basis of all things in her school. She also talked about the need to keep teachers informed and to include them in discussions—even when the direction will be set by the leadership team and that direction may not be what the teachers want. When talking with all stakeholders, Ireland was clear that her message must be on point and transferable in an easy fashion. “I think because you get limited time with them ... you have to be very, very clear and concise with your message. I think it’s really, really important that you get three or four talking points over any big idea, and those are the ones that you and your team go out and say the same thing all the time.” For Ireland, that mantra is “All roads lead to careers.”

Meyer’s sense of what and how to communicate is student driven, just as it is for Ireland. Whether discussing the advent of the High Performing Schools legislation that precipitated change at his school, building of a new senior wing at his school, expanding college level academic offerings, increasing access to internships, or making instructional changes with his teachers, Meyer asks, “[W]hat are the obstacles?” That question then informs his ability to shape changes. Once changes are in place, Meyer asks, “[H]ow [do] we get that kid plugged in to a program to see different options?” Meyer continues by saying “I think what we learned is ... there is something [important] to involving stakeholder input, especially students.

Students are not Meyer’s only focus in communicating change. Like Ireland, he understands the power of teachers being resistant to change. Meyer led his teachers to “get

comfortable with learning on display” and with changes in instructional delivery. Meyer states, “We’ve been able to navigate that storm ... if we are a risk taking culture, if we’re a failure culture [allowing teachers to experiment and fail], if we’re a culture that allows teachers to teach to their strengths ... as a building leader I have to be able to explain that.” A principal can implement only so much change: the day-to-day difference has to come from teachers. And communicating to teachers the reason for specific changes improves that process.

Perceived Student Needs

Interviews with each participant revealed leaders who see themselves as making student driven decisions. The term “student driven decisions” derives from the standpoint that although the school is run by adults—teachers, administrators, the schoolboard, and state officials—school leaders see their ultimate constituents as the students they serve. As stated previously, what are perceived as needs can be informed by community standards, stakeholder input, available community resources, and a desire to improve the rigor and relevance of the high school educational experience. Principals aren’t making changes just to make changes. All of the redesign efforts that Butler, Ireland, and Meyer spoke about are intended to improve students’ experiences and preparation for the future.

Butler spoke about the need to “go back to the original intent” of building the senior wing of his school. He asked the rhetorical question, “[A]re we still living up to that, how does it need change and adjust with the current needs of students?” Butler said, “[A]necdotally, feedback, whether it is [from] teacher[s] sharing emails with me from students or families ... about my kid is starting as a sophomore at Purdue or whatever ... the anecdotal data has been positive.” Butler also shared how he uses student focus groups to advise the administrative team on both positive and negative aspects of the senior experience in the school. Butler noted that responses received

from these diverse gatherings of students “have always been very positive from kids in regards to their preparation.”

Ireland’s approach is unique, in that she has senior students complete an exit survey as their ticket to graduation rehearsal. She wants to know if students challenged themselves. Several years ago Ireland noted that “coming out of those [surveys] was kids were saying ‘if you’re not an AP kid, there’s not a place for you here.’” This became one of several impetuses for change. As Ireland said, “[I]t used to be that we were focused on getting kids to graduate. Well, now that has evolved to preparing them for the day after graduation, right? Well, now that is evolving to all roads lead to careers.” Ireland’s emphasis on internship and other career related experiences shows that she and her team are dedicated to expanding the importance of senior year beyond AP courses.

The work Meyer has done to redesign the senior year includes what he calls “student-centered instruction”. Meyer stated that “once you have seen student-centered instruction and you’ve had that moment of real authentic assessment that worked, once you see how students are more confident in their core academic skills and their reading and their writing and their presentation skills because you’ve given them independence, you’ve given them choice, you can’t go back.” Like Butler, Meyer points to conversations with students and graduates as key feedback as to whether the changes in the school are working to serve students. Meyer says, “as always, just kids coming back again [to the high school after matriculating to post-secondary opportunities] and saying ‘I stood out among my peers ... I was so much more prepared’ ... and again, not just talking about content.”

Each principal interviewed emphasized in their own way that students are driving force behind everything they do. No matter how differently they may go about the process, the end goal is the same.

Individual Leadership Strengths and Dispositions

The interviews elicited a wide range of responses that help to identify the strengths needed for principals to lead change. It is clear that in the cases studied, each person's willingness to initiate change or to seek new ways to structure the school experiences for their students varies.

Butler is a strong building leader; however, he leaves initiating change to others on his team, and he does not appear to take the lead or wish to drive significant changes. His responses to questions about the specifics of change in his school often resulted in him naming others who have led changes or who would know more than he does about processes in his school. Butler appears to be a good manager of other leaders at the school (teachers and assistants). He gives others the freedom to initiate change and doesn't feel the need to micromanage. Butler demonstrates his effectiveness by being visible to all and by articulating the vision of the school. Even though his leadership style is different than Ireland's and Meyer's, Butler can articulate redesign efforts he can support in the school's future.

Based on responses from Ireland, one expects her to lead with passion and energy. Ireland was a very animated interview on both occasions. Her passion for making site specific changes that will improve outcomes for her students appears to extend to all facets of the high school experience. And similar to Butler, Ireland's answers indicate that she enables her administrative team to draw large on a fresh canvas, while she supports the work they do. "Usually what I do is tell people, my team, you go and implement, let me stay behind the scenes and talk to who needs talked to and remove this obstacle, [to] finesse ... I really try to give my people permission if it is the right thing to do. Give them permission and let them know I'll be held accountable, not them, and I am very willing to be held accountable for it." Ireland is aware that part of her job is to be developing program for students that will serve them in the long term, whereas business leaders concern themselves with immediate needs for workers. Even so, Ireland has staked a great many

innovations in her school to relationships and partnerships made with local businesses, while also improving academic access for students across the curriculum, and creating flexibility for students. Her passion for redesigning the senior experience has allowed her to overcome any obstacle throughout that process.

Meyer is much like Ireland without the overt passion. Meyer's interviews suggest that he has a strong understanding of his own dispositions and need for growth. While discussing his school's impressive curriculum, instruction, scheduling, and physical plant innovations, Meyer also noted his own misgivings about change, the need to trust others, and the necessity to keep growing himself. While recounting a story that described a very creative school day that included every single person in the school Meyer reflected, "I had some teachers, and I know they were testing me, came to me and said 'we want to do a student choice day' ...and I am thinking 3400 kids, creating a logistic nightmare. But I knew as a culture we were at a point I couldn't say no to it." Relatedly, Meyer told of personal misgivings concerning student freedoms he and his leadership team had to come to grips with as they implemented their senior year changes. During the time of his leadership, Meyer expressed the need to model vulnerability and to take risks. "You've got to model failure. You've got to be vulnerable yourself ... We're modeling vulnerability and risk taking ... It's dangerous and it's messy." Meyer understands that he too needs to grow. Someone with a great idea is a great leader for a while. But once that idea is gone, there's nothing left. Meyer seems to have the personal drive for constant improvement, a strong sense of self-awareness, and the ability to articulate the excellence that then pervades the school.

Meyer's interviews suggest that he is not fully aware that the level of change he is leading is unique. In his school he has led physical plant improvements, which led to student schedule changes, which increased freedom for students. Changes in the physical plant also became the

impetus for changing curriculum delivery and improved assessment arrays for teacher and students. Changes in the schedule became changes in the curriculum as students and the leadership team began to see learning outside of school in the form of internships as viable and necessary. The changes continue—due in no small part to Meyer’s continual push for improvement.

Assertions

The participants’ commentary, outlined themes, and sub-themes in the previous sections from the case study provide insight into the experiences of high school principals as they work to create site specific redesign solutions for their schools. The principal’s individual statements, as well as the commentary, serve to clarify the various facets of the principal as a leader in redesign efforts. The interrelated nature of each theme is apparent in the principal’s answers. The themes identified through data analysis have been assessed, leaving three assertions for principals to consider when seeking to create site-specific school redesign solutions in their own settings. As is apparent in the literature review for this study, students have a history of easing off and disengaging in the senior year. High school redesign efforts have the potential to increase engagement in the senior year.

Assertion #1 – Principals must have a clear vision for the need to change.

Redesign efforts, such as those studied here, have the potential to increase student engagement while improving both the perceived value of study and the academic rigor of courses seniors take (Kuh, 2007). Rather than reinforce a culture of relaxation and ease during the senior year, principals such as those in this study are redesigning the senior year to increase expectations for academic intensity through Advanced Placement and dual credit study, internships, vocational training, and personalized learning experiences.

All three principals expressed a need to improve the connection between school and post-secondary opportunities. Although each school served a college going community, each principal articulated the need to expand work or internship opportunities because they can see the benefit for students. As principals concentrate on students' experiences, high school redesign will take on the personality of the school and community served. Redesign efforts in one school may not translate to other locations well, thus principals must use the examples from other schools as a starting point for change while determining the best course of action for their individual schools (Dries & Rehage, 2008a, 2008b, 2011, Kirst 2000, Kirst 2001).

Principals must realize that high school seniors often experience their least important and least academically intense school year when they enter the 12th grade (Sizer, 2002). Networking with principals who are working to improve student learning opportunities in the senior year is an important option for understanding and developing a vision specific to their personal setting.

Assertion #2 – Principals must communicate clearly with stakeholders.

When implementing high school redesign plans, principals must communicate the need for change as well as the structure changes will take. During interviews, Meyer said that “vision should drive decision making. How do we make it a more relevant and rigorous senior year for all students?” Meyer’s vision, along with Butler’s and Ireland’s, is to meet the needs of all students, not just those who will matriculate to elite post-secondary institutions. Meyer seeks to “customize [individual student’s curriculum options] and do a better job with that ... so, I think decision making is shaped by vision. The vision is how we make it more relevant while maintaining the rigor of the senior year.” As leaders in the school, each principal must be able to explain that redesign efforts will not harm those traditionally served, but will enhance all students’ options for an academically challenging senior year.

That said, it is clear from the principals' comments that redesign efforts are not complete upon implementation and that initial plans will change as time progresses. This too, must be communicated with stakeholders. Butler suggested the need for reevaluation of the original intent of redesign plans. While noting that the building of a senior only wing at his school made it possible to implement a school-within-a-school model, he was also aware that some intended changes weren't used often. "Great concept, but [uniquely designed rooms and spaces] are not necessarily used that much." Physical plant changes Meyer led have had a direct influence on the curriculum options and creativity at the school. Meyer said, "[W]e have utilized the physical redesign to leverage student-centered instruction." Throughout the process of building a senior only wing and change to instructional design, Meyer "utilized that process of talking to our stakeholders to say, what are our obstacles."

All of the principals spoke of the ongoing need to communicate. Butler relies heavily on administrative team members to create a vision and complete the work of redesign, while he ensures communication is clear with students and families about academic concerns. Ireland uses her ability to simplify the various necessary messages that individual stakeholders need to hear by articulating succinctly. Ireland said, "[Y]ou have to be very, very clear and concise on your message. I think it's really, really important that you get three or four talking points over any big idea, and those are the ones that you and your team go out and say the same thing all the time."

One could argue that the most important area of communication in high school redesign can be found in listening to students. Dries and Rehage (2011) list multiple reasons that we should listen to students as much as we present communication outward. Students are capable and valuable resources in the community who are looking for ways to break old routines. Students are

eager to show what they know and can do and wish to move beyond traditional teacher directed learning experiences.

Assertion #3 – Principals must embrace the uniqueness of their school and create redesign solutions specific to their schools.

In Patton et al. (2001b), the authors write that “no single ‘silver bullet’ will bring about the changes required in the nation’s education system ... what is required is a nationwide commitment by states and communities to provide all students with rigorous and challenging academic preparation.” By looking at three similar (yet distinct) communities, this study demonstrates the need for site specific solutions that serve individual schools and communities well. There is no “right” answer or specific plan that can be replicated identically from one location to the next. This should seem self-evident when one considers how varied individual human talents are, how unevenly dispersed talents are, and how unequal individual school facilities and budgets are.

In their work redesigning senior experiences for students at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, Dries and Rehage (2011) relied specifically on faculty expertise, examples from model programs, and research to create new programming for their students. Sizer (2003) suggests that schools can revitalize the senior year by changing courses of study, cutting back on traditional course offerings, giving students learning experiences which test their ability to work diligently, help them make well thought-out choices, manage their time well, and helping students adjust to change. Obviously, there are limitations within state statute and department of education guidelines, but these laws and guidelines can be mined for creative solutions that answer the letter of the law and yet create better learning experiences for students.

Summary

Following the data collection process and open coding of responses, this qualitative case study revealed that the work of redesigning the senior year takes different forms depending on circumstances. Three participants were interviewed to collect data on the process of high school redesign specific to the senior year. Every effort has been made to present the perspectives of the participants throughout chapter four. These interviews provide information and issues to consider as a starting point for school leaders who wish to initiate redesigned senior year experiences for students. The data analysis process revealed four major themes and five sub-themes. The four themes include (a) rigor, (b) relevance, (c) freedom, and (d) increasing post-secondary opportunities for students were the overarching structures within which principals framed the need for change. The supporting sub-themes are (a) physical plant structures, (b) local stakeholder desires, (c) perceived student needs; (d) communicating change; and (e) the individual strengths and dispositions of school leadership personnel. Each theme and sub-theme created a framework for site-specific solutions at each school.

Three assertions, which should serve as building blocks for principals leading redesign efforts were also developed and are as follows:

1. Principals must have a clear vision for the need to change.
2. Principals must communicate clearly with stakeholders.
3. Principals must embrace the uniqueness of their school and create redesign solutions specific to their schools.

The assertions are supported by information collected from participating principals through interviews. Chapter 5 considers recommendations gleaned from the study, the limitations of the study, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although each principal interviewed provided details concerning the changes initiated in their schools and each demonstrated great care concerning their respective students and schools, it is clear that none of the schools are implementing truly disruptive innovations as defined by Christensen (2008). Notwithstanding the existence of one-to-one computing, increased academic rigor, increased access to internship experiences, and student freedom to shape their academic days, the principals (and by extension the schools) studied are not developing truly disruptive educational environments that will replace the brick and mortar schools of our nation. This is not to say that the changes made at the respective schools under the guidance of the participating principals are not significant. On the contrary, schools across Indiana would be well served to study the positive and substantive innovations made at these schools (and potentially other schools) as a way to make site specific changes appropriate to their individual community and school settings. Observations from interviews determined that the innovations undertaken and implemented represent examples of what Christensen would call sustaining innovations (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008). Christensen writes: “In every organization there are forces that shape and morph every new innovative proposal so that it fits the existing organization’s own business model, rather than fitting the market it was intended to serve” (p. 74). Elements of the principal interviews demonstrate innovative approaches to personalizing the educational experiences of high school seniors while increasing the rigor and relevance of the senior year, but each stops short of being a disruptive innovation in the sense that Christensen defines.

Participants should be encouraged (and readers as well) by the innovations the interviewed principals have implemented in a relatively short period of time. The blended learning opportunities for students, one-to-one computing platforms, digital learning management systems,

unique scheduling options for seniors, Advanced Placement courses and dual credit offerings, changes in teacher perceptions about what students know and can do, and changes in what it means to offer a rigorous and relevant student-centered academic instruction, as well as increased access to work based learning and internships all should be commended and built upon by educators in other locations.

As noted in Tyack and Cuban (1995), educators willing and able to innovate in our schools are likely to continue to be limited by institutional structure and “powerful political constituencies ... social expectations about schooling held both by educators and by the general public” (p.134). Discouragement in the face of long odds can be ameliorated by networking with likeminded peers who are doing similar work in their schools. As Meyer noted during interviews, specific changes in the physical plant at his school preceded other redesign efforts in his school. “I think even that physical environment [a new wing for seniors] has had a nice instructional impact throughout the building. They [teachers and staff] see possibilities that they didn't. We see possibilities on the administrative team that we never did before.” As such, I am not making a general assertion as one might in other case study research (Yin, 2008). Rather, I believe the research findings discussed here represent only a starting point for practical application of localized decision making and site specific solutions for educators similar to what Meyer experienced after building a new building.

Using the work of Clayton Christensen as a framework, it was my desire to assess principal perceptions as to whether the changes made in their school are truly disruptive innovations, or instead are sustaining innovations as suggested by the work of Christensen, Horn, & Johnson (2008). The purpose of this study was to describe how high school principals in Indiana are

redesigning senior year academic experiences as a means of increasing student engagement and making the senior year more valuable for students.

This qualitative multiple case research study was developed to examine the experiences of high school principals doing the work of high school redesign in Indiana. There were five emerging themes within which participant responses could be grouped and five supporting sub-themes which further delineated the findings. As written in Chapter 4, it is evident that (a) rigor, (b) relevance, (c) freedom, and (d) increasing post-secondary opportunities for students were the overarching structures within which principals framed the need for change. The supporting sub-themes are (a) physical plant structures, (b) local stakeholder desires, (c) perceived student needs, (d) communicating change, and (e) the individual strengths and dispositions of school leadership personnel. Each theme and sub-theme created a framework for site specific solutions at each school.

The following research questions guided this study: (1) What types of changes are high school principals implementing when redesigning the senior year experiences for students? (2) How are high school principals making decisions about their high school redesign initiatives? (3) What difficulties do high school principals face when implementing their high school redesign initiatives? The data collected from interviews provided the information necessary to consider these questions.

Discussion of Findings

The remainder of this chapter addresses the implications of this study, including the research questions examined, recommendations for future research, and the limitations of the study. As four themes and five sub-themes emerged, three assertions developed. When studying the responses of the three principals in this study, it became evident that (a) rigor, (b) relevance,

(c) freedom, and (d) increasing post-secondary opportunities for students were the overarching structures within which principals framed the need for change. The creation of site specific redesign solutions at each school is supported by the sub-themes of (a) physical plant structures, (b) local stakeholder desires, (c) perceived student needs; (d) communicating change; and (e) the individual strengths and dispositions of school leadership personnel.

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What types of changes are high school principals implementing when redesigning the senior year experiences for students?
2. How are high school principals making decisions about their high school redesign initiatives?
3. What difficulties do high school principals face when implementing their high school redesign initiatives?

Research Question One

Research question one investigated how the principals were implementing changes when redesigning the senior year experiences for students. Specifically, questions related to whether daily schedules had been altered, how or if academic offerings had been enhanced, how or if behavioral expectations for seniors have changed, and how or if been changes made to the physical plant which augmented redesign efforts. The principals interviewed articulated a vision for their schools, which may or may not translate directly to other locations. For example, each principal has developed daily schedules that serve their schools well; however, each principal developed schedules that are completely unlike the others. Each school has augmented academic offerings as well as altered behavior expectations for its students, but only two of the three schools have made physical plant renovations to serve senior students specifically.

Each principal in this study serves a high performing school district as stipulated by their “A” designation by the Indiana Department of Education. Because of this, each school is afforded the same freedom to alter their schedule for students. Only Meyer has done so in a significant manner, although Butler and Ireland have made alterations on either end of the school day providing additional freedoms to seniors. Meyer is also the only principal in this study to have significantly altered the expectations for student so that those taking four or more college level courses have additional freedoms. Although creative in their own right, Butler and Ireland have not chosen to make significant changes to their daily schedules specific to seniors.

All three principals have made significant changes to curricular offerings, with the expansion of internship opportunities being the most significant similarity among the schools. In all cases, the principals decided to increase internships based on the needs of students. Those internship programs have led to increased community involvement in the schools. Based on observation, it appears that two of the three principals are leading their schools to increase rigor across the academic spectrum, using Advanced Placement and dual credit offerings augmented by partnerships with local post-secondary institutions. Although the third principal is clearly the building leader, professional decisions have been made that require other building personnel to make decisions about curriculum augmentation.

Each participant in this study expressed understanding that changes in the physical plant can or has enhanced the redesign efforts in their schools. Although Ireland had yet to experience the effects of a building project, Butler and Meyer confidently spoke about how the new senior wings of their schools impacted their schools’ climate, culture, and academic settings. Butler had not tied curricular changes to the senior wing of his school. Meyer, however, strongly conveyed that the physical plant was an impetus for greater curricular innovation. From the outset of design,

Meyer and the school community worked to create a learning space which would impact the “entire delivery and design of curriculum.” Ideas relating the design of the physical plant to instructional delivery were considered from the outset of planning for change. A key statement by Meyer related the fact that the new physical plant helped stakeholders “see possibilities that they didn’t [before].” Meyer asserted “that physical environment has had a nice instructional impact throughout the building [school].

Research Question Two

Research question two investigated how high school principals make decisions about high school redesign initiatives. Participants were asked to describe their decision-making process, what resources and research they consulted when determining redesign initiatives, and based on hindsight, what changes to the decision-making process they would change if they were to approach redesign again. Each principal responded with varying levels of passion about where they thought their schools were headed next as they reflected on how their decision-making processes.

One of the three principals was not a part of redesign efforts to a great degree and had largely allowed others to take the lead in changing senior year experiences. This principal was aware that there are schools and leaders doing the work of redesign. Although he had not visited those schools or done significant networking to share ideas with building leaders in those locations, he had encouraged others on the leadership team to network and learn from others. Even with a limited background in the specific changes which reshaped the senior year in his school, this building leader clearly created an environment conducive to change and had moved forward to make changes in the future.

All three leaders realized the need for ongoing and consistent communication with all stakeholders. Meyer had been a part of a process that intentionally included the superintendent, the principal, a wide range of administrators, teachers, students, parents, and stakeholders. Ireland also spoke specifically about the importance of communicating the need for change with all stakeholders. Butler asserted that if there was a specific weakness in the work of the senior experience in his school it was in the area of ongoing review and evaluation. Butler stated a need to go “back to what was the original intent of the [senior wing] and [ask] are we still living up to that?” Ireland expressed a need to have “philosophical time” and time to debrief with peers and team members about the curricular directions her school is taking. Ireland also spoke at length about the need to create positive community relationships, having a clear message to share, and listening to students. Meyer also expressed a need to have ongoing times of reflection and expressed how communication and networking with business leaders had been very important to the ongoing success of the school.

Research Question Three

Research question three asked participants about the challenges encountered while implementing redesign initiatives. Included in this question were follow-up questions about promoting ideas to multiple stakeholders, adjusting processes and initial strategies for change, and identifying the most significant threats to the sustainability of changes made to senior year programming. In addition, principals were asked how disruptive the changes had been to the life of the school and what were the most positive and least advantageous reactions to the changes made in their schools.

Clearly all participants feel that communicating clearly with stakeholders is the key to building sustainable changes that the community can support. As with most innovations,

redesigning high school experiences for students requires some experimentation and trust because what is planned to happen rarely finishes in the same form. Communicating the need for change effectively has allowed the principals studied to continue making changes and augmenting the learning environment for students, making adjustments to all phases of the school experience as time passes.

It is clear that the principals interviewed feel that the greatest threat to the sustainability of changes comes from legislation that limits creativity in the schools. Relatedly, principals were concerned that decisions made by the Commission on Higher Education might hinder dual credit programming in high schools. In addition to legislative oversight, each principal clearly viewed the teaching staff in their schools as being problematic when creating change. Two of the principals suggested that teachers have a vested interest in the status quo and are not likely to be the change agents one would desire them to be. Ireland spoke about the need to move specific teachers off of leadership teams when they hindered progress, and Meyer added that when making plans for physical plant upgrades, teachers were the least affective at providing insight and ideas for changes.

The themes of rigor, relevance, freedom, increasing post-secondary opportunities for students are evident throughout the responses from principals. The principals understand that expanded educational options and the needs of students are driving the need for change in their schools. The principals also clearly articulate an understanding that student post-secondary options are augmented by the skills they acquire in high school. As the principals interviewed survey their own school environments, they are also acutely aware that physical plant structures enhance local decisions for change and that the desires of stakeholders must be taken into account when making changes. Each of the principals has a strong sense that communicating expectations and changes

is paramount in order to lead change successfully. The principals also know that self-reflection and the evaluation of their own strengths and dispositions is important for continuing change.

Recommendations

As stated previously, questions regarding the relevance of the senior year are a consistent concern for educators in all areas of the nation. Even though the literature suggests a need for change, many educators continue to offer the same high school experiences to 12th grade students as they do to 9th grade students. In Indiana, we have been provided avenues within which to create change for students in the senior year, even though state law still limits options. High school principals will continue to face difficulties in implementing redesign initiatives. Networking with peers to collaborate on site specific solutions seems to be a viable solution for administrators trying to innovate in spite of state placed obstacles. And although beyond the scope of this paper, more research and discussion is needed to support educators in creating site specific solutions and innovative programming for all students, not just those in the senior year.

Additional research could include studies of successful innovative practices in neighboring states that have similar legislative restrictions or by researching locations with far more freedom in an effort to bring ideas for even greater change to Indiana. Broadening the scope of research might also include the potential study of small or rural school innovations relative to the senior year, or research into senior year innovations occurring in urban or high poverty schools. In the broadest sense, the ultimate goal must be to increase the educational outcomes for all students. This study, however, sought only to encourage the work of redesign and school change in high schools in Indiana. And given the statutory restrictions, as discussed below, this study focused on high-performing schools within the state.

Action Steps for Principals

Principals and school leaders can take findings from this study and make them actionable by considering their own role in high school redesign, whether whole school or specific to the senior year. In summary, it is suggested that principals:

1. Network extensively with principals across the state in an effort to develop professional learning communities of their own. Principals should consider forming informal networks of communication with other school leaders serving schools demographically similar to, and drastically different than their own.
2. Communicate with all community stakeholders about the need for change. Express the “why” behind all proposed changes.
3. Collect information from a wide range of stakeholders, being intentional to survey current students for their ideas on changes that they consider significant to improving the senior year.
4. Collect information and ideas from recent graduates who have matriculated to post-secondary opportunities at the college level, have moved on to the world of work, or to military careers concerning changes that they feel would have improved their senior year experiences.
5. Make themselves aware of changes in school law that may allow their schools to implement changes that seem significantly outside the norm, yet are applicable to many locations.
6. Use building projects, significant physical plant renovations, and new schools as an impetus for change. All three principals in this study noted how a change in geography helped to bring curricular, instruction, and assessment changes to their schools.

7. Partner with community members and organizations to leverage changes and to meet the needs of the immediate community.
8. Focus changes on making senior experiences for students more relevant to their needs, while increasing the academic intensity of those experiences in more personalized ways.
9. Secure the support of central office leadership and the local school board while you are building toward the future.
10. Make a plan and get started. Develop a growth mindset that allows you to build the necessary changes when they are needed, and do not wait for all elements to be perfect for change ... they never will be.

Limitations

There are some obvious limitations to this study. At the time this study was initiated, it appeared there would be a large pool of principals in Indiana from which to draw. There was not. There are over 550 public high schools in Indiana. It was difficult to find high performing high schools as defined as “A” schools by the Indiana Department of Education who were recommended as doing the work of high school redesign in the senior year. Although there were five school principals recommended for this study, only three were readily available and interviewed. It would have been beneficial to have interviewed principals from a wider geographical area than was available to the researcher. These restrictions are limitations to this study, but they also show a deeper problem with education. This study was necessarily limited because of the way the law is written in Indiana. Only high-performing schools have much leeway to innovate in the manner in which we see at the schools studied.

Another limitation of the study was the extent to which each participant had actually been a leader in the innovations initiated in their schools. Two of the three participants had significant experiences in leading change, while one had not specifically led changes or could not verbalize how change had occurred as well as his peers. Restricting this study to qualitative methods served both as a positive and negative. A positive outcome of the study is its narrative nature and the ability to share what others are doing in an effort to inform change in others schools. By choosing to use strictly qualitative methods, this study may have limited the acceptance of findings of some readers who desire the inclusion of quantitative data in all research methods. Future study including quantitative information or mixed-methods may increase understanding.

In addition to using quantitative or mixed-methods research methodology, future research may enhance findings, action steps, and conclusions from this study by clarifying details. Researchers must determine what types of information would increase understanding. Suggestions for additional study include longitudinal studies of data collected from graduates including the following questions: Do students who experienced redesigned senior year experiences go to college at higher rates than their peers? Do they declare majors after participating in redesigned senior experiences at a higher rate than students participating in traditional senior year programming? Do they graduate from college in a timelier manner than their peers from traditional high schools? How do redesigned senior year experiences that include internships or work experiences impact post-secondary decision making? How are redesigned senior experiences being evaluated for effectiveness? This list is not exhaustive and researchers will find a number of new beginnings to study as they relate to high school redesign and the senior year.

Conclusions

As suggested by the literature, there continues to be a need to increase the relevance of the senior year in high school. Redesign of the senior year is possible; however, the process limited by local understanding and state statute. At the same time, the deft leader can improve local understanding while simultaneously navigating current state statute to find elements that will support changes. By encouraging creative solutions at the local level, principals can facilitate collaborative conversations with other principals to empower leaders to increase the relevance of the senior year. Although the nature of innovation studied here does not rise to the level of disruptive innovation as defined by Christensen, the innovating practices and experiences of these leaders can provide a starting point for more innovation and improve the educational experiences for students.

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APPENDIX A

Individual Interview Questions for Principals:

1. What specific changes have you made to your school in the process of redesigning senior year experiences for students?
 - a. How have you altered the daily schedule or individual schedules for students?
 - b. How have you enhanced academic offerings?
 - c. Have there been changes to rules and expectations specific to seniors in your school?
 - d. Have there been changes made to the physical plant in any way that have augmented redesign efforts?
2. How did you make decisions about high school redesign initiatives in your school?
 - a. Please describe your decision-making process.
 - b. What resources and research did you consult when deciding on your high school redesign initiative?
 - c. Based on your experiences, in hindsight, what changes to the decision-making process would you make?
3. What challenges did you encounter when implementing your redesign initiatives?
 - a. What specific changes required promoting the idea to multiple stakeholders?
 - b. As you have encounter difficulties which influence decisions related to redesigning the senior year, how have you adjusted processes and initial strategies for change?
 - c. What are the most significant threats to the sustainability of your changes in senior year programming?
 - d. How disruptive have the changes you have made in senior year programming been to the life of the school?
 - e. What have been the most positive and least advantageous reactions to the changes made in your school?

APPENDIX B

Individual Interview Questions for Principals Round 2:

1. Describe how your work in redesign has increased (or not increased) student engagement in the senior year.
2. How do you see current successful changes providing a platform for future change?
3. Using Christensen's definition for disruptive innovation as a lens (that disruptive innovation fundamentally changes the way products or educational experiences are developed or presented – think: analog to digital, rotary phones to cell phones, horses to the Ford Model T, or Taxis and Uber) what are the most powerfully disruptive innovations you have put in place in your school?

APPENDIX C

Participant Recruitment Letter:

September 4, 2017

Dear Colleague,

My name is Park Ginder. I am a doctoral student at Purdue University. I am also the principal at Homestead High School in Southwest Allen County Schools. The reason for this correspondence is to ask for your assistance. You have been selected to be a potential participant in my doctoral research study titled, "High School Redesign and the Senior Year." Based on the selection criteria, you have been identified as a principal in the state of Indiana who has been or is involved in redesigning senior year experiences for students in your school.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to describe how principals in high schools in Indiana are redesigning senior year academic experiences for students in order to increase engagement and make the senior year more valuable for students.

If you choose to participate in this research study you will be asked to participate in two interviews. The first interview will last approximately 40 minutes. The second round of interviews will be completed after each participant has an opportunity to read and verify initial observations made from the first interview. Second interviews should take no longer than 30 minutes.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are not required to participate. If you choose to participate, please know that you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. When I am done with the study, I will write a report with the hope that individual case-studies and multiple-case study and ideas specific to the principals interviewed can engender new ideas and help illicit planning and changes in other Indiana high schools. Your name, and the name of your school will not be used in the final report.

If you would like to speak with me to further discuss your participation, please feel free to contact me via email at pginder@purdue.edu or cell phone 260-341-0583. Dr. Marilyn Hirth (mahirth@purdue.edu) is my major professor and guiding my research. Please let me know by September 15, 2017, if you are interested in participating in this research study. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Thanks in advance,

Park D. Ginder
Purdue University, Graduate Student
Ph.D. Candidate

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

High School Redesign and the Senior Year

Dr. Marilyn Hirth

School of Education

Purdue University

Purpose of Research: The purpose of this research study is to describe how high school principals in Indiana are redesigning senior year experiences as a means to increasing student engagement and making the senior year more valuable for students.

Specific Procedures: Consent will be provided by all participants so all parties understand that participation is voluntary and each participant understands the risks involved in being interviewed. To minimize risk pseudonyms will be used in place of your name and your school corporation. I am requesting to take notes during interview sessions, as well as make audio recordings of each interview. Once permission is granted and the research participant consent form is signed, we will begin our interview sessions, using a scripted interview protocol. Upon completion of each individual interview, all notes, recordings, and consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet until successful completion of the research study.

Duration of Participation: Each participant will take part in two 40 minute interviews.

Risks: Based on responses and data provided in the research, readers may be able to link you, as the principal, to your school, as one of the principals being interviewed.

Benefits: The multiple-case study design will be used to show commonalities and differences in how high school principals are doing the work of high school redesign in Indiana, in the hope of demonstrating transferable behaviors and decisions in non-participating Indiana high schools. Current or aspiring principals will be able to access and learn from your experiences and find applicable transferability of concepts to their school settings.

Compensation: No monetary compensation will be given to participants

Extra Costs to Participate: Not Applicable

Injury or Illness: Not Applicable

Purdue University will not provide medical treatment or financial compensation if you are injured or become ill as a result of participating in this research project. This does not waive any of your legal rights nor release any claim you might have based on negligence.

Confidentiality: The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at Purdue University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Dr. Marilyn Hirth at 765-494-7299 or mahirth@purdue.edu if you have questions.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (765) 494-5942, email (irb@purdue.edu) or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University
Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032
155 S. Grant St.,
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

Documentation of Informed Consent

I have had the opportunity to read this consent form and have the research study explained. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research study, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. I will be offered a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

Participant's Signature	Date
Participant's Name	
Researcher's Signature	Date

- The participant must sign and date the consent form. The only exception is if the study is granted a waiver of signed consent.
- The researcher's signature, above, refers to the research team member who has obtained the participant's consent. The researcher's signature indicates s/he has explained the research to the participant (or the legally authorized representative when IRB approved) and has answered any of the participant's questions

VITA

Park D. Ginder

EDUCATION

- 2018 Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana
Ph.D. in Educational Leadership
- 2007 Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
Ed.S. Specialist in Education
- 1994 Indiana Purdue University, Fort Wayne, Indiana
M.S. in Secondary Education
- 1986 Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana
B.S. in Art Education

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2013-Present Southwest Allen County Schools, Homestead High School
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Principal
- 2011-2013 DeKalb Central United School Dist., DeKalb High School
Waterloo, Indiana
Principal
- 2002-2011 Northwest Allen County Schools, Carroll High School
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Assistant Principal
- 1995-2002 Fort Wayne Community Schools, Northrop High School
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Art Teacher
- 1986-1995 Fort Wayne Community Schools, Shawnee Middle School
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Art Teacher