

2013

Teachers' Perceptions of Cultural Change in a Challenged High School During the Implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

Victoria Crowell
University of North Florida

Suggested Citation

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**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL CHANGE IN A CHALLENGED HIGH SCHOOL
DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME**

by

Victoria Crowell

A dissertation submitted to the College of Education and Human Services in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

July 2013

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The dissertation of Victoria Crowell is approved:

Elinor A. Scheirer, Ph.D., Chair

Date

Mary K. Baron, Ph. D.

Date

Richard H. Chant, Ed.D.

Date

Katherine M. Kasten, Ph.D.

Date

Accepting for the Department:

Date

Accepting for the College:

Date

Accepting for the University:

Date

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my committee participants for whose patience and copious corrections I am so grateful. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Elinor Scheirer, who exercised tremendous patience and restraint while shepherding me through endless rewrites and corrections.

To Madison, who believed that holding a flashlight on my laptop in bed at night helped me to work better, and who patiently did so for many “long” stretches of time (long at least to a six-year-old) – I love you up to the sky and back again.

Finally, I want to give very special thanks to my husband, Chet, who has endured this process with me and was always a source of support and encouragement. He has spent many solitary weekends, fixing dinners and caring for our granddaughter while I studied or wrote at the library. He entertained himself in outlet malls and patiently waited in budget motels while I interviewed my study participants at Valdosta High School. I never heard a word of complaint but was always greeted with a smile, a hot cuppa, and, “Well, baby, how’d you do today?” Without him, I would have abandoned the project long ago. I love you, too.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction and Background.....	1
School Culture as an Indicator of School Health.....	3
Framework and General Research Question.....	5
Limitations.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	10
Conclusion.....	13
Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature.....	15
Historical Context of School Reform.....	16
Contributions from Early America to School Reform.....	17
The Focus on Curriculum Development as School Reform.....	18
Development of Standardized Testing Practices and the Resulting Effects upon Schools.....	23
Educational Access for African Americans.....	24
Reform Movements Addressing the Black-White Achievement Gap.....	30
Compensatory Education.....	31
Programmatic Reform Models.....	31
The Effective Schools Movement.....	32
Total Quality Management.....	33
Comprehensive School Reform Program.....	34
Accelerated Schools PLUS.....	35
Expeditionary Learning Schools.....	35
Continuous Improvement Model.....	37
Qualities of Effective School Reform Initiatives.....	37
Small Learning Communities as a Support for Teachers' Change in Practice.....	39
Self-Efficacy.....	46
The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.....	46
History of the International Baccalaureate Programme.....	50
The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Curricula.....	51
Culture and School Health.....	55
Conclusion.....	61
Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology.....	63
Development of the Research Question.....	63
Justification for Qualitative Research.....	65
The Researcher as Tool.....	67
Research Design.....	71
Site Selection.....	71
Participant Selection and Access.....	73
Confidentiality and Informed Consent.....	74
Data Collection Methods.....	75
Data Analysis: Description.....	80
Rationale for the Narrative Approach to the Study.....	81
Conclusion.....	84

Chapter 4 Analysis of the Data	86
The Story of a School	87
Historical Context.....	89
Public School System.....	90
Issues Around Race	91
Lowndes County at the Time of the Study	94
Valdosta High School.....	100
History of Valdosta High School	101
A Legacy of Athletics at Valdosta High School	103
Valdosta High's Status as a Struggling School.....	107
The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as a School Reform Measure	107
School Reform as Change	112
Implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme	115
Community Concerns regarding Racial Equity within Valdosta High School	116
Students at Valdosta High School	122
Curricular Fidelity within the International Baccalaureate Programme	125
Small Learning Communities within the International Baccalaureate Programme	129
Teacher Self-Efficacy among IBDP Teachers.....	135
The IB Programme at Valdosta High after First Year.....	137
Conclusion.....	140
Chapter 5 Summary and Discussion	142
Summary of Related Literature and Methodology	143
School Reform	143
School Culture	144
Educational Access for African Americans.....	145
Small Learning Communities	146
Discussion of Data Analysis.....	147
Curricular Fidelity.....	149
Increased Teacher Self-Efficacy	150
Academic Access for African Americans	152
School Culture as an Indicator of School Health	154
Recommendations for Leadership.....	155
Recommendations for Future Research.....	157
Conclusion.....	159
Appendix A IRB Approval Letter.....	161
Appendix B Email from Principal Brett Stanton Approving Study at Valdosta High School.....	163
Appendix C University of North Florida Human Research Consent Form	164
Appendix D Interview Protocol April 30 and May 1, 2009.....	169
Appendix E Interview Protocol November 19 and 20, 2009	171
Appendix F Interview Protocol April 15, 2010 and May 13, 2010	173
References.....	174
Curriculum Vitae	195

List of Figures

Figure 1: Reciprocal Relationship between Teachers' Perceptions and Research on School

Reform 158

Abstract

Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme – A Case Study

Academically failing schools are under intense scrutiny from district, state, and federal education administrators, policymakers, and the general public due to chronic inability of school administrations to lower dropout rates and to educate students who are able to pass high-stakes graduation assessments. States' efforts to adhere to the NCLB Act have led to the development of accountability systems to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) and to assign school grades, as well as the wholesale reassessment of educational programs currently in place and often their replacement with curricula deemed more rigorous.

Among curricular programs that have been sought out as reform measures for academically failing schools is the International Baccalaureate Program (IBP). The IBP's exacting curriculum has attracted many schools to adopt the IBP as an alternative course of study for their advanced students as well as a rigorous option to build academic capacity among students who have failed to make adequate yearly progress as specified in NCLB.

This case study examined teachers' perceptions of the effects upon their school's culture from the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as a reform measure in an academically underperforming high school in Valdosta, Georgia. Teacher volunteers from within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as well as teachers who taught standard classes participated in a series of three semi-structured interviews over one and one-half years, during which time the school made its initial application to the International Baccalaureate Organisation and subsequently began implementation of the program with the school's first cohort of students. Additionally, documents relating to the International Baccalaureate application process were examined, and observations of the IB teachers with

students in their classrooms were conducted. Data analysis utilized the frameworks of educational criticism and narrative analysis.

Teachers within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme reported feelings of increased self-efficacy as a result of their work with both students and community stakeholders. Participant teachers in both International Baccalaureate courses as well as in other programs described an overall improvement in the school culture.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

“Solving today’s education problem is complex; it *is* rocket science.”
[Italics original] (Fullan, 2001, p. 101)

Academically failing schools are under intense scrutiny from district, state, and federal education administrators, policymakers, and the general public due to chronic inability to lower dropout rates and to educate students who are able to pass high-stakes graduation assessments. Concurrently, and perhaps as a result, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 laid out its “Four Pillars” of stronger school accountability for results, increased flexibility for states’ and communities’ use of federal funds, the provision of more educational choices for parents, and use of proven educational programs. States’ efforts to adhere to the NCLB Act have led to the development of accountability systems to determine adequate yearly progress (AYP) and to assign school grades. Often school-based redesign may also include the wholesale reassessment of educational programs currently in place and their replacement with more rigorous curricula selected especially to effect the desired outcome (Villars, 1991, pp. 6-8).

The International Baccalaureate Program (IBP) is frequently the choice of academically challenged schools seeking such redesign. The International Baccalaureate Programme was originally developed to ensure that the children of career diplomats and government employees of all nationalities would receive the same high quality of education regardless of the post(s) to which their parents were assigned. The resulting diploma from an International Baccalaureate

school would then have ready acceptance at any university worldwide. Colleges and universities readily accepted students with IB diplomas and thereby acknowledged the program's curricular rigor and depth as quality academic preparation for postsecondary schooling (Barnes, Currie, Brown, Roberts, & Andain, 2004; Byrd, Ellington, Gross, Jago, & Stern, 2007; Dervarics, 2006; Plucker, Chien, & Zaman, 2006).

The academic strength of the IB Programme suggested to administrators of school districts with academically underperforming schools that the IBP's rigor and depth of study might support and strengthen the struggling students at these schools, as well as prepare them to perform well on high-stakes standardized tests (Barnes et al, 2004; Byrd et al., 2007; Dervarics, 2006; Plucker et al., 2006). Where students were unable to pass standardized assessments, an understandable result was low graduation rates and a percentage of graduates who pursue post-secondary education that was well below both state and national averages (Barnes et al., 2004; Dervarics, 2006; Plucker et al., 2006).

The United States federal government also recognized the potential for the IB to support students in schools under pressure to improve test scores and graduation rates. The Department of Education has awarded over \$2 million to the International Baccalaureate of North America to help fund its expansion in Title I schools and has offered additional financial support through the department's Magnet Schools Assistance Program (Byrd et al., 2007). As a result of the needs of these struggling schools and the government support of their efforts, an overwhelming number of the International Baccalaureate Organisation's (IBO) school authorization applicants have been public schools in the United States (Bland & Woodworth, 2009), growing from 268 schools in 1999 to 1,090 in 2009 (Bunnell, 2010; International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2012f). In 2009, 49,100 of a total of 87,800 students in 122 countries who were enrolled in International

Baccalaureate Programmes were from the United States (Bunnell, 2010). By 2010, 42 Title I designated high schools offered the IB Diploma programming, serving approximately 74,000 socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Mayer, 2010, p. 85).

A review of the literature suggested that research regarding the success of these schools' efforts to improve standardized test performance, graduation rates, and postsecondary readiness through the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme has only recently begun to be available. Nevertheless, research around the emphasis upon high-stakes testing and the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has recognized their effects on school culture because of the pressures of testing and repeated reform initiatives at the school or district level (Groves, 2002; McAdams, 1997; Smith-Maddox, 1998). Yet, a healthy school culture is "probably the most outstanding common feature of . . . [world class schools] striving to become 'learning organizations' with a commitment to continuous problem solving and a sense of shared responsibility for improvement" (Jenkins & National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1994, p. 72). Thus, there is a need for complex knowledge about the function of culture in IBP schools, both its initial effects during the authorization process and its lasting role once the IBP is fully adopted. This study in that way concentrated on the human element in the overall change process rather than upon an evaluation of any particular IBP program.

School Culture as an Indicator of School Health

In her meta-analysis of studies of successful schools, which included Expeditionary Learning, Accelerated Schools PLUS, Ed Visions, and International Baccalaureate schools, Wilson (2008) determined that culture served as a prominent conceptual framework in the educational philosophies of effective schools. A healthy, supportive school culture which communicated a passion for students' achieving high expectations to the school's stakeholder

community was Wilson's first among 10 traits critical to an effective school (p. 14). Thus, culture becomes central to a school's identity and, hence, to goals for improvement.

The concept of culture is itself complex. Schein's (2004) definition of culture captures the essence of this notion of culture as a viable entity within a school. Culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that were learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration of some new idea or reform. These "shared basic assumptions" (Schein, 2004, p. 17) worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to similar problems in the future. Once thoroughly integrated, these assumptions are so taken for granted as to finally drop out of awareness.

Schein's definition of culture aptly applies to an educational setting when like-minded academic professionals are working to achieve a mutually agreed-upon mission. Organizational excellence builds upon the cultural foundation the school lays for itself (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993, p. 260). In support of this, Saphier and King (1985) suggested that

if certain norms of school culture are strong, improvements in instruction will be significant, continuous and widespread; if these norms are weak, improvement will be at best infrequent, random and slow. . . . Giving shape and direction to a school's culture should be a clear, articulated vision of what the school stands for. . . . The development of "school excellent," the development of a bright educational future for American youth depends on the creation of a rich and supportive culture. (p. 261)

Saphier and King described 12 such cultural norms, including collegiality, school improvement, high expectations of students, tangible support for both faculty and students, celebration, and traditions (1985, p. 67).

In active acknowledgement of the vital role of a healthy school culture in achieving much-needed school reform, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has committed more than \$8.9 million since 2000 to support EdVisions (Ed Visions, 2005; 2008). Started in Minnesota by a group of educators, parents, and interested community members, EdVisions sought to implement John Dewey's theory of active learning, primarily in urban schools with high minority populations and low socioeconomic status. Since its inception, EdVisions has created 38 schools in 11 states focused on providing a healthy and developmentally appropriate school culture which actively involves the student populations (Newell, 2002).

EdVisions uses its internally developed monitoring device, the Hope Study, to examine its schools, all of which have consistently met their adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals as specified by NCLB (Newell & Van Ryzin, 2007, p. 466). Using these results, Ed Visions developed a scale of factors which purportedly directly and measurably impact the effectiveness of school- and district-based academic reform efforts: "autonomy [which] refers to the opportunity for self-management and choice, belongingness [which] refers to the depth and quality of interpersonal relationships, and competence [which] refers to the desire to be effective and successful" (Newell & Van Ryzin, 2007, p. 468). Autonomy, a sense of belonging, and self-efficacy are qualities which have figured prominently, with some variation, in most contemporary education reform movements.

Framework and General Research Question

This qualitative study focused on analysis of educators' perceptions of the impact upon school culture resulting from the adoption of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) as a school reform measure. In the context of this case study, a "challenged" school was defined as "academically failing," as measured by a majority of the students' inability to pass

state-mandated tests required for graduation. The International Baccalaureate Organisation reported more schools' implementation of the International Baccalaureate curriculum in the United States than anywhere else in the world (Gehring, 2001; Peterson, 2003). Since the first public high schools adopted the IB Diploma Programme in 1978, the number of IB schools in the United States has grown to 1,207, 91% of which (1,100) are public schools (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2012, p. 1). Florida had the second-greatest number of IB schools at 114 (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2012, p. 2).

However, despite the widespread growth of the IBDP and its efforts to improve access for students from lower income backgrounds, very little research exists examining the actual effects upon the cultures of the schools which adopt the IBP. A survey conducted in 1987 by the IBO determined that North American schools were adopting the IBP for four primary purposes: its "academic excellence, the challenge inherent in the syllabuses, its appeal to gifted students, and the opportunity to upgrade and enrich the curriculum school-wide" (Fox, 2001, p. 73). Additionally, in recent years the IBO has reached out to low-income students in both urban and rural areas of the United States. The organization noted that in 2009 16% of IB Diploma candidates came from low-income families as measured by their eligibility to receive a free or reduced school lunch (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2012, p. 4). Inasmuch as high-school students often underreport their eligibility for free or reduced lunches, that percentage may in fact be higher. This study was an effort to fill the gap of knowledge around the impact of this increased presence of the International Baccalaureate Programme in high-needs schools in the United States,

The present case study took place over one and one-half school years, from spring 2009 through the following spring 2010. Data were gathered first from the application documents

completed by administrators at Valdosta High School for submission to the International Baccalaureate Programme. The documents contained information such as proposed course frameworks, commitments by the school to provide certain levels of technological and media (both print and electronic) support, and names and credentials of recommended IB faculty. Later, classroom observations of participant teachers permitted a first-hand examination of the relationships between students and participant faculty, critical to understanding the culture within the school. I chose not to interview students or other stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the IBDP at Valdosta High but rather concentrated on the nine teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. Teachers interact both with each other and with a broad spectrum of students within a given school day, whether the teachers have those students in their classes, have had them as students previously, or are working with them during an extracurricular activity. Additionally, teachers bore the brunt of the responsibility for Valdosta High's academic challenges, and they would also have been most directly affected by any resulting pressures to improve academic performance. Finally, IBDP teachers were responsible for crafting the school's initial application, developing the various curricula within the program, and then implementing the new curricula to the first cohort of students. Thus, teachers would have an offer key perspectives on school culture before, during, and then at the conclusion of the current study.

Semi-structured interviews provided a framework for approaching each interview with an initial consistency targeting specific areas which I wanted each participant to address. The largest part of the interviews, however, became the discussion of those questions which my participants' responses provoked, either by way of probing for additional information or pursuing a different line of questioning that arose naturally from the conversation. This semi-structured format

allowed me to immediately act in response to the exchange as it progressed, clarifying participants' views and exploring new topics (Merriam, 1998). Areas of primary interest to me and comprising the structured questioning in my interviews included teachers' perceptions of how the adoption of the International Baccalaureate Programme influenced the overall school culture, and how these teachers' experiences with the implementation of the IBDP affected their professional practice.

The first area of interest goes to the heart of the teachers' impressions of the influence upon school culture resulting from the adoption of the IBP. The second area of interest, how teachers' experiences implementing the IBDP affected their practice, allowed the researcher to examine responses from participating IBDP teachers in regards to their resulting senses of self-efficacy, including autonomy, belongingness, and competence. Finally, responses from non-participants in the IBDP increased understanding of how a given program within a school might affect the culture of the entire school beyond the boundaries of the program itself.

Data from the participant interviews was analyzed using strategies associated with educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) and narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My previous personal experience with implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at an academically underperforming urban high school provided me with a level of connoisseurship, albeit limited, which enabled me to appreciate certain situations and experiences described by my participant teachers and to describe and interpret how they relate to each other.

Limitations

First, limitations exist with virtually all research approaches. One perceived limitation of this study was the fact that my participants were all teachers at one high school in Valdosta,

Georgia. Participants presumably could have volunteered because they saw an opportunity to express strong personal opinions or to share deeply-felt emotions regarding the presence of the IBDP in their school or other issues. These conditions leave open the possibility that a participating teacher may have had a particular ax to grind, so to speak, regarding his or her personal situation within the school.

Additionally, Valdosta High is one school in a small South Georgia town. Thus, it might appear inappropriate to generalize from the results of this study at a particular high school to all high schools or IB schools in the United States. Valdosta High is also situated in a very particular geographic area, a school which administrators and teachers describe as being “urban” yet which is within a couple of miles of small farms. However, Eisner (1998) described generalization in qualitative research as the use of interpretations in a given study as they may inform understanding within a new situation. Inasmuch as the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme as a reform measure at academically underperforming schools will be shown to be a relatively recent innovation, schools utilizing this reform are certainly undertaking a new situation which data from a study of Valdosta High may inform.

Another limitation of the study was that it only examined the effects upon school culture during a particular stage of implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme. Valdosta High was only studied during the application process and initial year of implementation of the IB Programme, During these stages, teachers may appear to be more optimistic and hopeful, even expectant, of positive results. Resources such as books and materials may flow into classrooms more frequently than is usual for established programs. Professional learning is typically encouraged and intense so as to heighten teachers’ skills and prepare them for successful presentation of the curriculum or other reform measure to students. These advantages

may diminish as the program becomes more established or as the initial funds allotted for implementation of the program are exhausted. The discussion of suggestions for future research will include the recommendation that followup interviews of the teacher participants and perhaps students and parents might further inform educators and researchers about the longer-term impact upon school culture from the implementation of a rigorous academic curriculum such as the International Baccalaureate.

Definition of Terms

This case study uses numerous terms and concepts particular to several fields. The definitions below ensure a common understanding of the terms as used throughout this study.

Academically challenged school — A school at which the majority of the students are not making sufficient academic progress as determined by the district or state board of education. In Georgia, the criterion by which the performance of a public school is measured is its students' performance on the Georgia High School Writing Test and the Georgia High School Graduation Test (Georgia Department of Education, 2012a). The Georgia Department of Education deemed that schools were academically challenged or failing if students who were tested using the above instruments failed to demonstrate sufficient mastery of the content or demonstrated insufficient academic gains over at least three of four consecutive school years.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) — AYP, as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2008), measures an individual state's progress toward NCLB's goal of 100 percent of students achieving state academic standards in reading, language arts, and mathematics. AYP sets the minimum level of proficiency that each state's school districts must achieve on annual tests and related academic indicators. Students who attend Title I (low-income) schools which consistently do not meet AYP may be given options to transfer to another

school.

Culture — “A pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p. 17).

Georgia High School Completion Test (GHSCT) — A summative assessment required of all students seeking a Georgia high-school diploma. The GHSCT includes four content areas and a writing assessment, ensuring that students qualifying for a diploma have mastered essential core academic content and skills (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

High-stakes testing — A term used to describe the practice of utilizing tests that have serious consequences for students, teachers, schools, and school systems. Typically, students’ placement in academic programs or their eligibility for promotion or graduation rests upon their performance on such tests. Increasingly, teachers are being held accountable for their students’ performance, with many states now using student test performance data to determine teachers’ annual raises as well as to make hiring, retention, and tenure decisions.

International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) — A not-for-profit organization registered in Switzerland in 1968 with the intent of providing schools which educated the children of career diplomats with a curriculum which would be universally acceptable to all institutions of higher learning throughout the world. The IB Diploma Programme was first offered at the International School of Geneva. The Middle Years Programme and Primary Years Programme were created in 1994 and 1997, respectively, in order offer educational programs from prekindergarten (ages three and four) to the end of secondary school. The organization has four regional offices: IB North America and the Caribbean, headquartered in New York; IB Latin America, headquartered

in Buenos Aires; IB Asia-Pacific, headquartered in Singapore; and IB Africa, Europe, and Middle East, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) — A two-year, upper-level or high-school-equivalent course of study leading to an IB diploma.

Needs Improvement Level (NI) — A designation for schools that do not meet AYP in the same subject for two or more consecutive years. This designation was derived from language within the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act, more familiarly known as No Child Left Behind, which details the remediation steps required for school improvement in a variety of indicators (Public Law 107-110, 2002, p. 1455). In Georgia, this status indicates the school is subject to escalating consequences for each successive year of NI status. A number follows the “Needs Improvement” or “NI” designation indicating the number of years the school failed to make AYP (e.g., NI3). “Same subject” is defined as two years of the school’s students not making sufficient gains in either or both Reading/English Language Arts (participation or academic performance) or mathematics (participation or academic performance), or in a second non-academic indicator such as graduation rate. The Georgia DOE noted that “Needs Improvement schools are NOT ‘failing’ schools. Schools that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years in the same subject are in need of improvement or are simply under-performing” (Georgia Department of Education, 2012, ¶12). Repeated NI designations result in a continuum of school-level consequences including but not limited to school choice for parents and an escalating hierarchy of corrective action and restructuring plans (Georgia Department of Education, 2012, ¶13).

Redesign — Sometimes confused as being a synonym to “reform,” “redesign” is more accurately described as “a substantive, systemic change in the structure of education . . . the ‘How’ and the

‘So what’ [of educational change]. . . . What will it look like? How will all the elements fit together and work in harmony? Will it really make a difference?” (Villars, 1991, p. 8).

Reform — School reform that “alter[s] existing procedures, rules and requirements to enable the organization [such as a school] to adapt the way it functions to new circumstances or requirements” (Conley, 1993, p. 8).

Restructuring — Term reserved for localized efforts, often site-based, to change the academic or social climate of a school. Restructuring activities change fundamental assumptions, practices, and relationships, both within the organization and between the organization and the outside world, in ways that lead to improved and varied student learning outcomes for essentially all students. Villars (1991) referred to restructuring as “providing the conceptual framework, or the ‘Why’ and the ‘What’” (p. 8) for school reform efforts.

Conclusion

With the demand by legislatures and the public for increased accountability by schools for demonstrating that students are making satisfactory academic progress, state departments of education and local school districts are continually searching for academic programs with research-based rigor sufficient to help low-achieving students pass state-mandated achievement tests. One of the programs implemented frequently in the United States is the International Baccalaureate Programme (IBP), which is available in models designed for elementary, middle, and secondary students.

Perhaps because of the relative recency of this strenuous accountability movement in schools, the research has not caught up with the growth of the International Baccalaureate in schools. In particular, little has been done in the area of how implementation of a rigorous cross-curricular academic program such as IBP may affect the culture at a school which has been

labeled as “challenged” or “failing,” a place where students are underperforming academically as determined by high-stakes tests.

This case study examined one such high school in the Southeastern United States and documented teachers’ perceptions upon the school culture resulting from the implementation that occurred over one and one-half school years of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

An understanding of the historical context of school reform as well as current academic reform initiatives is critical in order to better situate teachers’ perceptions of the impact of the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme upon their school’s culture. A brief history of school reform, plus a review of current academic reform initiatives, follows in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology for the current case study are examined. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the data obtained from teacher interviews, document examination, and observation within participating teachers’ classrooms. Finally, Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the examination of the data and suggests areas for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

This chapter begins with an introduction to the history of educational reform in the United States. In order to contextualize the current reform measures in public education, the discussion includes an understanding of the historical context which led to such measures and the resulting impact on climate and culture. The legislative decisions such as No Child Left Behind and the genesis of an administrative reliance upon high-stakes academic testing as a determinant of teacher accountability have created a climate which promotes reform, including the adoption of rigorous new programs by which to assist struggling students.

Other sections within this chapter examine programs described in the literature that address how effective school reform is best achieved. Also included is an examination of school culture as an important factor in a healthy school climate that cultivates academic success, or conversely, where the school culture is unhealthy and contributes to the academic failure.

The final section of this chapter examines the literature in areas suggested during the analysis of the data as relevant to making sense of what was observed, what the participants shared in interviews, and the information offered in the many documents examined. These topics included the importance of educational access for African Americans in the United States, the value of small learning communities (SLCs) in schools, and teacher efficacy as a catalyst for effecting school reform. The issues of race and access, in particular, underscored almost every aspect of the study of the implementation of the IBP at Valdosta High School. An examination of the history of the Valdosta and Lowndes County area illuminates how these factors came to

figure so prominently in the controversy around Valdosta High School's implementation of the International Baccalaureate Programme.

Historical Context of School Reform

Early in the history of organized, publicly supported schooling, the United States took great pride in the education of its children. As a result, a variety of reform initiatives have shaped its educational system into the well-recognized design utilized by the majority of schools today. In the United States, schools generally begin in the late summer or early fall, a schedule corresponding to what was once the schools' response to the need for labor in agriculture. Schools still dismiss in the late spring or early summer, a holdover from past years when children helped in their families' fields. In addition, schools are separated into roughly three basic age groups— elementary, middle, and high school—and subdivided by age into grades within those groups (Cremin, 1979; Goldin, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Most public schools utilize an assessment system that awards letter grades for perceived success or ability and withhold progression of students when their grades fail to meet specified standards of achievement. These academic rituals, “the grammar of schooling” (Tyack & Tobin, 1994, p. 453) so ingrained into our national consciousness, are all the results of generations of academic reforms at some level.

A more recent, widespread call for school reform in our nation, however, has motivated educators, administrators, politicians, and the lay public alike to re-examine their understanding of what our schools need and how these changes can best be accomplished. Phrases like “high-stakes testing” and “accountability” are no longer academic jargon but rather the stuff of media investigation, teacher education and evaluation, and parental concern.

An urgency for reform arises not from the emphases upon social mobility and individual

welfare which previously motivated school reform (Cremin, 1990; Goldin, 1999), but rather upon “the apocalyptic consequences of failure in education” (Levin, 1998, p. 132), which is now described often in terms of economic impact and workforce preparation. Additionally, school reform and redesign proponents have attempted to lessen a widening achievement gap between ethnic groups and to provide our students with a competitive edge within the international community (Bali & Alvarez, 2003; Ford, 1998; Gordon, 2007). In so doing, school systems around the nation have adopted a wide variety of curricula to address perceived failures, programs such as Fluent Reader and Accelerated Reader from Renaissance Learning, Read 180 from Scholastic, and Achieve 3000, each marketed as grounded in current research (Achieve 3000, 2010; Moyer, 2006; “Renaissance Learning,” 2006). The results have been mixed, however, and not without their detractors (Bracey, 2005). Schools and district administrators in search of curative curricular reform measures still struggle to identify which factors make a course of study ideal for school reform or redesign.

In order to better understand how school systems might consider the International Baccalaureate Programme as a curricular reform, it is worth examining the history of educational reform in the United States. A historical focus upon curricular reform demonstrates why the International Baccalaureate Programme, a program which espouses many traits inherent in many of the successful school reform measures of the last several decades, may indeed be an appropriate and effective choice for schools where the students struggle to succeed academically.

Contributions from Early America to School Reform

Schooling in the American colonies grew slowly from the cottage industry of the women-operated “dame schools” or the use of private tutors educating the children of the wealthy to the community schools supported by towns and providing elementary schooling for 10 or 12 weeks a

year. These schools usually limited enrollment to boys and charged their parents fees to supplement the town's funding. By the mid-nineteenth century, grammar or "common schools" provided a means toward individuals' self-sufficiency by teaching students basic literacy skills (Cremin, 1957; Goldin, 1999). Although education in America at that time was limited to unindentured White males, the rhetoric within that group described it as a very democratic process, both a civil responsibility and a tool for personal advancement. The classical traditions of Greece and Rome were not suited "for such a country as ours" (Franklin, 1818, p. 302). Rather, a new notion of education as a process of socialization took root, fostered by the need to Americanize the working-class immigrants from Europe. At this juncture, education's purpose was to imprint upon children the "beliefs, values, skills, and understandings [that] must be transmitted . . . in order to keep society going" (Perkinson, 1995, p. 9). Decisions would have to be made concerning which beliefs, values, and skills, in the form of curricula, were worthy to impart to all students. Once those decisions were made, a uniform method of instructing the nation's youth in these curricula would have to be created.

The Focus on Curriculum Development as School Reform

In the 19th century, Horace Mann found his exemplar for what became our public school model in the United States, not in the English and Scottish systems which had largely been the model for schools in colonial America, but rather in Central Europe. There Mann studied the Prussian public schools and their role in the transmission of German culture to youth. Mann was also among the first to keep statistical records regarding educational conditions, which data he used as powerful argument for reform (Cremin, 1957; Finkelstein, 1990; Peterson, 2010). Although Mann met with some opposition from the Massachusetts legislature, he fought to keep the fledgling state school system intact. By 1843, with very few exceptions, public schools in

Massachusetts were free to all students, and, in 1852, Massachusetts became the first state to introduce compulsory education (Cremin, 1957; Finkelstein, 1990; Peterson, 2010). Since Mann's time, a free, compulsory public education from ages 5-18 has become the norm in the United States.

After the Civil War, a movement began toward some consistency across the great variations in schooling from state to state. One long-prevailing perspective on curriculum was to consider it a means by which the accumulated wisdom of the human race might be transmitted to children (Painter, 1896/2006, p. 6). William Torrey Harris, superintendent of the St. Louis School System in the late 19th century, was an early proponent of developing a curriculum including a common body of knowledge, or core curriculum, which should be part of each American student's education (Cremin, 1961, p. 51). Traditionalists have argued that this basic information or core curriculum should include important terms and names, specific skill sets, and "acceptance of a set of fundamental values . . . necessary for the society to function smoothly" (Posner, 2004, p. 97).

Another early 20th century educational movement was progressive education, which advocated a more democratic approach to education. Rather than academic preparation for a few students and vocational education for the majority, proponents of progressive education believed that students should be recognized for their own interests, abilities, needs, ideas, and cultural identity (John Dewey Project on Progressive Education, 2002, ¶ 1). They suggested the development of critical thinking and social skills which would enable them to better understand and participate successfully in of their communities. John Dewey, in particular, saw that with the decline of local community life and small business, young people were losing valuable

opportunities to learn the arts of democratic participation. Dewey felt that education needed to make up for this critical loss of experience in a democratic society (Wood, 1992).

The Eight-Year Study, conducted by the Progressive Education Association (PEA), was an experimental project in which 30 high schools redesigned their curricula while trying innovative approaches to student testing, program assessment, curriculum design, and teacher professional learning (Wood, 1992). Students who graduated from schools espousing a Progressive approach to curriculum were adjudged to perform well academically and were also more involved and successful in cultural and artistic activities (Wood, 1992). However, the Eight-Year Study also showed that many different forms of secondary curricular design ensured postsecondary academic success. In fact, students from the most experimental schools earned significantly higher academic achievement rates than their traditional school peers and other Progressive-prepared students (Wood, 1992).

After World War II, and largely in response to the increasing availability of atomic weaponry, the United States continued its research into alternative forms of power for both domestic and military use. In May, 1950, President Truman signed Public Law 81-507, creating the National Science Foundation (NSF) "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; [and] to secure the national defense" (National Science Foundation, 2012, ¶ 1). The NSF joined other government agencies already involved in science research and the promotion of more rigorous science education in public schools, including the National Institute of Health and the United States Atomic Energy Commission (Powell, 2007). On October 4, 1957, Sputnik 1, the first artificial Earth satellite, was launched into orbit by the Soviet Union. In addition to signaling the start of the Space Age, this "focusing event . . . galvanized the United States to enact reforms in science and engineering education so that the

nation could regain the technological ground it appeared to have lost to its Soviet rival” (Powell, 2007, ¶2). A year later, Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which increased funding for education at all levels, with an emphasis again upon science and engineering (United States Department of Education, 2012b). Whereas the study of science in schools had previously been seen as secondary to instruction in the “three R’s,” the presence now of a rigorous science curriculum in a school or school district became a condition of quality education.

In 1983, at the request of then-Secretary of Education T. H. Bell, the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), an indictment of the public school system in the United States. The Commission’s findings focused on four areas, including the nature of the content in the curriculum. Among its criticisms was an emphasis upon variety rather than depth of study, “a cafeteria style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses” (p. 25). The report based its recommendations on hearing testimony from hundreds of educational practitioners and site visits to elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools around the country.

A Nation at Risk had an immediate impact through its specific, detailed recommendations, which included a return to academic fundamentals. These “New Basics” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 31) stressed proficiency in a core curriculum. This core curriculum consisted of language arts, mathematics, and social and experimental sciences in which students would demonstrate mastery according to certain criteria. Reliance upon grades and standardized testing was also recommended in order to ensure the transmission of this core body of knowledge and to provide evidence of students’ readiness for

promotion. In addition, textbook companies and other sources of academic materials were instructed to provide evidence that their products were based upon sound educational theory and field testing.

E. D. Hirsch and William Bennett were contemporary advocates of the New Basics. Hirsch (1987) voiced the perspective of many traditionalists, both historical and contemporary, when he wrote that “to be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world” (p. xiii). In his 1988 evaluation of American education since the publishing of *A Nation at Risk* five years earlier, Secretary of Education William Bennett observed, “Common sense tells us, and education research confirms, that youngsters rarely learn what they do not study. Since students study what adults teach, it is important for adults to define essential knowledge and resolve to teach it well” (Bennett, 1988, p. 5). The position raised by some educators that a core curriculum was impossible or insensitive in our culturally diverse society ignored what Bennett believed was a “consensus . . . about the most compelling ideas and books and authors our students should know” (1988, p. 6).

In the last decade, many states have acknowledged that core standards regarding basic content and skills should be taught in the public schools. Led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and in collaboration with teachers and school administrators, the Common Core State Standards were developed “to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012, ¶1). The NGA Center and CCSSO received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, postsecondary educators (including community colleges), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with

disabilities. Following the initial round of feedback, the draft standards were opened for public comment, receiving nearly 10,000 responses (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012). The resultant Common Core State Standards in reading and mathematics were initially intended to exist initially side-by-side the existing standards in 45 of the 50 states. The goal was to have the Common Core standards then replace those state standards, a process resulting in a *de facto* national curriculum in at least those two critical content areas (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

Development of Standardized Testing Practices and the Resulting Effects upon Schools

The National Science Foundation (NSF) suggested that there should be a refocusing of educators' attention upon what a student should be able to do with regards to content, as well as what a student should know (Hurd, 1997). A methodology for providing this measure with validity and reliability required the development of instruments which could determine students' mastery of the content.

Ralph Tyler (1976) did substantial work in the analysis of behavioral objectives, and Benjamin Bloom developed a taxonomy or structure of behavioral objectives as they related to the desired educational performance of students (Bloom, 1956). Bloom's Taxonomy was for many years the standard for the development of educational objectives, but educators still lacked the means by which to determine the success of such objectives in effecting content-area achievement in the areas of mathematics and science deemed critical to providing the U. S. with the scientists and engineers necessary to maintaining its position as an international superpower. One method was through the use of standardized testing instruments. An early proponent of standardized testing was Edward Thorndike, who did groundbreaking work in the area of mental measurement as it applied to education and who is credited with publishing the first standardized test, the Thorndike Handwriting Scale, in 1909 (Perrone, 1991).

Joseph Mayer Rice conducted and published the results of extensive surveys concerning the use of standardized testing through his text, *Scientific Management in Education* (1913/2010). Rice supported the application of scientific principles in education and the utilization of standardized testing as a way of measuring student achievement, a foreshadowing of what would become the No Child Left Behind legislation of nearly 100 years later. He also proposed the institution of fixed standards in education against which students' relative achievement and, hence, teachers' performance, could be measured.

Supporters of this approach espoused that the subject matter within a course of study could be broken down into a set of discrete ideas and behaviors that are both observable and measurable (Posner, 2004). Such behaviors could be described as performance objectives for demonstrating mastery within each discipline (Posner, 2004, p. 100). As long as educators continued to look at the identification of students' behavior as the focus in efforts to help students be successful, they ignored the possibility that environmental factors, such as access to adequate and equitable school facilities and materials and even the teaching methods used in particular schools, might in fact be the cause for some populations of students to fail to thrive academically. This was evident in particular for those marginalized racial groups such as African Americans.

Educational Access for African Americans

Prior to the Civil War, both slaveholders and slaves in America recognized the pivotal importance of education as it related to the slaves' quality of life and the degree to which the slaves would permit themselves to be managed or controlled (Du Bois, 1949/1971). Denial of formal education was a cornerstone of the owners' efforts to maintain economic control over African Americans. After the Civil War, W. E. B. Du Bois made a powerful case for the

education of African Americans and argued not only for access to schools, but also for a classical education that would enable students to think critically and to take control of the course of their own learning, to determine their own fate, and to lead their own people.

After 1865, although White northerners and southern former slave-owners sought to restrict both educational access and the quality of curriculum available to African American students, educated abolitionists and African Americans viewed education as philosophically tied to the elevation of the African American race. Thus, the curriculum in the many southern African American elementary, normal, and collegiate schools which sprang up paralleled the New England model of a classical liberal arts curriculum, much as Du Bois had described (1903). At the college level, African American students sat in courses in Latin, Greek, math, science, history, philosophy, and languages. Du Bois described these students' studies of the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy), the seven liberal arts which "methods will grow more deft and effectual, its content richer by toil of scholar [with but] one goal—not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes" (1903, V. ¶ 12). Du Bois wanted "the right to vote; civic equality, and the education of youth according to ability" (1903, III, ¶ 19), and he believed a classical curriculum provided a discipline of the mind which would enable African American leaders to guide the rest of their community toward freedom and political and civil equality.

Here Du Bois differed fundamentally from his contemporary, Booker T. Washington. As founder of the Tuskegee Institute, Washington was regarded by most Whites as the voice and face of the African American community (Harlan, 1983). He believed that focusing on economics would eradicate racism and advance the race and took the position that young African

Americans during Reconstruction needed the financial freedom of being able to support themselves through vocational training rather than academic learning (Harlan, 1983).

As an invited speaker at the Atlanta Cotton Exposition in 1895, Washington advocated segregation and maintenance of the status quo; in a speech which quite tellingly became known as the Atlanta Compromise, Washington likened this alliance to a hand, noting “in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (Washington, 1901, XIV, ¶ 7).

Du Bois criticized Washington’s industrial program as backward and conciliatory. In his essay, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” (1903, III), Du Bois condemned Washington’s “programme of industrial education, conciliation of the South, and submission and silences as to civil and political rights” (1903, ¶ 1) and charged that the Atlanta Compromise resulted in “the disfranchisement of the Negro; the legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro; and the steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro” (1903, ¶ 16). Additionally, Du Bois and fellow intellectual and activist Carter G. Woodson advocated separate institutions for African Americans based on what they perceived as pervasive racism in northern schools. Du Bois (1935) envisioned

a separate Negro school, where children are treated like human beings, trained by teachers of their own race, who know what it means to be Black in the year of salvation 1935, [which] is infinitely better than making our boys and girls doormats to be spit and trampled upon and lied to by ignorant social climbers, whose sole claim to superiority is ability to kick “niggers” when they are down. (p. 335)

Woodson’s position on interracial education was from a more Afrocentric perspective. Like Du Bois, Woodson acknowledged the racism present in schools and stated frankly that

African American students in desegregated schools were taught to venerate Whiteness and despise Blackness, a situation leading to acceptance of their inferior status. Woodson argued in favor of an African American curriculum such as advocated by the Black Power and Black Studies Movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. Woodson stated that “no systematic effort toward change has been possible, for, taught the same economics, history, philosophy, literature and religion which have established the present code of morals, the Negro’s mind has been brought under the control of his oppressor” (1933/2008, p. ix). For Woodson, “this crusade is much more important than the anti-lynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom” (1933/2008, p. 2).

Du Bois’ and Woodson’s appeals garnered some consideration and support in the early 20th century (Cross & Parker, 1998) but faced increasing opposition in the face of the legal fight for desegregation. These conflicting philosophies of education still resonate today in “discussions over how to end class and racial injustice, what is the role of Black leadership, and what do the ‘haves’ owe the ‘have nots’ in the Black community” (¶ 1).

While the argument waged on regarding what type of curriculum was appropriate for African Americans, changes began to occur in publically supported African American colleges in the South. Although these institutions had often received generous support during Reconstruction for their wide-ranging, classics-heavy curricula, the legislatures began reducing appropriations, abolishing scholarships, downgrading curriculum, and renaming the institutions as Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges, a nod to what Southern politicians viewed as these schools’ more modest intentions (Sansing, 1990). In an attempt to counter this trend, the 1935 Conference on Vocational Guidance and Education for Negroes critiqued the way schools

prepared African American students for jobs which perpetuated a lower-class lifestyle (Sansing, 1990).

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked tirelessly to redefine access to education as not just access to industrial schooling but also access to law schools, medical schools, and other avenues for intellectual, economic, and political leadership (Darling-Hammond, Williamson, & Hyler, 2007). Segregated elementary and secondary schools were also examined under “separate but equal.” *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483, 490 (1954) challenged segregated African American schools’ typical long distances from assigned neighborhoods, lack of adequate academic resources, and poor physical conditions. School districts, however, continued to skirt the law by instituting tracking systems within integrated schools which both recreated segregation and manipulated the curriculum, a strategy that kept African American students in vocational courses and out of the college preparatory coursework which emphasized critical thinking and intellectual development.

Community and scholarly support for a culturally relevant and responsible Afrocentric curriculum grew at all levels (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 287). For example, The Ten Point Platform of Oakland’s Black Panther Party suggested that African American students needed an

education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society [and] that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people knowledge of self. (Black Panther Party, 1966/2013, ¶ 5).

Like Woodson and Du Bois, these activists argued that segregated schools provided a nurturing and supportive environment in which African American students would be challenged

to excel in a curriculum in which their culture was respected and infused throughout. Some districts compromised through an introduction of more Afrocentric curricula and a systemic review of textbooks to identify those which misrepresented or ignored aspects of African American culture (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 287).

However, the efforts to desegregate the schools and end “separate but equal” through the availability of an Afrocentric curriculum and the increasing numbers of African American students, teachers, and administrators in the schools resulted in many White families moving to more homogeneous school districts in the suburbs. This “White flight” (Coleman, 1975, as cited in Ravitch, 1979, p. 1) out of the urban core left once-again largely African American schools supported by neighborhoods and businesses which themselves were now cash-strapped and fighting for survival. This gradual collapse of the infrastructure was coupled with a deindustrialization of the economy, resulting in a loss of many jobs previously available to the undereducated and a fierce competition for the remaining jobs from recent immigrants and off-shore enterprises (Theobald, 2005). Although desegregation may have been *de jure*, African American children were once again *de facto* the majority in poorly funded and poorly maintained urban schools.

United States history demonstrates that there has been much debate among African Americans as to what constitutes robust, comprehensive education for African American students: a classical curriculum, as advocated by Du Bois; an Afrocentric curriculum, as proposed by Woodson; or simply equal access to the same curriculum as is available in primarily White schools. African Americans have also differed over who would be the better teacher for their students, a highly qualified teacher of any race or one who is also African American. Regardless of the argument they support, African Americans as a racial minority have come to

believe that equal access to rigorous academic education has historically been limited or denied to them in the United States. This history of lack of equal access to quality education, particularly to curricula of a more classical or liberal arts design, figures prominently in the proposals for curricular reform to address the underachievement of African American students, especially in preparing them for postsecondary education.

Reform Movements Addressing the Black-White Achievement Gap

In July, 1966, the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS) by James S. Coleman (1966) concluded in part that family factors such as poverty or a parent's lack of education prevented children from learning and played a greater role than did the effects of schools in determining academic success. The Coleman report lent weight to the argument that student background and socioeconomic status were much more important in determining educational outcomes than were measured differences in school resources, such as per pupil spending (Hanushek, 1998). The report prompted many educational researchers to refute its findings. They sought instead to develop a body of research supporting the premise that all children can learn and that the school does in fact control the factors necessary to assure student mastery of the core curriculum.

Known as the Effective Schools Movement (ESM), this research did not negate the important role played by environment and family in children's early learning. Rather, the research posited that the schools' responsibility was to discover how to reach each and every individual child at his or her own level and through the child's preferred learning modality (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 2005). Schools that were making the necessary differences in children's learning were studied to determine what was working and how it was being accomplished. Over time, ESM developed its correlates of highly effective schools, a list which

included strong instructional leadership, a strong sense of mission, high expectations for all students, and frequent monitoring of student achievement (Lezotte, 2005). Although not causal, these factors did provide a benchmark of qualities against which schools might self-compare to adjudge the degree to which they were providing these factors for their students.

Compensatory Education

Some districts used Coleman's report as the basis for removing their burden of responsibility for the academic success of poor students of color. By the late 1960s, these districts attempted to improve underserved inner-city schools without going through the effort to integrate (Kozol, 2005). Despite the impassioned and specific language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, these districts sought to fulfill the letter of the law by instead providing better facilities, more teachers, smaller classes, and extracurricular activities. Long-overdue improvements to schools with primarily African American students did not fulfill the intent of the Civil Rights Act, however. The system which developed, in which schools were "separate but equal," could be argued to be still in place today (Kozol, 2005).

Programmatic Reform Models

On January 8, 2002, with the overwhelming support of both Democrats and Republicans in Congress, President George W. Bush signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002. Popularly known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the law called for higher standards and increased, supervised accountability throughout public school systems in the United States which received federal funding (United States Department of Education, 2004). Although the marker of educational reform for most of the public and indeed for many educators, this legislation is not really reform but rather a setting forth of the standards

towards which future reform measures must strive. Several programmatic educational reform measures have had widely varying degrees of success in these efforts.

The Effective Schools Movement

Implementation of NCLB proved controversial, even though many educators asserted that the spirit behind NCLB, that “no child [be] left behind” academically, was obviously well-meaning. The NCLB legislation pointed to the Effective Schools Movement (ESM) for support of its initiatives, but former proponents of ESM (Bainbridge, 2002; Dantley, 1990; Thomas & Bainbridge, 2001) pointed out that the authors of NCLB misunderstood what ESM originally proposed. For example:

Empirical research does not support the belief that all children can learn the same curriculum, in the same amount of time, and at the same level. The problem with such an unsubstantiated belief is that it may be used to deny differential financial support for those who come to school with environmental disadvantages. Not all children have high-quality nutrition, stimulating homes, and extensive learning opportunities prior to entering school. (Bainbridge, 2002, ¶ 7)

Dantley (1990) believed that the Effective Schools Movement was a deficiency model which took an assimilationist approach to disenfranchised groups such as racial and ethnic minorities and the urban poor. Although the Effective Schools movement portrayed itself as a means by which to offer marginalized minorities opportunities to participate in the dominant culture, ESM’s position that an effective school leader’s “manipulation of specific kinds of school variables . . . purported to produce effective, successful schools of excellence” (p. 592) only served to further marginalize those groups. In so doing, ESM failed to recognize the strengths of the local school community and thus further marginalized it. What was needed was

for school leaders to have the ability to accurately situate a school within its cultural milieu and use that knowledge not to manipulate but to fuse the efforts to meet the academic needs of the school with the background and goals of the community it serves.

Schools are grounded in an environment that celebrates and reifies specific cultural trappings; therefore critical leadership of urban poor schools must understand that cultural capital is tendered at the local school site. They must understand this social/cultural milieu with all its history, celebrations, traditions, and rituals. Further, they must be aware that cultural currency seeps through the permeable boundary that artificially separates the school from its community. (Dantley, 1990, p. 596)

Thus, former proponents of ESM struck a blow simultaneously against both NCLB and proponents for a national core curriculum; they refocused attention on how effective schools need to first understand the cultural identities of the students and schools within which they would effect change. Then, they are able to approach the challenge of differentiating instruction, along with making early support and remediation readily available to everyone (Dantley, 1990).

Total Quality Management

One group which undertook to address the diversity of learners and their future role in society through organizational change strategies, not curricular development, was the National Alliance of Business (NAB; Sallis, 2002). In the latter part of the last century, NAB adapted Total Quality Management (TQM), a business model for organizational change, to the educational environment as a comprehensive strategy in redesigning schools to help improve student and system performance. The NAB additionally called for developing a methodology for teaching value-added skills such as leadership, problem solving, and creativity. Students, considered the products of this system, would develop the necessary tools to become lifelong

learners. This quality of being a life-long learner was a vital attribute for potential employees of businesses, TQM's customers, who desired to remain competitive in the world market through change and growth (Siegel & Byrne, 1994, p. 2).

Further, although a rigorous academic course of study and critical thinking skills were deemed crucial to the success of TQM, equally critical was the culture of the organization. A supportive culture was one in which employees felt valued and supported and were thereby motivated to give their best efforts toward the organization's success. "Increasingly, educational researchers and policy analysts agree that the organizational design and culture of schools can either enhance or hinder their effectiveness" (Hawley & Rollie, 2002, p. vii). Thus, a healthy, supportive school culture and the success of a rigorous academic curriculum were linked in a healthy symbiotic relationship.

Comprehensive School Reform Program

Despite the intention to provide school improvement, the pendulous cycle of reform measures in the latter half of the 20th century sent educators from one program to another with little evidence of national progress (Slavin, 1989). Perhaps in response, Congress and other educational policymakers made some funding sources available only to schools that implemented educational reforms with high-quality evidence of effectiveness. The Comprehensive School Reform Program (CSRP), formerly known as Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration, began in 1998 and was authorized as Title I, Part F, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002. CSRP provided \$300 million in grants to schools to adopt reform measures "based upon scientifically based research and effective practices" (United States Department of Education, 2013a, ¶ 1). School districts thus had to exert due diligence in pursuing academic reform models or curricula by ensuring that the research around their

selection was sound as well as generalizable to the students for whom the reforms or curricula were intended.

Accelerated Schools PLUS

Accelerated Schools PLUS (AS PLUS) was designed to transform school communities, especially those characterized by high poverty and low academic achievement, into enhanced environments distinguished by accelerated instruction and gifted and higher-order teaching strategies more typically reserved for only the top 5% of students (Davidson Institute for Talent Development, 2012; National Center for Accelerated Schools Plus, 2012). The Accelerated Schools Project was founded by Henry Levin at Stanford University in 1986 to address both the needs of schools where students struggled academically as well as the questions and challenges presented in *A Nation at Risk* (United States Department of Education, 1983).

AS PLUS has partnered with more than 1,800 public schools in 42 states; in 2012, it supported four demonstration school sites in the United States, in two elementary and two middle schools, plus 162 Accelerated Learning Academies (K-8) and Accelerated High Schools (Accelerated Schools PLUS, 2012). Accelerated Schools PLUS espouses three learning principles: a unity of purposes among stakeholders; empowerment coupled with responsibility on the part of all members of the school community; and a commitment to building on students' strengths rather than concentrating on the remediation of weaknesses (Accelerated Schools PLUS, 2012).

Expeditionary Learning Schools

Expeditionary Learning Schools are models of comprehensive school reform based on the educational ideas of German educator Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, an international organization providing students experiential education (Outward Bound, 2012).

The emphasis is upon high levels of student engagement, character development, and achievement. Students engage in project-based “learning expeditions,” which are interdisciplinary and involve in-depth study of compelling topics in groups and in their community. Student assessment is performance-based, through cumulative products, public presentations, and portfolios (Expeditionary Learning Schools, 2012).

Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS) hold what they refer to as 10 design principles, among which are the primacy of self-discovery; responsibility for learning, both personal and collective; collaboration and competition; diversity and inclusion; and service and compassion. These design principles inculcate students with a world view in which the students’ roles as citizens are critical to their future success (Expeditionary Learning Schools, 2012).

Begun in 1993 through funds received from the New American Schools Development Corporation, Expeditionary Learning initially opened 10 demonstration schools throughout the United States. The Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) evaluated ELS models and practices and cited positive outcomes, such as higher student achievement and participation and a more positive and productive school culture. The 2002 CRESPAR analysis of 29 comprehensive school reform models awarded ELS the highest rating given to any model created in the previous 10 years (Borman et al., 2003, pp. 34, 38). Today there are more than 150 Expeditionary Learning Schools, elementary and secondary, in the United States and the District of Columbia. In February 2009, President Barack Obama visited Capital City Public Charter School, an Expeditionary Learning School in Washington, DC, and said the school “is an example of how all our schools should be” (Phillips, 2009, ¶ 1).

Continuous Improvement Model

Another school reform initiative of the past decade is the Continuous Improvement Model (CIM). CIM is a blend of the Effective Schools Movement's research plus Total Quality Management. The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), Division of Public Schools, Bureau of School Improvement (2005) described CIM as that factor identified by principals of F-graded schools which most improved student achievement (p. 6). CIM combines ESM's directives to provide strong instructional leadership and high student expectations with the business model of TQM and its emphasis on data-driven processes designed to benefit all stakeholders (FLDOE, 2005). Within CIM is a call for proven, research-based curriculum models that could serve to raise schools' struggling learners to higher levels of achievement (p. 14).

Qualities of Effective School Reform Initiatives

“School reform” is most often used to refer to systemic change, whereas “redesign” or “restructuring” are terms reserved for more localized efforts, often site-based (Villars, 1991, p. 15). School reform may be as innocuous as an adaptation of what is already in place, with an eye toward improving upon existing successes; but, it may also be as radical as a substantive change in the educational process itself. “Redesign” implies a reworking or repositioning of a school's elements, very often involving administrative and faculty changes. It may also mean the laying aside of current curricula and the adoption of alternative curricula selected especially to effect the desired outcomes (Villars, 1991, pp. 6-8).

Educational theorists and reformers suggest that school and curricular redesign may take as long as five to eight years (Villars, 1991, p. 22). However, states' accountability systems for their schools often call for much shorter timelines. In Georgia, for example, a high school that

fails to make NCLB's annual yearly progress (AYP) in the same subject for two or more consecutive years—less than half the recommended turn-around time stated above—is placed in “Needs Improvement” status with escalating consequences for each successive year during which progress is less than satisfactory. School-level consequences which escalate with each successive year of failure to make AYP include vouchers for students to attend charter schools, placement under a Corrective Action Plan, or, finally, reconstitution, that is, closure and reopening with new staff and administrators (Georgia Department of Education, 2012a).

What then are the characteristics of an academically successful school? Lightfoot (1983) looked closely at this question in her aptly titled *The Good High School*. Lightfoot addressed the genesis of her study as a response to issues raised through her participation in the Daedalus Seminar that included members of the Academy of Arts and Sciences and representatives from the professions and public life. Stephen Graubard, the editor of *Daedalus: The Journal of the Academy of Arts and Sciences*, drew scholars in the field of education together in this seminar in order to “consider contrary perspectives” on the state of American secondary schooling (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 9). Out of these discussions grew a desire by some seminar participants, including Lightfoot, to take an intimate, insider's look at “good” public high schools as a way of grounding their conversations in reality: to find out “what works . . . and whether it is replicable, transportable, to other environs” (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 10).

The “portraits” (Lightfoot & Davis, 2002) of participant schools, all acknowledged “good” schools, were brilliantly detailed and provided “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) of the qualities of these schools; they “penetrate[d] the surface . . . to the meaning events have for those who experience them” (Eisner, 1998, p. 35). Recurrent themes, those “replicable [and] transportable” (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 10) attributes, were evident in Lightfoot's portraits of these

schools: “Good” schools clearly communicated and uniformly held high standards, promoted mutual respect and support among faculty and staff, and provided creative and inspired leadership (Lightfoot, 1983).

More specific were the findings of the non-profit educational organization Research for Better Schools (RBS), which examined more than 200 exemplary public elementary schools in its search for those factors common to “good” schools (Wilson & Corcoran, 1987). In his Foreword to the report, then-Secretary of Education William Bennett cited the survey as “a guide and an inspiration to others who seek to replicate their success” (Wilson & Corcoran, 1987, p. iii).

Similar to Lightfoot’s research on secondary schools, RBS found that these good elementary schools “influence[d] and share[d] the values, goals, and standards of their school” among their faculty and students (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993, p. 3). These schools dealt directly with the tension between challenging high-achieving students while at the same time scaffolding the instruction for students who were academically less able. They resolved this tension by “maintaining high standards for their classes over the long run, in the short run varying their expectations for individual students in order to motivate them to produce their best work and move closer to the school standards” (Wilson & Corcoran, 1987, p. 30). Their principals communicated “a clear and distinct . . . vision for the school[s]” (Wilson & Corcoran, 1987, p. 35). With this exemplary leadership, these schools’ faculties embraced high standards and expectations which were “supported by policies and programs that reinforce[d] the message” (Wilson & Corcoran, 1987, p. 35).

Small Learning Communities as a Support for Teachers’ Change in Practice

Given that culture is central to curricular reform and that attention to reculturation is essential for reform to occur (Fullan, 2001), personnel within a school must work together to develop a culture to support curricular change. It is a common aphorism among teachers that the only constant in their professional lives is change. Spillane (1999) described the ability of teachers to successfully alter their classroom practice when presented with changes such as curriculum reform as related to capacity and will. He further defined key terms in that description. "Classroom practice" Spillane described as the "core dimensions of teaching such as the knowledge presented in classroom tasks, classroom discourse patterns, roles and responsibilities in the classroom" (1999, p. 143). "Will" was defined as "teachers' motivation to change their practice to carry out reformers' recommendations" (1999, p. 143). Finally, Spillane defined "capacity" as "educators' ability to practice in ways recommended by reformers" (1999, p. 143). The intersection of these three key terms forms a teacher's "zone of enactment," where the teacher constructs new classroom practice and makes the educational reforms which have been introduced an integral part of his or her personal teaching strategies portfolio (1999, p. 144).

Capacity is largely the result of rich, relevant, and well-timed professional development which provides teachers with the necessary tools with which to implement the reform curriculum. The requisite capacity for implementation can be evidenced by a teacher's internalization of the language, values, and ideas of the reform measure and the attempts at their transference to the students through rigorous lesson planning and instructional activities (Spillane, 1999). Capacity may also be a reflection, however, of the degree to which the curricular reform mirrored the teacher's existing classroom practice (Spillane, 1999).

The Rural School and Community Trust (Jimerson, 2006) conducted a review of the literature around the benefits of small schools and found that teachers in smaller high schools more frequently initiated reform strategies (Cotton, 1996, 2001; Jimerson, 2006). Teachers in small schools tended to be more satisfied with their positions and assume greater responsibility for student learning (Jimerson, 2006). In addition, teachers in small schools had a stronger sense of professional community and found more opportunities for working as a team (Mohr, 2000). Professional development in small schools was often perceived as more valuable and effective, more focused on school priorities, ongoing, and peer-led—all qualities that teachers and researchers identified as elements of professional development that increase student learning (Jimerson, 2006).

Teachers' will to implement educational reform in their classrooms is a very personal, even emotional feature, positively influenced to a degree by external incentives such as performance pay or the desire to continue one's employment. Their reform efforts are even more successfully influenced, however, by the capacity and will of colleagues in the same grade level or department (Spillane, 1999). Spillane conducted a mixed-methods study of how math and science teachers in Michigan responded to widespread instructional reforms by altering their classroom practice (1999, p. 144). In his study, the willingness and ability of the entire cohort of teachers to acquire and succeed under the new curriculum effected positive adherence to and implementation of the reform curriculum. Such an environment encouraged collegial conversations during which teachers might

work together to figure out what practising the reform ideas might involve and [have] an opportunity to gain the insights of others on the practical problems of putting the ideas into actual practice. The conversations these teachers engaged in created the sort of

distance from practice needed for learning about practice while still remaining closely connected to teachers' day-to-day practice. (Spillane, 1999, p. 164)

Additionally, the social dimensions of the work of teachers in Spillane's study created a small learning community (Spillane, 1999, p. 165). Within this small learning community, teachers struggled to embrace and implement math and science curricular reform and broadened the scope of their individual zones of enactment, defined by Spillane (1998) as "the 'space' in which teachers apprehend reform and work out its implications for their practice" (p. 27). Rather than undergoing the implementation of curricular reform within the insular four walls of their classrooms, these teachers came together with colleagues and benefited from their shared experiences and perspectives. In turn, a broadened zone of enactment empowered the teachers to more successfully implement curricular reform (Spillane, 1998, p. 27).

The shared experience of school change also increased the teachers' sense of self-efficacy, which Howard McClusky (1974) might have described as improving the teachers' margin. According to McClusky's (1974) theory of power-load-margin, the key factors of adult life are the load the adult carries and the power that is available to him or her to carry that load. McClusky conceived of margin as a ratio or relationship between the person's load, which are external tasks such as family and career, and power, which are physical, emotional, mental or economic (McClusky, 1970, p. 27.) Although teachers' load may be increased by the degree to which curricular reform differed from their previous pedagogy, or by their perceptions that as non-participants in the reform that they were somehow being short-changed, the teachers' power increased through their collegial support.

The actuality of small learning communities (SLCs) as an educational milieu dates back to the one-room schoolhouse, itself a small community of learners. SLCs have come under

closer scrutiny in the current environment of widespread educational reform as a potential counterbalance to increasingly larger public schools. Budget deficits in education today drive districts to more efficiently utilize school campuses, resulting in a proliferation of K-8 schools and large regional high schools. In an effort to help local education agencies (LEAs) plan, develop, implement, or expand smaller, more personalized learning communities in large high schools, Congress earmarked \$45 million in 2000 to fund Section 10105 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the Smaller Learning Communities program (United States Department of Education, 2001, p. 3).

A small learning community may be anything from a purposefully smaller-sized school to the creation within a larger school setting of smaller teams or cohorts of students who move within a prescribed curriculum and a core group of teachers and assigned administrators. Smaller school structures within a larger school site include academies, house plans, schools-within-schools, and magnet programs (United States Department of Education, 2001, p. 5). These examples share the intent of fostering a more personalized and supportive educational experience for students. An additional benefit appears to be a similarly more supportive educational experience for faculty.

Research into the effects of school size upon student success recommended that smaller high schools, for example, have no more than 500 to 900 students (Cotton, 1996; 2001; Klonsky & Klonsky, 1999; Raywid, 1996; Ready, Lee, & Welner, 2004). Despite the smaller-size as a goal, the average school size is not declining in the United States, and schools in rural and suburban areas continue to grow in size due to consolidation efforts aimed at “demonstrat[ing] their commitment to the forces of science, progress, and modernization” by seeking to make schools “efficient,” a term borrowed from the private sector (Smith & DeYoung, 1988, p. 3).

Yet smaller school size positively influences student success. For example, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that students in smaller schools or communities within schools felt more of a sense of connection to their school's culture and activities than did their peers in larger schools; the larger the school, the lower the sense of school connectedness (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2009, p. 7). Cotton (1996; 2001) suggested that, in addition to this sense of increased connectedness to the school, students in smaller school communities profit from other distinct benefits, four of which directly relate to this study. For each benefit I have provided a brief clarification of how it positively impacts student academic success.

1. Smaller class size promotes individualized instruction and improved teacher-student relationships.

John Dewey (1938/1998) observed that an effective school "is realized to the degree in which individuals form a group" (p. 65). A more contemporary justification for smaller class size and the individualized instruction which results rests on the likelihood for improved relationships among all people in the school. Students can say with assurance, "They know who you are" ("Classroom management," 2002, ¶ 14). Teachers ensure that at least one adult knows each student well and help personalize students' experiences in even the largest schools. By identifying small cohorts of 15 to 20 students for whom each teacher will have oversight responsibility, these adult advocates can develop rapport, provide academic guidance, and serve as links to additional resources when needed (Cotton, 1996; 2001; United States Department of Education, 2001). Much of the available research shows that the improved support which smaller school communities provide to students fosters positive outcomes by promoting students' sense of belonging (Cotton, 1996; 2001; Schaps, 2005; Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997).

2. Best practices and curricular changes are easier to implement in smaller settings.

Teachers are better able to employ pedagogical best practices and are more likely to do so with fidelity when they are working with smaller numbers of students. For example, specific differentiated instruction based on real-time student data was more frequently made available when the teacher had previously had the opportunity to devote class time to the observation and instruction of individual students (Fine & Somerville, 1998). Furthermore, “because change is easier to implement in a smaller setting, smaller learning environments create a context hospitable to reform” (United States Department of Education, 2001, p. 3), so state-mandated and school-initiated reform measures are more likely to bear fruit.

3. The intimacy and familiarity which smaller schools advance tend to bind small communities together in support, serving as an economic and social hub (Jimerson, 2006, p. 5).

The role of the school in the local community is significant. “Communities are typically places that naturally result in close interpersonal connections, where individuals know, share with, and care for each other. Smaller schools mirror these qualities” (Jimerson, 2006, p. 16). There is also a higher rate of parent involvement in smaller schools or units which is frequently cited as a positive influence on student achievement and attitudes (Cotton, 1996).

Large urban schools where students are struggling academically based on their performance on high-stakes tests often strive to replicate those positive qualities resulting from small learning communities. Increasingly, schools select the school-within-school structure using specialized curricula in an effort to bolster academically under-performing students.

4. Teachers have an improved sense of self-efficacy.

That self-efficacy is a benefit of small learning communities within a school can be expressed through teachers' voiced improved satisfaction in their jobs, in their relationships with colleagues and students, and in their efforts to better serve their communities (Bandura, 1985).

Self-Efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as “people’s judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance” (Bandura, 1985, p. 391). Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with people’s beliefs in their ability to influence events that affect their lives. Perceived self-efficacy is defined as “people’s judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance” (Bandura, 1985, p. 391). This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, performance accomplishments, and emotional well-being (Bandura, 1997). Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to undertake activities or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors may serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that an individual can make a difference through his or her actions.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

The International Baccalaureate Programme (IBP) meets many of the aforementioned characteristics of effective reform efforts. The number of International Baccalaureate (IB) programs in American schools is rapidly increasing, and the presence of this program has in some cases even been used as an indicator of school quality and of efforts to increase minority participation in more rigorous college preparatory coursework (Mathews, 2005). Several factors have contributed to the growth of the IB Programme in the United States. One such factor is the program’s readily available curricula. The IBP sets forth extensive frameworks within which

courses must be developed, even going so far as to provide a prescribed reading list that includes different genres and countries of origin from which IB teachers must choose a required number of texts (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2012).

Another perceived benefit of providing the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in high school is the belief that the rigor of the IBDP's academic standards develops in its students the requisite study skills for postsecondary school success (Sjogren & Campbell, 2003). This perceived benefit is especially significant for students who might become the first family member to attend college (Paige & Marcus, 2004, ¶50). Some IB schools encourage students who may lack the academic competence necessary to pursue the full-fledged IB Diploma to take IB courses *à la carte* instead. These students earn an IB Certificate for each course for which they successfully take the examination, with the perceived benefit of having IB coursework on their high-school transcripts. They thus may be more likely to consider pursuing post-secondary education.

Although colleges do not grant as many credit hours earned for IB courses taken as singletons (Mathews, 2008), the experience of having taken the coursework has proven to be beneficial with regard to college acceptance and college completion. The Chicago Postsecondary Transition project, a multi-year research project in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), tracked the post-high school experiences of successive cohorts of graduates through data obtained through the National Student Clearinghouse (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, & Moeller, 2009). The study found that students who participated in an academically advanced program such as the IBDP were more likely to enroll in a selective college and more likely to remain in college compared to non-IBDP students (Roderick et al., 2009). Students who were in the IBDP

as of their junior year also had higher college placement test scores than their CPS peers regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds (Roderick, et al., 2009).

There is recent research from outside the United States concerning instructional personnel's perceptions of how the adoption of the IBDP changed their schools' culture and outcomes. For example, one South-East Asian study noted schools adopted IBDP because they were "eager to keep abreast of global trends by updating their educational offerings" (Yin, 2006, p. 3). The research report did not indicate that the schools studied were struggling academically; rather, they were seeking a new philosophical thrust for their educational systems.

A survey in England of 71 schools of higher education examined the overall perceptions of educators concerning the IB's recognition by postsecondary institutions (Barnes et al., 2004; Jenkins, 2003). Within this study was a discussion of the adoption of the IBDP by the Broadgreen School in Liverpool, UK, which, according to the authors, was "classified by the Department of Education and Skills as a school in 'challenging circumstances'" (p. 12). Broadgreen's success with IB had been documented by the almost 100% record of entry to universities for students who participated in even one or two stand-alone IB courses. The report attributed this preferential treatment of Broadgreen students by post-secondary institutions in the U.K. to their recognition of the students' exposure to a rigorous curriculum, its unique Theory of Knowledge course, and its stringent requirements for community service (Barnes et al., 2004, pp. 12-13).

The IBDP has come to be associated with the school reform movement in the United States, whether intended to be whole-school or implemented as a small learning community within the school. Although as recently as 2002, when one teacher referred to the Programme as "one of the best-kept secrets in education" (Gazda-Grace, 2002, p. 84), within five years the

College Board's Advanced Placement curricula and IBDP were being compared for academic rigor (Byrd et al., 2007; Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2007; Mayer, 2010) and their relative ability to "align high-school standards with college and work" (Spellings, 2006, ¶ 22). Factors contributing to the program's growth in the United States were the depth and breadth of the content in the course offerings, the professional development available to participating faculty, and the portability of the college credit granted by postsecondary institutions (Byrd et al., 2007; Kyburg et al., 2007; Mayer, 2010). One additional perceived advantage of the IBDP over the long-familiar AP curricula is its cachet as an international program. For example, in Mathews and Hill's *Supertest* (2005), a school board member in Fairfax County, Virginia, recalled considering the IB Programme's "'plumminess'—that British upper-class thing useful in American politics" (p. 7)—as a desirable quality in an academic program here intended to help infuse curricular rigor and depth when his own district's schools were struggling academically.

The curricular rigor and depth of the IBDP and its ability to effect academic success in struggling schools received a strong endorsement by the Bush administration in 2004 when it announced that it would issue \$1.2 million in grants to implement IB programs in certain low-income school districts. Further, President Bush's 2006 education budget targeted \$52 million—a 73% increase over the previous year's budget—for school districts to implement increased access to Advanced Placement and IB programs (Archibald, 2004; Hutcheson, 2005, ¶ 6).

The International Baccalaureate Programme's original intent was to provide a strong academic background for the somewhat more privileged children of career diplomats and foreign service employees who needed a well-recognized and widely accepted credential for entering international colleges and universities. Today, the IBP is utilized frequently as a means of

providing academic reform for struggling students because of its rigor and demonstrated success in preparing students for postsecondary success.

History of the International Baccalaureate Programme

After World War II, the children of the diplomatic corps and international businessmen and women needed a diploma program that would be recognized across national boundaries and be rigorous and sufficiently all-encompassing to prove adequate for admission to colleges and universities worldwide. In 1949, UNESCO convened a “Conference of Principals of International Schools” in Paris to develop a plan for such a course of study (Mathews & Hill, 2005, p. 17). A few schools responded, forming the International Schools Association in 1951, but those schools quickly discovered that this alliance did not free their students from having to negotiate through several academic requirements in order to gain credit for their completed high school coursework. For example,

in 1964 . . . students who were studying physics in hopes of applying to universities in that field were divided into four small groups: one followed the syllabus for the Swiss *maturité federale* [italics original], one prepared for the English General Certificate of Education A level examination, one fixed on the French *baccalauréat*, and one got ready for the American College Board Advanced Placement test. (Mathews & Hill, 2005, p. 19)

École International or the International School of Geneva (Ecolint) approached the Ford Foundation with the idea for developing a course of study which would encompass the criteria for all such culminating examinations, a truly international curriculum (Mathews & Hill, 2005). With the help of a variety of educators worldwide, including Oxford University and The College Board, Ecolint took the Ford Foundation’s \$300,000 seed money and by 1967 developed what

became known as the International Baccalaureate Programme.

The first IBDP was authorized in the United States at, appropriately, the United Nations International School, a private school in New York City. In 1978, three high schools in Wisconsin and one in Ohio were the first public schools to offer the IBDP (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2010b). In the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 1,057,000 students from 3,483 schools in 144 countries participated in the IB program, 1383 of those schools in the United States (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013a, ¶ 4, 9).

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Curricula

Within the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) are programs for students in three age divisions as well as a career-related certification program (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013b). The Primary Years Programme and Middle Years Programme are intended to acquaint younger students with the IBO's global perspective and rigorous coursework. The IBDP is the upper secondary program within the IBO. The IBDP itself has a six-pronged approach. Students must study their primary language, or Language A1, as well as a second, world language, or Language A2. The individual schools may determine the content of coursework in three areas: "individuals and societies," or the social sciences; the experimental sciences; and mathematics and computer science. For the sixth subject, the student may choose an elective course such as art or psychology or take a second course in one of the previous areas. IBDP students also complete three core requirements: an extended essay, a service component called CAS (creativity, action, service), and, lastly, a course entitled "Theory of Knowledge," or ToK. In the Theory of Knowledge course, students make connections among the six areas, as well as receive foundational instruction in learning theory, philosophy, arts appreciation, and world citizenship (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013c).

Students typically begin the Diploma Programme informally as “pre-IB” students in the ninth grade. Although the International Baccalaureate Organisation has not formalized the pre-IB course of study, it does assist member schools in developing preparatory coursework in order to ensure student readiness for the actual Diploma Programme beginning in the junior year of high school. IBO requires only a 2.75 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or what is basically a high “C” average in most school systems; this requirement places the Programme within the reach of motivated students of average previous achievement for whom, until the College Board’s SpringBoard in 2006, there were no rigorous academic curricula widely available.

Upon completion of the Diploma Programme, students prepare the above-mentioned extended essay, an essay on a topic suggested by their Theory of Knowledge course, plus formal, timed examinations designed to assess their mastery of their past two years’ coursework. Examinations may include English (in the United States), a world language, philosophy, mathematics, psychology, music, geography, social and cultural anthropology, chemistry, and physics, among others. In the Language A1 (primary language) exam, for example, IBDP students take a four-hour examination during which they write an extemporaneous commentary on a literary excerpt selected by the examiners in advance (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013d). Students also take an oral examination with an assessor during which they analyze a previously unidentified piece of literature (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013d). The multiple levels of assessment which the IBDP student undergoes over a prolonged period of time are intended to provide a more accurate assessment of a student’s degree of content mastery (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013d).

The IB Programme ensures the external validity of its examinations by sending all of the students’ final essays to IB examiners at participating schools around the world. Thus, an IB

student in Valdosta, Georgia, may write an essay which will be assessed by an instructor in Singapore, or Melbourne, Australia, or Cardiff, Wales, IBO's curriculum and assessment center. More importantly, the IB grading system is criterion-referenced. IB examiners evaluate an individual student's work against preset standards for excellence, so that IB students are in essence competing against themselves or the criteria and not against all other students who took the same assessment in the same year, as with the College Board's Advanced Placement tests, for example. This method would seem to ensure continued quality and adherence to standards and would avoid any unintended degeneration due to a systemic decline in academic performance throughout the IBO's member schools (Sjogren & Campbell, 2003, p. 56).

Instrumental in ensuring this continued quality of the IB coursework is the provision of high-quality, ongoing professional learning to the teachers within the program. Monitoring of the content and structure of the professional development provided to IB teachers is a highly centralized process, and fidelity to the curriculum is a major area of concern. IBO maintains this fidelity by employing current or retired IB teachers as workshop facilitators (Mayer, 2010).

In addition to the extensive training IB teachers receive from the IBO in preparation to teach these courses, ongoing professional feedback on these teachers' perceived effectiveness as judged by their students' work helps IB teachers continually improve their craft. Along with the marked examinations, IB graders return to the students' schools their recommendations for individual instructors regarding how to improve instruction on particular points. Teachers who fail to move their students toward mastery are mentored or, if continually unsuccessful, replaced.

One criticism of the IB Programme has been the perception that it does not attract or recruit students from groups who are underrepresented in other academically advanced programs (Hanover Research Council, 2010). The IBO recognized that this weakness in its program is

“due to [the IB Programme’s] relatively small scale, the lack of academic preparation of many high-need students for the level of rigor in the Diploma Programme, and the perceptions held by schools and students that the programme is for the ‘elite’ students” (IBO, 2008, p. 12).

A second criticism has focused on the cost of the IB Programme (Mathews, 2010, ¶ 18-19). In their book, *Supertest* (2005), Mathews and Hill calculated that an average public high school spent about \$56,000 a year on IB, including subscription and additional costs per pupil. This cost is due in part to the IBO’s insistence that all IB teachers receive professional development. In addition, the essay questions on IB tests are more expensive to grade because they are all read by selected, paid, IB examiners.

Many districts are willing to overlook the high cost of the IB Programme in favor of its strength in gaining preferential college admission for graduates. More universities each year are providing IBDP graduates varying amounts of college credit or automatic placement into higher-level courses (University of North Florida, 2012). These already motivated students are then able to pursue their desired courses at greater depth more quickly. The assumptions that universities have about incoming IB graduates are numerous (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013f; Sjogren & Campbell, 2003). The recognized rigor of the IBDP presupposes these students’ experience with a strong academic curriculum for which coursework the students have demonstrated mastery, thereby suggesting a non-inflated grade point average (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013f, p. 7; Sjogren & Campbell, 2003, p. 56). As entering freshmen, college faculty described IBDP graduates as demonstrating the maturity and responsibility of older students, motivated to accept educational challenges, and with established research and writing skills necessary for college-level work (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013f, p. 7; Sjogren & Campbell, 2003, p. 57).

These latter skills, including maturity and responsibility, motivation, and postsecondary readiness, all contribute to creating a positive, healthy school culture in which students and teachers believe in their work and in their ability to be successful at it. Schools at which the students struggle academically can develop an unhealthy or even toxic culture due to students' repeated failures on high-stakes testing and the resultant stress of increased scrutiny and oversight by district and state educational personnel.

Culture and School Health

If school reform is to occur, it is not enough for schools or districts to attract more academically able students into a school's high-stakes' test-taking population through the marketing of high-profile academic curricula such as the International Baccalaureate Programme. The overall school culture must foster a new sense of possibility and empowerment in all of the students who attend the school for any program within the school to succeed in overall school improvement. This culture enables the program to both draw and hold students. Deal and Peterson (1999) argued that "the culture of an enterprise plays the dominant role in exemplary performance" (p. 1). Although offering a rigorous academic curriculum might initially lure students with academic prowess to a previously ailing school, the overall culture of that school must be sufficiently healthy and engaging to keep such students from eventually exploring their other options. Senge (1990) described such a successful school culture as one in which students and faculty alike "continually expand their capacity to create results which they truly desire" (p. 3).

Culture as a term is very difficult to define, so much so that Williams (1985) described it as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English Language" (p. 87). He offered three potential explanations for culture. One definition, "the words and practices of

intellectual and especially artistic activity” (p. 90), described the pursuit of the fine arts including music, theatre, and sculpture, to name only a few. The next definition was an intellectual and aesthetic development, and the last, a particular way of life (p. 90).

If culture as a term is difficult to define, it is surprisingly easy to detect and describe by those who are engaged in work within the culture’s confines. The stakeholders in academically failing schools recognize when they have an ailing or unhealthy school culture. Roland Barth in 2002 described school cultures as either

hospitable [or] toxic. A school’s culture can work for or against improvement and reform. Some schools are populated by teachers and administrators who are reformers, others by educators who are gifted and talented at subverting reform. And many school cultures are indifferent to reform. And all school cultures are incredibly resistant to change, which makes school improvement from within or from without—usually so futile. Unless teachers and administrators act to change the culture of a school, all innovations, all the new higher standards, and the high-stakes tests will have to fit in and around existing elements of the culture. That is, they will be destined to remain superficial window dressing, incapable of making much of a difference. (Barth, 2002, pp. 6-7)

Similarly, Peterson (2002) noted that an unhealthy school culture can subvert even the best-intentioned, most academically appropriate and necessary school reforms.

When a school has a positive school culture, one finds meaningful staff development, successful curricular reform, and the effective use of student performance data. In these cultures, staff and student learning thrive. In contrast, a school with a negative or toxic

culture that does not value professional learning, resists change, or devalues staff development, hinders success. (Peterson, 2002, p. 10).

An example of this subversion of a previously healthy school culture can be found in a case study of Jackson Elementary School, a participant in North Carolina's A+ Schools Program, conducted from 1996 to 1998 (Groves, 2002). This study found both teachers and students energized by the A+ Schools Program's content integration of music, dance, drama, and visual arts. An emphasis upon collaborative and interdisciplinary learning played well to their students' diverse learning styles. Following a stellar introductory year, Jackson hung red "A+" banners with posters asking "How are you smart?" and displaying a graphic of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences. Student work hung everywhere, and student "voices" were heard literally in their choral and dramatic performances and in their creative writing read aloud in small groups (Groves, 2002, pp. 21- 23).

In the next year, however, in an effort to now monitor the results of the A+ program, North Carolina implemented its high-stakes testing program, the ABCs of Public Education. The "ABCs" stood for accountability, basic skills, and local control of discretionary funds (Groves, 2002, p. 19). Testing results found that, although most North Carolina elementary schools made modest gains, these same schools failed to meet benchmark requirements and were therefore labeled as "low performing" (p. 24). Within a year, remarked Groves,

the walls of the school were bare, the A+ banner was tucked away in a closet, and the school was completely quiet. "Doesn't it feel morbid here?" remarked one teacher as she caught me in the hallway. "The whole school is down and the focus is all on tests and that's about it." . . . What died in the school was . . . their positive school climate, and the excitement children displayed as they experimented and learned new things. . . .

Teacher morale had reached an all-time low, community and parent support dropped off considerably, and students no longer enjoyed coming to school. School climate had taken a very negative turn. (2002, p. 24, italics original)

In this case study, the researchers found that the introduction of high-stakes testing into the culture of the school took only one school year to reduce the benefits previously noted from a new program. Jackson Elementary School's culture, newly exuberant due to the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders to improve the school, returned to or surpassed its previous levels of toxicity.

What, then, are some of the characteristics of toxic school cultures that can lead a school toward academic failure? Deal and Peterson (1999) identified a short list of characteristics of toxic school cultures which included an overall focus on "negative values" (p. 118) which are not student-centered. Faculty and administrators at such schools may deceive themselves into believing that the work they engage in daily is in the interest of students, but their outcomes often are too low, such as a focus on basic skills remediation. Exclusive attention to the lowest performing students stifles the creative impulses within faculty and higher-performing students alike. Faculty may come to resent their lower-performing charges who seem resistant to all their strenuous and scrupulously monitored efforts. Resentment may affect or even dominate teachers' overall attitudes toward their work and their interactions with students and faculty, to the extent that they become what have been described as "negaholics" (Carter-Scott, 1989; Deal & Peterson, 1999). Groups of similarly aggrieved and bitter teachers may form small but influential networks within schools, led by "antiheroes" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 123), influential teacher leaders who cling to nonproductive rituals and stale lesson plans in the face of change efforts.

The inevitability of change is inherent in the life of a school, however. Thus, any change effort must address critical aspects at the root of school culture. In order for school reform measures to work at a school where the culture has grown toxic, change must be implemented purposefully and in a controlled fashion in order that it might be sustained (Browne-Ferrigno, Maynard, Jackson, & Stalion, 2006).

All aspects of the culture must be addressed: artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions, critical areas which Schein (2004) termed sub-systems. Artifacts are what are seen and heard, the external characteristics of culture. Schein's second level is values, or persons' perceptions of what ought to be, the benchmarks for behavior and achievement. Finally are what Schein termed the basic underlying assumptions, accepted "truths" which guide behavior and perceptions but which may lack any basis in fact (Schein, 2004, p. 15). Any study of school culture, then, should consider the school as a very individual entity, a "personality," as evidenced by its available artifacts, the school's espoused belief system and values as well as the implicit beliefs and values of its faculty and staff, and, lastly, the explicit mores and rituals which typify the behavior of administrators, faculty, and students.

A scrutiny of the members of the school's stakeholder community can shed light on basic underlying assumptions about what the school's function has been historically and what that function is in the present. The presence of strong community support of a school as it undergoes growth and change is fundamental to the success of these measures. Such community support enhances motivation, the desire to learn, and the willingness to succeed [within students and faculty]. The establishment of a community climate that permeates the local school building is essential. Community members have the power and potential to support and change the educational system. By creating and fostering a community climate everyone

becomes vested in education. Everyone becomes responsible for what happens in the local school building. (Villani, 1999, p. 104)

Without the support of the community, then, it can be inferred that educational change within a school may not be successful, that motivation and a positive school climate may be hampered, and that the support of key stakeholders such as faculty and students may be diminished.

Barth (1990) considered change and the concept of school improvement, including school culture, as a constantly evolving collection of characteristics that attempt to define an effective principal, teacher, and school. He asserted that true school improvement occurs when all stakeholders are put in situations to learn simultaneously, to think critically, to solve problems important to them, and to become a community of learners where learning is widespread and tangible. Change or improvement must be sought and achieved collectively through the building of communities of learners in schools. For Barth, four assumptions operate: (a) Schools have the capacity to improve themselves, if the conditions are right; (b) adults and students alike learn, and each group energizes and contributes to the learning of the other; (c) what needs to be improved about schools is their culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences; and (d) school improvement is an effort to determine and provide conditions under which the adults and students will promote and sustain growth among themselves. "Taking these assumptions seriously leads to some fresh thinking about the culture of schools and about what people do in them" (Barth, 1990, p. 45).

Such a familiarization with a school's culture should occur prior to the introduction of any changes such as educational reform measures (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). However, more often, changes take place without any examination of whether the proposed change would be a good fit. A proper examination of proposed change involves not just ensuring that the change

addresses the specific needs of the students for whom it is intended, but also whether the change is consistent with the belief set of the teachers who will implement the change. When the teachers who will be called upon to implement the change are wary, reluctant, or even hostile to the idea of change, any implementation of the change will necessitate their “reculturation” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996, p. 107). Reculturation has been defined as changing one set of beliefs for another, “the production of a positive school culture that enables principals and teachers to construct and sustain professional roles, promote strong identification with schools, reinforce effective schooling practices, and support mutually supportive relations” (Hemmings, 2012, p. 202). Reculturation becomes necessary when the previous school culture is one which does not promote the sustainability of new ideas and methodologies.

That a healthy school culture “support[s] mutually supportive relations” (Hemmings, 2012, p. 202) may be demonstrated in the way that students and faculty come together around a shared academic goal. Stronger collegial relationships may develop between teachers, and caring mentoring relationships would be able to form between teachers and students who might not have been able to spend as much time getting to know one another and focusing on high learning expectations were the teachers and students not working so closely together within a small learning community.

Conclusion

The brief history of educational reform and qualities of effective schools is intended to demonstrate that reform has been a part of the United States educational system since its inception. Throughout the years the foci of reform efforts have included curricular content, academic rigor, and access for marginalized ethnic groups, but schools and school systems in the United States have consistently sought to bring rich academic experiences to their students.

Although the debate continues regarding the most effectual method for improving students' academic achievement, especially in schools where students struggle to pass high-stakes tests, certain criteria have risen to the forefront as requisite components of quality educational reform. In addition to the presence of rigorous academic content, these criteria include

- a healthy school culture that promotes and celebrates a learning environment;
- teachers who are empowered by administrators through ongoing professional learning to reach beyond their previous achievement;
- communities of learners that promote and support academic endeavors; and
- equal access to the benefits of the academic reform for all ethnic groups.

These four components both inform the academic reform measure and in turn are affected by and profit from it.

Reflecting on the history of school reform, particularly curricular reform, in the United States, we now come to look at how the design for the current study was critical to gathering meaningful data regarding the implementation of this particular reform measure. Not only were teachers interviewed who were key stakeholders in putting the IB Programme into practice, but also teachers who, while not themselves teaching the International Baccalaureate, nevertheless gave witness to some seminal cultural change at Valdosta High.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

The desired outcome of this qualitative study was to understand teachers' perceptions of how the implementation of an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at one high school as an approach to curricular reform affected that school's culture. Educators considering the implementation of such a reform measure might benefit from such an understanding. Even the most student-centered of school-based reform measures, implemented in response to an observed need, may not include a consideration of how such reform might be affected by and in turn affect the existing culture in the school(s).

Development of the Research Question

In this study I brought my "own existential and cultural baggage, a set of lens through which [I] would . . . attempt to make sense" of the life of a school (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 49). I originally became interested in this line of study as an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) teacher in an urban high school in Jacksonville, Florida. Considered academically failing based on consecutive annual school grades of "F" under Florida's school accountability system, this high school also adopted the IBDP as a school reform measure.

Although there was never any negative reaction to the IBDP as an academic reform or concerns regarding the rigor of the program, the teachers at my school in Jacksonville did wonder among themselves why this program was selected for this particular school. The majority of the 10th graders taking the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) had

failed one or both parts of the test on the first administration. Even the brightest students were often enrolled in remedial reading or mathematics or both while at the same time taking Advanced Placement courses. In addition, attendance of students just to take the tests was an ongoing problem. Although FCAT requirements penalized schools who tested too few of their registered students, absenteeism and truancy created critical shortages of students when standardized testing took place. Factored in formulaically with the students' poor performance on the content of these testing instruments, the overall school accountability score was driven even lower.

The fact of their not being made aware of the rationale behind the implementation of the IBDP did not surprise these IB teachers in Jacksonville; rather, they took this as further evidence that administrators in the school district did not value the work that they performed with their students and believed them to be ineffectual. Not surprisingly, this negativity spilled over into the teachers' opinions around the possible success of their students with this program. Several of these teachers at the time stated that the students at this particular high school were ill-prepared to participate in the IBDP. They believed the students lacked the work ethic as well as the academic foundation to be successful in this program. And in the absence of information on the research and data that suggested the IBDP was the right program to help students' achieve academically, teachers' negative perceptions and opinions began to form a culture of disbelief in the program and in the students who were enrolled in it. Although one student from the original 9th grade "pre-IB" cohort eventually did graduate with an IB Diploma, the program sputtered and eventually failed, as students who were not being successful either transferred away to other schools or were placed in standard diploma classes. Fewer and fewer new students enrolled in the program, likely in reaction to the continuing bad press around the school's academic failures.

IB teachers transferred to other schools; two of the original IB coordinators went to a higher-performing high school and administrative positions. The IB Diploma Programme at that school was withdrawn by the district after only five years.

I developed a curiosity about how such an implementation might have been more successful, and I questioned how teachers could and should be included in this process. Most importantly, I wondered to what degree, if any, a more careful, inclusive implementation of a rigorous academic program like the IBDP might alter an existing school culture of failure and lack of confidence in both students' and teachers' abilities to effect change.

Justification for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was critical to the purpose of this study as an approach for examining the complex issues surrounding teachers' perceptions of the effects from the implementation of a curricular reform. Eisner (1998) pointed out that all knowledge, including quantitative research, is referenced in qualities and that there is more than one way to represent our understanding of the world. Although participants in a qualitative study may share perceptions which reflect individual points of view, they share them as personal realities. Their perceptions shared with the researcher and reader are no less "true" than are results determined from "the highly controlled and quantitatively described scientific experiment" Eisner described above (1998, p. 31).

Qualitative approaches to research are based on a holistic belief that follows three major principles: (a) There is no single reality; (b) reality is based upon the perceptions of each person and may be different for each person; and (c) the experiences of people have meaning within a given situation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Qualitative research is designed to help

researchers understand people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live and work (Creswell, 2003).

The research question was, “What are teachers’ perceptions of the effects of the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme upon school culture?” The focus of this question demanded a qualitative approach. “Teachers’ perceptions” focuses on participants’ understanding of complex experiences within authentic settings. Inherent in this focus were numerous attributes associated with qualitative research as described by Eisner and Patton (Eisner, 1998; Patton, 2002). One such attribute, naturalistic inquiry, required a field focus centered on teachers and their work *in situ*, investigating “the meaning of social phenomena as experienced by the people themselves” (Malterud, 2001, p. 398). This field focus was accomplished through meeting with teachers at their schools, observing their interactions with students, and reviewing the documents which they prepared in conjunction with the implementation of the curricular reform. Recording teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the IBDP provided data which allowed the researcher to “attempt to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2).

Another attribute of qualitative research, the role of interpretation and the use of expressive language, was valued through the verbatim transcription of participants’ voiced perceptions during interviews. Qualitative research is also focused on detail, provided through a careful examination of the historical and current contexts in which the curricular reform was taking place. Both reason and utility were used in looking at one very specific aspect of school reform, its impact upon school culture, which is not quantifiable through examination of

standardized test results but which nevertheless directly impacts student academic success (Eisner, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Recognition of and provision of a venue for the articulation of participants' "voices," their individual perceptions and opinions, is yet another attribute of qualitative research, one critical to the telling of a story about a studied phenomenon.

Voice lingers close to the true and the real, and because of this proximity, has become seen almost as a mirror of the soul, the essence of the self. Qualitative researchers have been trained to privilege this voice, to "free" the authentic voice from whatever restrains it from coming into being. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 1)

"Voice" in qualitative research additionally has the sense of a literary element because of the responsibility of the researcher to seek to perceptively interpret the nuances of meaning inherent in transcribed interviews.

The Researcher as Tool

A distinctly qualitative characteristic is the notion of the researcher as tool in the study. This requires a conscientious self-scrutiny of the researcher's connoisseurship before becoming the instrument for data gathering and the lens through which all subtle shades of interpretation are made visible (Eisner, 1998; Patton, 2002). As a researcher, I sought to gain an understanding of the perceptions of teachers of the impact upon their school culture from the development and implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) as a school reform measure. My personal background with the IB allowed me several distinct advantages. My teaching experience within academically challenged urban high schools provided me a framework within which to search for a site school which had similar demographics and academic challenges. As a former classroom teacher within a fledgling IBDP program at an

urban high school, I was able to empathize with teachers doing the work of implementing rigorous new curriculum in an academically challenged school. I was also able to establish a personal and professional connection with the participants. I had first-hand knowledge of much of what these teachers experienced in their first two years as an IB school, and I was able to respond to participants in a way which may have allowed them to feel more at ease and therefore more willing to share their experiences. However, the distance from my own school site at the time of my research, plus the length of time between my three visits to Valdosta High (spring of 2008, fall of 2008, and spring of 2009) served to ensure that I did not become so close to the setting and participants as to feel that I myself were a part of the school and more than just a collegial acquaintance of my participants.

My previous experiences contributed to what Eisner (1998) described as connoisseurship, “the art of appreciation. Connoisseurship can be displayed in any realm in which the character, import, or value of objects, situations, and performances is distributed and variable, including educational practice” (p. 63). The word *connoisseurship* comes from the Latin *cognoscere*, to know (Eisner 1998, p. 6). It involves not merely the ability to look at something but rather to see it clearly for what it is. As an IBDP teacher, I participated in IB-sponsored professional learning opportunities in Vancouver, British Columbia. I had written a large part of my school’s initial application as a candidate school. I had also taught Language A1, English, for several years. All these experiences provided me with a first-hand knowledge and appreciation of the IBDP which would have been difficult to replicate in a researcher who had not had those same experiences.

Yet there is a second sense of knowing appropriate to the use of qualitative research in this study. “Narrative knowing” (Bruner, 1996) endows experience with meaning, resulting in a story. Bruner described this task of assigning that meaning as difficult because it “requires some

awareness of alternative meanings that can be attached to the matter under scrutiny, whether one agrees with them or not” (1996, p. 13). In order to do this effectively, the researcher must develop the ability to name and appreciate the different dimensions of situations and experiences and the way they relate one to another, in order to place the experiences of participants and the researcher’s understanding of these experiences in a wider context and connect them where appropriate with one’s own experiences. As researcher, I not only had gone through situations similar to those of the teachers in Valdosta, but I also understood how those experiences would affect a teacher’s practice and self-view. I was better or at least more quickly able to relate these experiences and feelings to the teachers’ environmental context than had I no previous experiences in a similar situation.

In addition to “outing” one’s connoisseurship so that those connections between participants’ and researcher’s experiences can be explored, the researcher must become a critic. It was incumbent upon me to not only understand and apply meaning to the experiences of my study participants but also to situate those experiences contextually and describe that relationship so as to help others understand those experiences. Dewey (1938/1998) noted that “the function of criticism is the reeducation of perception. . . . It is an auxiliary in the process, a difficult process, of learning to see and hear” (p. 324). Understanding does not result immediately from and cannot stop at merely looking clearly at something. The process of understanding something must be entrusted to and enabled by a skilled guide, the connoisseur. Furthermore, criticism is the art of disclosure. . . . The task of the critic is to help us to see. Thus, . . . connoisseurship provides criticism with its subject matter. Connoisseurship is private, but criticism is public. Connoisseurs simply need to appreciate what they encounter.

Critics, however, must render these qualities vivid by the artful use of critical disclosure.

(Eisner, 1985, pp. 92-93)

Criticism can be approached as the process of enabling others to see the qualities of an artifact or experience and thereby reeducating them as to its meaning. “Effective criticism functions as the midwife to perception. It helps it come into being, then later refines it and helps it to become more acute” (Eisner, 1998, p. 6). Thus, connoisseurship provides the subject matter and background knowledge for effective criticism (Eisner, 1985, pp. 92-93) which in turn enables the researcher to give shape and form to participants’ perceptions (Eisner, 1998, p. 6). Through such a process, the researcher imbues the participants’ experiences with meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) that might provoke critical change through a call to action by the researcher (Patton, 2002, pp. 544-545).

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that validity in qualitative research might be shown through the lens, or viewpoint, which researchers choose in order to validate their studies (p. 124). Qualitative researchers might choose to view the research data through their own lens or through that of their participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). This viewpoint is coupled with the researchers’ paradigm assumption, which in the case of this study is a perspective which “holds that researchers should uncover the hidden assumptions about how narrative accounts are constructed, read, and interpreted” (p. 126). The “historical situatedness . . . based on social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender antecedents of the studied situation” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126) is examined and challenged in the interest of full disclosure. To this end I looked at these aspects of the history of Valdosta, its school system, and Valdosta High School in particular, in order to have sufficient data in which to situate the knowledge and perceptions of the participants. Additionally, I was constantly mindful of my personal perceptions about how

the adoption of the IBDP impacted the culture of my own school, and I took particular care to avoid leading questions in my interview protocols. I avoided when possible sharing my own experiences as an IB teacher, and during the analysis of the data I was careful not to extract teachers' remarks out of context. This led me to include larger portions of participants' responses in order to better situate their comments in context for the reader.

Research Design

Case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to “seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case” (Stake, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 238). Case studies provide the reader with an opportunity to understand experiences which have been told through the story of the case as if the reader had herself experienced them. The reader can then particularize to situations encountered in real life this acquired understanding as naturalistic generalization, in ways which enrich the reader's own understanding of personal experiences or situations (Stake & Trumbull, 1982).

Howe and Eisenhart (1990) proposed criteria which are designed to keep the researcher honest and to promote both validity and reliability in the study. One of those, “ensuring a fit between research questions, data collection procedures, and analytic techniques” (p. 30), is particularly pertinent to this study. I took particular caution to ensure that my data collection procedures were based on sound precedent (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990), the data gathered thorough and substantial (Patton, 2002), and analysis procedures rigorous and clear to outside consumers (Eisner, 1998).

Site Selection

The selection of a specific site and then the participants was necessary because one cannot study how all teachers might perceive the development and implementation of the

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programmes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Yet the selection of one site school for this case study offered sufficient data for study because, although only one IB school, the selected site offered a wide selection of faculty participants in the IBDP. Merriam (2002) described a “rich, thick description [in which] the words (not numbers) . . . persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings” (p. 15). In an interpretive qualitative case study using such rich, thick description, the researcher interprets and theorizes about the phenomenon studied.

The process used to select particular participants at a specific site must be intentional and explicit to avoid bias (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Additionally, pragmatic reasons operate when selecting research sites, including feasibility in gaining access for data collection. Practical sites for a research study have (a) probable entry; (b) a diverse group of people and interactions; (c) a possibility for the researcher to build relationships that are trustworthy with the participants; and (d) a reasonable assurance of data credibility and reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

For this study, site selection involved first searching the International Baccalaureate Organisation’s website (www.ibo.org) for IBO “candidate” schools, schools which were currently undergoing or had recently undergone the authorization process. This characteristic was critical to my case study because candidate schools offered the opportunity to follow participants through the application process and the initial stages of implementation and subsequent growth. I found several candidate schools in the southeastern United States, but I determined to further examine only high schools. Primary and middle schools’ programs are more driven by philosophical approaches to education with integrated curricula, whereas high school IB programs are more rigorous in terms of specific content and could be seen as a bridge to postsecondary education or career opportunities.

I next determined through Internet searches the demographics of these candidate high schools. The qualities typical of the demographics of urban schools, such as a student body comprised primarily of African Americans or other ethnic minorities, as well as low socioeconomic status, were present in a number of the candidate schools. One such high school was located in Georgia within a three-hour drive from Jacksonville, Florida. Subsequent investigation determined this school to have consistently failed to make AYP under the federal No Child Left Behind guidelines (Georgia Department of Education, 2012a; Martin, 2008). Informal telephone contact with their new IB coordinator confirmed the school's seeking the IBDP as an academic reform measure. Subsequent communication yielded informal consent to participation in the study.

Participant Selection and Access

After receiving permission to conduct the study in the form of an IRB Approval Letter (Appendix A), I traveled to Valdosta to meet with then-Principal Brett Stanton and obtained his permission to conduct my study at Valdosta High School (Appendix B). I next turned to the task of finding participant volunteers. Participants were invited from the entire faculty in order to promote a diversity of views and responses and to thus better understand the effects of IBDP implementation upon the culture of the entire school. All teachers who volunteered were interviewed. The resulting mix of IB and non-IB teachers among those interviewed was serendipitous.

Principal Brett Stanton left that position in May, 2008, to join the Haralson County, Georgia, Board of Education as superintendent of schools ("Gary Boling named new VHS principal," June 25, 2008). He was replaced by Gary Boling, a 25-year veteran of the Georgia education system and former principal of North Cobb High School in Kennesaw, Georgia, a

magnet school for international studies. Mr. Boling had previously been the principal at a feeder middle school for another high school in Cobb County, Campbell High School, which was itself adopting the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. He had participated in extensive professional development at that time regarding how to help his teachers prepare their students for this rigorous curriculum (“Gary Boling Named New VHS principal,” 2008). Mr. Boling granted permission for the study to continue at Valdosta High School when he assumed the role of principal in the fall of 2008 (Mr. Boling, personal communication, August 5, 2008).

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

Consent alone does not preclude the researcher from protecting the participants from potential harm or unfavorable consequences (Patton, 2002). The researcher must also exercise due care and professional integrity to protect the well-being of the participants. Informed consent forms do offer safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants by outlining to each participant a description of the procedures to be followed, a description of any foreseeable risks or discomforts, a description of any benefits to the participants, and a statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the participants will be maintained. The original interview audiotapes and field notes were destroyed after transcription, and the electronic files including transcriptions, the key to the pseudonyms of the study participants, and all electronic copies of field notes were stored in a secure password-protected server. Back-up copies of the electronic transcription files were also stored on a second secure password-protected server.

Participants granted their informed consent to participate in the interviews by signing the University of North Florida Human Research Consent Form required by the Institutional Review Board which had approved this study (Appendix C). Participants did not receive stipends or cash

incentives to participate; however, when one interview series occurred near the winter holidays, I did purchase small Starbucks gift cards by way of showing my appreciation. The use of pseudonyms throughout data reporting protects the confidentiality of the participants.

Participants' names remained confidential via their replacement with names of characters from the novels of Charles Dickens. Dickens is a great personal favorite of mine who was himself a student of people and culture; his work is as much social commentary as rich storytelling and therefore was enhanced by, if not dependent upon, his contemporary readers' familiarity with the socio-cultural context, or milieu, in which his stories take place. Similarly, in the story of Valdosta High's implementation of the IBDP, I strove to provide that context for my readers through a careful and hopefully vivid description of significant people and events. For these reasons, I took Dickens' character names as pseudonyms for my participants; however, I did not intend that any of the qualities of Dickens' characters or the conflicts in which they found themselves be superimposed upon the participants. However, I recognize that the small number of teachers within the IB Programme at Valdosta High and my identification of participants as being IB or non-IB teachers might lead to a reader's working-out of who the individual participants are.

Data Collection Methods

A case study of teachers within a developing International Baccalaureate Programme provided an approach to understanding their interpretations of the application and implementation experiences and the meaning and knowledge they developed about these experiences. The use of interviews as a data collection method is based upon the premise that the perspectives and interpretations held by the participants are "meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Further, if one wishes to know how people view the

world, the most natural approach to that knowledge is to ask them (Patton, 2002).

The semi-structured or open-ended interview, one of the three basic types of interviewing methods described by Patton (2002), provided the framework for data collection. In this method, the researcher uses a series of pre-structured questions used to elicit open-ended responses. The open-ended responses to questions provide the researcher with statements, which were the main source of raw data. Consequently, participants' words revealed "the respondents' levels of emotion, the way in which they have organized the world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions" (Patton, 1987, p. 78).

This method encouraged participants to explore their knowledge, experiences, feelings and opinions about the topics, often in language that was far more telling than simple "yes" or "no" answers would have been to even the most carefully written questionnaire. Analysis of these data revealed the perceptions of these teachers and how they acquired these views while working at a high school moving through the IB authorization process and experiencing their first year of its implementation. Wadeley (2003) referred to this as "conversation with a purpose," flexible interviews stocked with key questions but open to addition or reordering to suit the participant and the tenor of the exchange (p. 31).

Patton (2002) described several types of questions which guided the development of questions for the three semi-structured interviews used in this study. These questions included those which intentionally explored feelings, knowledge, sensory impressions, and participants' backgrounds and demographics. Feeling questions aimed at eliciting emotions about experiences; knowledge questions were intended to gather specific facts and information; sensory questions sought to gather information about what has been seen or heard; and

background and demographic questions identified characteristics of the participants. (See Appendices D, E, and F for the protocol for each course of interviews.)

Background and demographic questions were spaced throughout the interviews because the personal nature of these questions could have proven uncomfortable for the participant if presented as if in a questionnaire. Additionally, there was the possibility that these responses in a group would have led to shorter responses to the more in-depth questions which I hoped would provide the rich, descriptive data I sought (Patton, 2002). The assumption was that by asking these questions at various times throughout the interviews, the overall intensive depth desired in the conversations could be developed and maintained.

Data collection included an initial site visit to secure the necessary formal permissions and to flesh out the logistics of future visits, as well as for the purposes of document examination and familiarization with the school layout, resources, and amenities. Documents examined included the original application for world school status by Valdosta High School to the International Baccalaureate Organisation, the IB course descriptions written by the various IB content area teachers and the International Baccalaureate site visit team's recommendations for improvement.

I made three subsequent two-day visits which included pre-scheduled interviews conducted with voluntary participants, both IBDP faculty and those teaching standard classes, as well as a total of four observations of classrooms and one administrative function with the IBDP, all activities associated with participant observation (Patton, 2002, pp. 265-267).

I conducted three sessions of interviews at points in the brief implementation timeline which I determined to be critical to the study. The first interviews took place in the spring of 2008, when Valdosta High was about to undergo its site review by the International

Baccalaureate Organisation as the final part of its application process. The second session of interviews took place in the fall of 2008, when the first students were participating in the IBDP. Finally, the third session of interviews occurred in the spring of 2009, after VHS had undergone its first full school year as an IBDP school. As a result of this schedule, I was able to speak with the participants before, during, and at the conclusion of one full school year of participation in the IBDP.

Prior to the first interview, I emailed all participating teachers a reminder of the intent of the study, possible use of the results of the study, the risks and benefits of participation in the study, and the provisions within the study for maintaining confidentiality. I interviewed nine participants from the entire faculty who volunteered to participate. Although I interviewed all volunteers, the small group of nine participants represented a good cross-section of the Valdosta High faculty. “If there is no end, actually or theoretically, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to observations that could be conducted, then the phenomenon [being studied] is not bounded enough to qualify as a case” (Merriam, 1998, p.28). I interviewed all nine teacher participants during the first session, six during the second session (two were at district training and one was absent), and all nine again during the third session, for a total of 24 interviews. The participant interviews during each of the three sessions lasted on average approximately one hour, the length of the teachers’ scheduled daily planning periods. Interviews were conducted primarily in the office of the IBDP coordinator, near the administrative offices at the front of the school, a location that minimized interruptions and distractions yet was still convenient for the participants. One interview was conducted in the participant’s classroom at his request as a matter of convenience.

The interviews were semi-structured, each utilizing a protocol of 10 to 12 questions designed to guide the interview into the area of interest, their perceptions of the impact upon the school culture from the development and implementation of the IB Programme. (See Appendices D, E, and F.) For each interview I created a different protocol of questions to structure the conversations with the participants. These interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. “Verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 88). Field notes and personal notes of the non-verbal reactions of the participants augmented the database to support the verbal data being provided. The actual recordings of the interviews were subsequently destroyed and the transcriptions held in a password-protected remote virtual host.

According to Merriam (1998), the case study does not claim any specific data collection methods, but “focuses on holistic description and explanation” (p. 29) of the data supplied by participant interviews, review of documents, and observations within selected classrooms. Within this focus, the case study might be described as particularistic, heuristic, or descriptive. Merriam described a heuristic case study as able to shed light on the phenomenon, allowing readers to extend their experience, discover new meaning, or confirm what is known. The case explains the reasons for a problem, the background of the situation, what happened, and why (1998).

In his work on case study methodology, Stake (1978/2000) maintained that “case studies are useful in the study of human affairs because they are down-to-earth and attention-holding” (p. 19). Readers make sense of the data by making comparisons to their understanding of the world shaped through personal experiences. Stake commented that “case studies will often be the preferred method of research because they may be epistemologically in

harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization" (p. 20).

After the interview and observational data were obtained, a narratological analysis of these participants' shared experiences afforded me "an especially translucent window" (Patton, 2002, p. 116) through which to examine the impact of the experience of the International Baccalaureate adoption process. Careful transcription after each interview followed by reading and rereading of participants' responses disclosed thematic elements which drove future questions in interviews. Those thematic elements perpetuated themselves through the course of three interviews as the participants' sharings were further examined. The process followed Eisner's (1998) definition of qualitative data interpretation by striving to discover the meaning of an event by first describing its context, making the experience vivid, identifying the prior conditions and potential consequences, and providing reasons for practices. Interpretation of these described data elucidated the data's context and provided meaning by exploring the complexities of this educational setting and examining their significance. The data analysis process of educational criticism then led to cultural themes and an evaluation of the quality of the educational practice. Themes are commonalities that may be extended from the studied educational environment to others similarly situated (Eisner, 1994, 1998).

Data Analysis: Description

The use of participant interviews required that the researcher be a careful listener, looking for opportunities within the semistructured interviews to expand upon a participant's responses through further probing questions. Inasmuch as this case study unfolded as a narrative, however, the elements of story were gradually revealed, requiring that a qualitative researcher

be a good listener in the special way a story requires: not[ing] the manner of presentation; the development of plot, character, the addition of new dramatic sequences; the emphasis accorded to one figure or another in the recital; and the degree of enthusiasm, of coherence, the narrator gives to his or her account (Coles, 1989, p. 23).

This active listening role on the part of the researcher, with clearly delineated purposes for listening as a critical element of interviewing, provided the researcher with the data from which to craft the “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) crucial to developing context and giving life to participants or characters such as would engage and connect with a reader. As the narrative strands of the participants’ perceptions are interwoven, a plotline develops, situated in context and inhabited by diverse characters all sharing an experience. The characters, or study participants, simultaneously recounted that experience from very individual points of view, as the main characters and with very distinctive voices. Through the inclusion of their responses in this study, they are also conveying their perceived meaning of the experience to others whose educational practice may find them within similar contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19; Schram, 2006, p. 105).

Rationale for the Narrative Approach to the Study

The story-narrative was an appropriate vehicle for recording and analyzing teachers’ perceptions because the narrative traits of qualitative research, particularly description and plot exposition, provide the reader vicarious engagement with the events described (Eisner, 1998). The reader can more personally connect with a story and begin the process of generalizing the study participants’ experiences and the findings resulting from the data to similar situations in the reader’s own experience. So, in this example, graphic depiction of one school in one case study may be descriptive “not only of the case, but of other cases like it” (Eisner, 1998, p. 203).

Throughout history, narrative has been a way of understanding experience and making sense of our world. Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968) noted that “everything begins with a story” (p. 41). Joan Didion (1966) suggested that narrative, or storytelling, fills the space between “what happened” and “what it means” (p. 133). Heroic epics, Shakespearean drama, and young adult literature all use the narrative structure to engage the reader and thereby share experience and beliefs. People live stories and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and, of course, those such as researchers who are new to the communities studied (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). More concisely, the appropriateness of a narrative approach to research is evident with the recognition that “experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Or, as William Carlos Williams noted, “Their story, yours, mine; it’s what we carry with us on this trip we take, and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and *learn from them*” [emphasis added] (in Coles, 1989, p. 30). As story, the research takes on a viable artistic value, rather than merely being a vehicle towards uncovering or detailing some truth or phenomenon. Routine observation becomes perception, and objective description, illustration.

As an English teacher, I recognized elements of literature inherent in the study as it unfolded. The setting for this study was not simply situated in the context of race and education in the South, but also in the very personal spaces of participants’ classrooms and workrooms. The scope of this historical context coupled with the intimacy of current teacher practice and perceptions gave a broader span to the study, not unlike a panoramic novel. Determining the degree of importance of those literary elements required a further look into the history and

cultural background of Valdosta High School, its back story, in order that I might be able to develop and depict the historical and contemporary contexts accurately.

Although the study participants individually provided a point of view and voice, other elements naturally inherent in narrative evolved, such as character and plot (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 28). As a narrative, the study of Valdosta High developed an identifiable timeline, like a plot sequence, with the exposition of the setting spanning the decades to bring the reader to a closer, more informed relationship with contemporary characters, the study participants. The plot became more complicated as Valdosta High School proposed its adoption of the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP), rocking the *status quo* of what was hitherto known as primarily an athletic powerhouse, not an academic one. The story reached its crisis point when Valdosta High pushed forward with its implementation of the IBDP, despite vocal objections from community members. The scope of the study focused on the preparation for and implementation of the IBDP, and thus left the rest of the story to unfold in the future.

Narrative analysis was particularly suited to my purpose because the study of Valdosta High School presented itself to me as story, told in large part by the study participants but also informed by the historical documents and context. The experiences of study participants captured in a narrative language can engage the reader and highlight their commonality of experience (Patton, 2002). The data analysis included strategies associated with educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) and narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The utility of educational criticism lies in its recognition of the value of the connoisseurship of the researcher with regard to professional knowledge and experiences. This connoisseurship provides the researcher with the ability to appreciate situations and experiences and how they relate to each other. Such connoisseurship becomes useful in the process of data analysis through the four-part

process of educational criticism: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics.

“Connoisseurship provides criticism with its subject matter. Connoisseurship is private, but criticism is public. Connoisseurs simply need to appreciate what they encounter. Critics, however, must render these qualities vivid by the artful use of critical disclosure” (Eisner, 1998, pp. 92-93). As a teacher and former member of an IBDP participant school, I have a level of connoisseurship that enables the discussion and analysis of teachers’ perceptions regarding their school’s development and implementation of the IBDP. The purpose was to supply meaning to these perceptions of teachers, their truth in situations and experiences, regarding the effects upon their school’s culture from the development and implementation of the IBDP.

It deserves mentioning that throughout the preparation of this dissertation I became aware of a particular voice on my part. Although I strove to avoid the use of connotative language, my voice is still recognizable, if not in the “thin description” (Geertz, 1973) of the physical context of my study site, then in my purposeful selection of images, artifacts, and interview excerpts (Lightfoot & Davis, 2002). How would additional or different choices of news media coverage have changed the reader’s understanding of the culture surrounding Valdosta High School? What other observations made by participants during the interviews might have created a different nuance in the data as I presented it? As factual and inclusive as I have striven to be throughout the process, there is nevertheless an element of subjectivity, my personal “voice” in my selections. Personal voice aside, my hope is that, as I have likened the study to the unfolding of a narrative about Valdosta High, the inclusion of contextual detail might be seen as additional illustrations, “portraits,” on behalf of the reader (Lightfoot & Davis, 2002).

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to bring meaning to the perceptions of teachers regarding the impact upon school culture of the implementation of the IBDP as a school reform measure at an academically challenged public school. In addition, the study furthered understanding of the complexities attendant upon any school reform effort. A qualitative research design allowed participants to tell their stories, and a narrative structure gave those stories dimension and allowed for a degree of generalization of the particular to the field of education as a whole (Eisner, 1998). Observations and semi-structured, open-ended interviews gathered thick, rich, narratives regarding the perceptions of teachers of the resultant changes in their school's culture. Additionally, a review of the teacher-created documents attendant to the development of the IBDP further expanded conversations held with the participants by providing concrete evidence of their vision for the IBDP at Valdosta High as well as their commitment to fidelity in its implementation. Finally, classroom observations of IBDP teachers as they presented this new curriculum to their first cohort of students helped to further develop a positive working relationship with these study participants and also provided talking points and background for future interviews.

These data have been analyzed using educational criticism in conjunction with narrative analysis in order to bring appreciation and disclosure to the stories of teachers' perceptions of the effects of the IBDP upon their school's culture. The presentation of these data in Chapter 4 portray the perceptions of these teachers at Valdosta High shortly before and during its first year of implementation.

Chapter 4

Analysis of the Data

The fourth chapter presents the analysis of data in this case study of Valdosta High School (VHS) in Valdosta, Georgia, including documentary data, observations, and interview data from participant teachers employed at the school. Central to this study were the perceptions of these teachers regarding the influence upon VHS's culture as a result of the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) as a school reform measure. Initial data analysis led to the identification of three topics that served to organize the data. These topics provided a means for describing cultural themes within the data around teacher efficacy, African American student access to curricula, and fidelity in curricular implementation.

In keeping with Eisner (1998), the data surrounding the present study's examination of Valdosta High's implementation of the IBDP was analyzed through four major phases: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. Chapter 4 presents the descriptive segment of the study, the context of the study, both historical and contemporary, in order to provide a vicarious experience of the physical and social environment. Interpretation of these data elucidated this context and provided meaning by exploring the complexities of this educational setting and examining their significance. Chapter 5 presents cultural themes within the teachers' perceptions of the impact upon their school's culture achieved by the implementation of the IBDP and described how this case represents efforts at effective school reform. The themes identified indicate commonalities that may be extended from the studied educational environment to others similarly situated (Eisner, 1994, 1998).

I chose to relate the story of Valdosta High as a story of a school. Stake (1995) described the use of story as an appropriate vehicle for conveying an analysis of data because so much of what we as humans do in our everyday lives revolves around the use of story:

Much of our gathering of data from other people will take the form of stories they tell and much of what we can convey to our readers will preserve that form. One of the choices each of us will make in presenting the case is how we will use a story form.”

(p. 1).

However, in order that this case study was not limited to simply storytelling, the narrative followed one of the three paths suggested by Stake (1995), which is a chronological or biographical development of the case (p. 127). The narrative style provided the reader with a brief history of Valdosta, Georgia, prior knowledge of which enables the reader to understand more fully the socioeconomic and demographic background of the district as well as the racial friction that had beset the district for decades. Interspersed within this narrative is commentary from critical stakeholders and study participants about the progress of the IB implementation at Valdosta High as well as about the racial tensions that continued to be discussed during that time. These perceptions of the experience both informed and illuminated the story.

The Story of a School

Stories are the most effective ways of changing minds. . . . There has to be a protagonist. There has to be a goal. There have to be obstacles people can identify with. There has to be an ultimate resolution, hopefully a positive one. . . . What leaders do is put aside or reject the old story, the story you have grown up with. Leaders say, “No, it's a different story. You may not like it initially, but it's a better story in the long run, and you have to go with it and here is why.” (Gardner, 2006, p. 125)

This is a story about a school, Valdosta High School, that made a decision to try to change the academic futures of some of its students. A school may at first blush seem an unlikely protagonist for a story, more of a setting than a proper character. Most public school campuses can be described almost generically as a “type,” those solemn, utilitarian brick buildings, one or two for classrooms, perhaps one for a gym or cafeteria, and all flanked by playgrounds or, with older students, athletic fields. Almost everyone can close her eyes and still “see” the schools of her youth, perhaps even hear bells jangling or frantic footfalls in stairways, or smell the “mystery meat” of lunch swimming in liquid. Joe Fox, in *You’ve Got Mail* (Ephron, 1998) knew this when he pondered sending his email friend a “bouquet of newly-sharpened pencils” in the fall. Thoughts of school evoke sights, sounds, smells, which are all aspects of a setting.

Yet sometimes a setting can become so vital to the telling of a story, such as the stinking city-within-a-prison in Dickens’s *Little Dorrit* (1855-1857) or the crushing, insistent jungle in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), that the setting itself begins to take on a life within the tale. The reader can trace the setting’s effects upon the other characters, perhaps its changes over time, and the impact upon it from the action of the story. So Valdosta High School, the school in this story, became a character in its own narrative, with a history and a personality as surely as any human character in any novel. Although many other supporting characters throughout its history helped to shape the school’s direction and focus, the school remained the central character, the hero. Many of these supporting characters moved in and out of the life of the school throughout its history and laid a foundation for the school’s inception in the context of a smallish town in the Reconstruction South. Other characters came into greater influence on the story as the school approached the occasion which was the focus of this study. But the school

remained, even as new students or faculty or administrative directives arrived and then faded.

This is the school's story.

Understanding how one of those new directives, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, stirred some teachers and students at Valdosta High School to consider a new academic direction for its own future, writing a new chapter in its story, depends upon the reader understanding the context, the setting, in which these changes took place. This nonphysical environment, the culture, attitudes and beliefs, all shaped in the relentless press of history, played an even more important role in the unfolding of the story of this school than the red clay and athletic fields which surrounded it. Every character has a backstory. This is Valdosta High's.

Historical Context

Lowndes County, Georgia, when approached from along the broad swath of Interstate 75, is fairly unprepossessing: expanses of tilled fields stretching away from the road back to small frame houses attended by scatterings of outbuildings; rag-tag lineups of rusting farm equipment on which lean hand-lettered "For Sale" posters; and the occasional light industrial complex, frequently vacant and offered for lease or sale. Located in Georgia's coastal plain, the county is extraordinarily flat and offers no vistas save that from the elevation of the interstate; by way of example, the 60-mile stretch between Valdosta and Waycross once boasted the longest straight section of railroad in the world ("Valdosta, Georgia: Early history," 2013). Uninitiated travelers might easily miss Lowndes' largest city, Valdosta, were it not for the numerous splashy billboards touting its Wild Adventures Theme Park and the accompanying advertisements for area motels.

White settlers first appeared in large numbers during a Georgia land lottery in the 1820s, during which they seized land previously inhabited by native Timucuan and Seminole whom

they summarily drove west. Settlers found ample building materials in the great virgin forests of yellow pine and oak, and soon commercial sawmills fueled the booming construction industry in the South. The fine sandy loam, laced with moisture-holding red Georgia clay, provided farmers with excellent grazing for stock and the ideal combination of minerals for cultivating tobacco and long-staple Sea Island cotton, for which the area later became the largest inland market in the world (Central Valdosta Development Authority, 2012).

In 1825, Lowndes County was created by legislative act and named for William Jones Lowndes, once a candidate for president at the time of the second-term election of James Monroe. By 1837, the original county seat of Franklinville was moved to the larger Troupville, named after Governor George M. Troup (“George Troup,” 2012). A new extension of the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad south of Troupville in 1859 prompted a wholesale relocation of the county seat to a spot more strategically selected along the rail line. The new community was simultaneously incorporated and made the county seat in 1860. Wishing to continue to honor the much-venerated Governor Troup, the new town was named Valdosta, after one of Governor Troup’s plantations, Val de Osta, in Laurens County. The original source of the name is thought to be Val d’Aosta, a picturesque region in the lower Alps and along the Roman road in northwestern Italy (City of Valdosta, Georgia, 2013). Proud Valdostans assert that this means, “Vale of Beauty,” and that tradition of civic pride continues in the annual Azalea Festival which has earned Valdosta one of its current nicknames, “The Azalea City” (The Greeting Service, 2012).

Public School System

In order to transform schools successfully, educators need to navigate the difficult space between letting go of old patterns and grabbing on to new ones. (Deal, 1990, p. 11)

In 1866, only six years after Valdosta's incorporation and driven by the sense of purpose which characterized much of the Reconstruction South, Samuel McWhir Varnedoe founded Lowndes County's first real school, the Valdosta Institute. The Institute offered the sons of local gentry the standard curricula for young gentlemen of the day, a strong classical secondary education in rhetoric, grammar, mathematics, history, Latin, and Greek (New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2012).

Today, the Valdosta City Schools system has five elementary schools and three middle schools. A learning center, Pinevale, is an alternative school which allows high-school students to regain, via online coursework, any credits lost due to failure or illness. There are also two high schools, one of which is an early college program located on the campus of Valdosta State University. The second is Valdosta High, established in 1922.

Issues Around Race

In 1968, a group of Black parents in Lowndes County filed a discrimination complaint with the United States Department of Justice against the school systems in both the county and the city. African American parents were distressed that both Valdosta-area school systems had not complied with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling (Georgia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2007, p. 24). To keep their federal funding, the school systems were forced to finally integrate the schools as ordered. The districts were also directed to have teaching and administrative staffs made more representative of the ethnic diversity of the student body (Georgia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2007, p. 33). Dr. Mark George, assistant professor of sociology at Valdosta State University and education chairperson for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chapter of the Southern

Christian Leadership Conference, tersely described the slow and reluctant desegregation of Lowndes and Valdosta City schools:

The feds come in '68 and say, "Fix this or lose all your money from us." Both schools drug their feet, they didn't have a physical plan, White folks didn't want to send their kids to Black schools, etc. . . . But Valdosta got on board a lot earlier than Lowndes County. (Pinholster, 2009b, ¶ 40)

Although Valdosta High School was officially racially integrated in 1969, the United States in the District Court for the Middle District of Georgia initiated a desegregation lawsuit in November, 1970, against the Board of Education of Valdosta City. This suit charged that Valdosta City Schools were de facto segregated despite what was described as their weak attempts at integration. In April 1971, the Board was enjoined from discriminating in the operation of the district and ordered to implement a desegregation plan providing for eight elementary and three secondary schools as well as provision for the desegregation of faculty and within other areas of school operation (United States v. Board of Education of Valdosta City, 1971). The United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit (576 Fu.2d 37 June 19, 1978) determined that Valdosta City Schools had "in large part successfully eradicated the dual school system that existed prior to 1971" (¶ 2), and the court attributed any remaining racially identifiable schools to factors of residential movement to different school neighborhoods. The United States Supreme Court in December 1978 upheld the lower court's decision that the Valdosta City Schools district was indeed a unitary system (Huch v. United States, 1978).

Nevertheless, issues surrounding the desegregation of faculty and staff continued to trouble the district. In 2008, the United States found the Valdosta City Schools district to have achieved partial unitary status in four of six areas. Commonly known as "*Green factors*" [italics

original], these six areas are conditions which the United States Supreme Court determined were critical in determining whether a school district has fulfilled its duty to eliminate segregation to the extent practicable (*Green v. County School Board*, 1968). Valdosta City Schools satisfactorily met four *Green* factors: student assignment, transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities (Consent Decree, 2008). The two remaining *Green* factors, faculty and staff, were adjudged to still be segregated, and the Valdosta City Schools system was placed under a consent decree to fulfill that obligation (Consent Decree, 2008). However, the district was allowed to retain its unitary status.

At the time of the present study, the public school systems of the city of Valdosta and Lowndes County were separately governed by elected school boards and state-appointed superintendents; only 21 such counties remained in the state of Georgia, with the other 138 counties operating as unified school districts (Community Unification for Educational Excellence, Inc., 2011). In Georgia the governing body that established a given school district, not the Department of Education, decided whether it was more fiscally sound for a small city district to consolidate with a larger county district for educational purposes (Ms. Maldon, personal communication, December 19, 2008). Because the City of Valdosta school system was created by an ordinance of the city of Valdosta, it could only be dissolved by the voters of the city of Valdosta. Valdosta City Schools had historically elected to remain separate from the Lowndes County Schools system that surrounds the city. The county system had seven elementary schools, three middle schools, two alternative schools, and one high school, Lowndes County High.

As of the 2000 United States Census, the greater Valdosta area had more than 15,700 students age 3 and older enrolled in these two school systems (United States Census, 2000b).

But there were striking differences between the two districts, especially at the high-school level, differences that resurrected talk within the community of de facto segregation. In the school year 2010-2011, 70% of Valdosta High's students were Black and only 21% White. At Lowndes County High School in that same school year, 68% of the students were White and only 24% were Black, almost exactly the opposite demographics (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2013a; 2013c.).

Lowndes County at the Time of the Study

Lowndes County and the city of Valdosta have not strayed far from their agricultural roots. Although the United States Census Bureau indicated that only .8% of the population reported farming as their primary occupation (United States Census Bureau, 2012), farms and small conglomerates in Valdosta and the surrounding county were still competitive producers of tobacco, turpentine, pine lumber, and pulpwood. However, Valdosta was more notable as a commercial center of South Georgia with numerous manufacturing plants and light-industrial parks.

An examination of the vital statistics of Valdosta demonstrated that it shared some of the characteristics of larger urban areas: poverty and underemployment. In 2010, the total population of the city of Valdosta was 54,518, with 139,588 living in the greater metropolitan area consisting of Lowndes, Brooks, Lanier, and Echols Counties. The city of Valdosta was 51.1% African American and 43.3% Caucasian (United States Census Bureau, 2010a). Nearly 36% of persons 16 and over were unemployed; of those employed, 23% earned less than \$15,000 per year. Perhaps understandably, then, 21.5% of families were below poverty level, with that number jumping to 51% of families with a female head of household and with children under the age of 18 in the home (United States Census Bureau, 2010b).

Teachers interviewed at Valdosta High School were very sensitive to the issue of poverty in Valdosta and how it affected a large percentage of their students, particularly those who were African American. Ms. Allen noted that among the poor at Valdosta High were the children of migrant families, students who were disadvantaged not only economically but also in their lack of social connections to other students.

We have poor children here at our school, and sometimes we have children that are displaced through moving, migrant families. They come in from other places and have to make friends with other people who are from Valdosta, the city, and I don't think a lot of them have a lot of money. They're basically poor. (Ms. Allen, IB¹)

Ms. Pegler recognized that these children of migrant families came from generational poverty.

There are no farmers, none of those kind of agricultural type children here, you know, whose parents own land. Some migrant families. Most of them have never been outside the state of Georgia. They have all been right here, in this area, for generations. Generations of low-income families. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Several teachers made a further connection, characterizing the students as products of an inner-city environment.

The majority of our kids do eat on free and reduced lunch, so there are a lot of inner city kids who come from a low socioeconomic background. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

Mr. Neckett, on the other hand, felt that the demographics of the school resulted in Valdosta High being unfairly characterized as a troubled school:

The demographics of the two schools are about polar opposites of each other. Ours is what would be more considered an urban school and theirs is not. The racial demographics of the two schools are about as opposite as they could be. Our makeup is about 70% African American and the other school system is about 30% African American. To be perfectly honest with you, there is a stigma that kind of goes with that, and there are a lot of assumptions that go with that among people in the community. There just is, whether it be in the print media or the recorded media or everything else. They kind of treat the two systems differently. I don't even know if people are aware that they're doing it sometimes, but they do. And Valdosta gets put down sometimes. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

¹ The designation of whether a study participant taught within the International Baccalaureate Programme will appear as "IB" after his or her name. A study participant who did not teach within the International Baccalaureate Programme will be indicated with "non-IB".

Teachers interviewed believed that these students had fallen victim to one of the many unpleasant assumptions about poor urban students, the often self-fulfilling prophecy that the students' poverty somehow imbued them with a congenital lack of character. Ms. Allen discerned that the community's perception of the caliber of students at Valdosta High was inaccurately distorted by the poverty of the students.

I think we have a stereotype that we have to overcome all the time . . . that the kids here are real bad, and I don't think they're any worse than anywhere else. Being poor doesn't automatically mean being bad, right? I think that anywhere you have kids, you have those who behave badly and you have good kids. I think that's everywhere. I think we just have a reputation that's real bad here, and sometimes it's a struggle to overcome that. (Ms. Allen, IB)

In Ms. Maylie's estimation, the perception that Valdosta High was the inner-city school appeared causal to the academic struggles that students there had been facing. Furthermore, students at Valdosta High may have suffered from comparative neglect in a two-district system that appeared to have favored the primarily White Lowndes High.

We are, I would have to say, probably something along the nature of an inner-city environment . . . because we have two school districts in this area. And the county has a different . . . demographic group that is the reverse of ours. You don't like to think that that makes a difference in the school's potential status, but you have to wonder sometimes if some of our students haven't been short-changed for years, gotten less than they should have somehow, or maybe not been motivated to grab it for themselves, and now the difference is showing up. (Ms. Maylie, non-IB)

A challenge to this two-district status quo came in November 2011 when a referendum was placed on the ballot for voters within the Valdosta City Schools district to unify that district with Lowndes County Schools. Supporters of a unified school system, including the deep-pocketed, small business-supported Community Unification for Educational Excellence (CUEE), promoted a unified district as being more reflective of the demographics of the entire county (Pinholster, 2010). Chairman Leroy Butler said results of a survey conducted by the CUEE Task Force indicated that 64% of those polled reported that they were in favor of school system

unification, and the organization collected the requisite 7,000 voter signatures to place the referendum on the November 8, 2010 ballot (Pinholster, 2010). Other local organizations such as the Valdosta Area Chamber of Commerce and the *Valdosta Daily Times* also supported consolidation of the two school systems (“What we think: School consolidation,” June 25, 2011; *WALB News*, 2011).

The Times has listed school unification annually as an objective to initially stimulate discussion on the possibility of school unification. That drive has been successful. A once-taboo topic in Valdosta-Lowndes County, school unification became a focal point of discussion. That discussion has become more heated as talk has moved toward action. (“What we think: School consolidaton,” June 25, 2011, ¶ 6)

The “once-taboo” topic was the sensitive issue of racial inequities between the school systems. Teachers interviewed for the present study recognized the politics behind the debate and how more balanced racial demographics at each school might create positive results.

Demographics have changed within the [school] system. Now Lowndes is considered the White school and Valdosta is considered the Black school or inner city school. . . . And they’re hoping that if you consolidate, all that will mix and change. But it’s a big controversy and all that. . . . (Ms. Larkins, Non-IB)

Equally vocal, however, were citizens who felt that such a consolidation of existing schools districts would be too expensive and potentially damaging to a system they viewed as working quite well. Both school boards in fact voted against support of the referendum (Denton, 2011a, June 22; “LCBOE resolution,” 2011; “Valdosta School Board statement,” 2011).

Protestors against consolidation, including Mayor Sunny Vickers, staged a march through downtown Valdosta less than a month before voting day, symbolically culminating in a demonstration at the Martin Luther King, Jr. monument (Gulberg, 2011; McClure, 2011a). Like many citizens in the area, these protestors felt that the referendum reflected controversy serious

enough to have even disrupted the delivery of education to students and possibly could continue to do so if the plan to consolidate were implemented (“Friends of Valdosta City Schools,” 2011).

The majority of voters in Valdosta evidently felt the referendum was not in their best interest, with a decisive 79% voting “no.” Fears of losing long-standing administrators, faculty, and programs were among several voiced reasons, but the most compelling motive for voting down this unification measure was the anticipated loss of autonomy, with the expectation that Valdosta City Schools would simply be folded into Lowndes County (WALB News, November 9, 2011; McClure, 2011b).

The desire to more equitably blend the two schools to achieve a representative racial balance had its roots in the schools’ current academic crises. Despite their differences in student racial makeup, both school districts have struggled under Georgia’s state accountability systems. Lowndes County Schools in 2011 were each designated as ADEQ_DNM. This acronym translates into Adequate School - Did Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, meaning that each school in the system failed to make adequate progress in the current year in at least one of three indicators or areas of focus (The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2013b). The indicators were test participation (percentage of the student enrollment who took the required test); academic performance; and a third indicator, which in Lowndes High School is graduation rate (The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2013b). These schools would have been in "Needs Improvement" if they did not make AYP in the next school year for the same indicator areas. For the 2012-2013 school year, Georgia public schools shifted from No Child Left Behind’s Adequate Yearly Progress performance measurement for students to the Georgia College and Career Ready Performance Index (Harris, 2013, ¶ 2).

In Valdosta City Schools, the situation was slightly more critical. Three out of nine schools in this district did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in the 2010-2011 school year

(Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2013d). One of the three underperforming schools in the Valdosta City Schools district was Valdosta High School, designated in 2011 an NI-5 (Needs Improvement Year Five). These results earned the district an overall designation of "Needs Improvement," meaning that the state stepped in to provide a system of support through the coordinated efforts of a number of agencies: Georgia Department of Education, Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs), Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS), Education Technology Centers (ETCs), and college and university representatives. This statewide system of support was designed to provide direct services to schools based on identified areas of academic need, including an assigned school improvement specialist, as well as additional programs or strategies for middle and high schools to improve graduation rates (Georgia Department of Education, 2012b). Mr. Neckett described this oversight process with his customary good humor, but noted too that the responsibility for a school's academic success was shared equally among a number of stakeholders:

They bring more people in to watch over you. Same old stuff. Now we're NI-3, and they brought in this guy, perfectly nice man, older gentleman, from RESA, regional educational thing [Coastal Plains Regional Educational Service Agency, in Lenox GA—serves Lowndes County] to watch over us and figure out what we were doing wrong. He kind of walks around, wanders around. . . . It's hilarious, I was sitting in a meeting, we were doing stuff, and he's sitting in the back, and all of a sudden I hear this in the back of the room, "ZZZZZ. . . ." I just lost it. You want to bring one of those guys in? Great, come on. You can bring 20 of those guys in if you want. . . . And I'm not saying that people like that can't make a difference in the school, but the battle's not fought with them. The battle's not fought with these administrators who come in to make the rules, although they have purpose and they're helpful. The battle's fought in the trenches. You've got to have the faculty who's doing its job and the administration who is backing them up, and then the community who is backing them up. When you get that, then you can see some effective changes. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

In the 2010-2011 school year, Valdosta High School failed in two of three possible indicators of adequate yearly progress: academic performance and a second indicator, which, like Lowndes, was its graduation rate. For VHS, the graduation rate in 2011 was 72.5%, below the

Georgia Department of Education goal of 85% (Georgia Department of Education, 2012c). For those students who did satisfactorily complete high school, postsecondary educational opportunities abounded in Lowndes County. Valdosta State University (VSU), founded in 1906 as South Georgia State Normal College for Women, became part of the University System of Georgia in 1950 and achieved university status in 1993. Valdosta Technical College provided workforce and technical training, and Georgia Military College in Milledgeville had an extension campus in Valdosta which offered a two-year liberal arts program.

Unfortunately, few local students were able to take advantage of these opportunities. Although the presence of a state university featured prominently in the local economy, the university's effect upon education levels in Lowndes County seemed minimal. As of 2010, only 13.6% of the population 25 years and older boasted a bachelor's degree. More alarmingly, over 18% of Valdosta's population at that time had not completed high school; 5.6% had less than a ninth grade education. Slightly more, 30.3%, had a high-school diploma or GED, and 21% of Lowndes County went on to earn some college credit but no degree (United States Census Bureau, 2010b).

Thus, Valdosta High had for several years been designated as needing improvement by virtue of the students' academic underperformance on high-stakes tests as well as their low graduation rate. This was the culture of defeat which greeted me as I began my study of Valdosta High School and its effort to turn around this academic failure for a portion of its students through the implementation of the IB Diploma Programme.

Valdosta High School

My initial introduction to Valdosta High School in this study was through the International Baccalaureate Organisation's website, which described VHS as an IBDP candidate

school and provided a link to the school's own website. Here school demographic data verified that VHS was indeed an "urban" school by virtue of its heavily African American student body, low socio-economic status of a majority of its students, and its failure to make adequate academic progress on state-mandated high-stakes tests. On paper, Valdosta High looked very like the urban high school at which I had taught IB English only a few years earlier and which was itself an "academically challenged" school.

Valdosta High School (VHS) was the non-magnet high-school option in the Valdosta City Schools system. The official school mascot was the "Wildcat" and its colors, black and gold. Built for the White students of Valdosta in 1922, VHS was a two-story, red brick structure which over the next 50 years saw numerous wings added for the addition of a lunchroom, library, and labs for home economics, music, and science.

History of Valdosta High School

After a fire in the main two-story portion of VHS in 1977, the building was razed and a new building with an "open-space" configuration built in its place, a nod to the educational movements in school architecture known as "open education" which enjoyed brief popularity in the United States in the 1970s (Cuban, 2004; Sanders & Wren, 1976; Staples, 1971). VHS utilized the open-classroom architectural concept until 2007, when the school system began extensive renovations to its complex. The front portion of the school which housed the four primary content areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies was remodeled during the summers of 2007 and 2008. The open classrooms were closed in, so that the main building of VHS became a somewhat confusing warren of looping and dead-end halls, oddly geometric classrooms, and two widely separated libraries through which students had to routinely pass

between classes. The teachers interviewed saw those alterations as improvements over previous conditions.

If you'd've been here three years ago it was totally different. We had open classrooms and partitions and no doors. In the classroom I was at, I could literally see into about six classrooms around me. You could hear everything going on at once. We had chalkboards instead of whiteboards. . . . We do have a nice facility now compared to what it was.
(Mr. Neckett, IB)

The remainder of the school, housing the arts and business education classes, was intended to be remodeled in 2009, but the special-purpose, local-option sales tax (SPLOST) monies were not levied by Lowndes County due to the poor economy and the perceived financial strain upon the community. Consequently, visitors to VHS noticed a clear distinction between the remodeled portions of the building with their framed motivational prints, numerous and expansive trophy cabinets, and bright natural lighting, and the darker, graffiti-walled section toward the rear of the building with its weary linoleum floors and flickering fluorescents. Teachers at Valdosta High anticipated my observations of their building and were quick to point out its shortfalls. Ms. Allen was somewhat sensitive to the impermanence of the alternations to her room:

I don't think you've been back in my area. Are you going on a tour? . . . We haven't been renovated yet, and you've heard how the school was before, all open classrooms, right? And I'm still in that kind of situation, with a divider between our rooms, sort of accordion style. And so I have to compete with the noise. . . . Well, for example, they were drilling today in my sculpture class, so we have to compensate for a lot of things that the other teachers don't have to do who have real doors to their rooms. (Ms. Allen, IB)

Mr. Neckett expressed the belief that the incomplete renovations to VHS' facilities were just a symptom of the state department of education's preference for more populated areas and its dismissal of rural South Georgia:

South Georgia kinda has this stigma about it as being second tier compared to Atlanta. I mean, when we go on the road to Atlanta, you go to all these schools that are really nice and really beautiful and really built up and all that kind of stuff. It may just be that

Georgia has different standards like, because, the teachers look here and we think, “This place is kinda dumpy.” . . . This is the perception that a lot of us have down here, that South Georgia and this area doesn’t have that much of a say regarding education because we’re kind of outmanned and outnumbered compared to like north Georgia and the Atlanta area and such as that. A lot of money has been infused in here recently though. . . . But if you look at some of the other systems and the other schools around here, and they’re like, wow, knock your socks off. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

A Legacy of Athletics at Valdosta High School

What did receive attention at Valdosta High School was anything and everything involving sports, particularly football. Even the most uninitiated visitor could notice the many gleaming mahogany trophy cases prominently displayed in every public area. From VHS have come countless athletes who helped earn Valdosta, Georgia, the nickname “TitleTown, USA.”

The Friday night lights shine a little brighter here. Literally. High above the new Sprinturf playing surface and armchair seating for its season ticketholders—and beyond the new locker rooms, press box and football museum that also came with the \$7.5-million renovation of Cleveland Field at Bazemore-Hyder Stadium—Valdosta High School installed the same high-performance lights used a couple of hundred miles to the south at Daytona International Speedway. They spotlight a high-school program that, even among the nation’s elite, stands out. (Wieberg, 2004, ¶ 1)

The Valdosta High School Wildcats have the “winningest” high-school football program in the United States and were instrumental in earning Valdosta, Georgia, its designation as “TitleTown, USA” by ESPN in July 2008 (ESPN, 2008). The football program’s record from 1913 through 2004 included 6 national championships, 23 state championships, and 41 regional championships. At the conclusion of the 2010 season, the record of the VHS Wildcats Football Team stood at 869-203-34 (National Federation of State High School Associations, 2012).

Despite the fact that renovations to Valdosta High's classrooms were suspended, the athletic complex has received substantial improvements. Bazemore-Hyder Stadium at Cleveland Field was a primarily single-sided stadium with no end-zone seating, a style typical of high-school stadiums. Fans strolled a Wildcat Walk of Pride, a pathway built of brick pavers which they purchased and enscribed with their names and graduation dates or the names of their alumni sons. One could also visit the adjacent David S. Waller, Sr. Valdosta Wildcat Museum, renamed in 2010 by the Valdosta City Schools Board of Education after their former chairman. Waller played for the 1950 and 1951 Wildcats, and many of the items in the Wildcat Museum came from his personal archives (Sosa, 2004, slide 12).

The Sprinturf, the Wildcat Walk of Pride and the Waller Wildcat Museum were all donated by the 1,500-plus-member Touchdown Club, a fan club comprised primarily of VHS alumni. The Club also sponsored a resolution to the Board of Education in 1996 requesting that the previously unnamed stadium be officially christened Bazemore-Hyder Stadium in honor of coaches Wright Bazemore (1941-1942, 1946-1971) and Nick Hyder (1968-1995). Under these beloved coaches' combined 50+ years-tenure, the VHS Wildcats won six national titles, 21 of the Wildcats' 23 total state titles, and 282 Cleveland Field victories. So beloved was Nick Hyder, who died in the school's cafeteria in 1996 from a heart attack, that more than 8,000 people filed by his black-and-gold coffin as it sat on the 50 yard line in Bazemore-Hyder stadium (Jubera, 2009).

The importance of athletics at Valdosta High was not just evident in the physical surroundings of the school. Valdosta High's school website features a "Sports Zone" page devoted to more than a dozen different athletics, including the marching band, apparently viewed as an athletic activity (Valdosta High School, 2012). Typical of external websites devoted to

VHS sports was “Valdosta Wildcats” at <http://www.valdostafootball.com> (2013). Here, beneath a panoramic photo of the 2012 Wildcats charging onto the field in full regalia, fans could read about the history of Valdosta High sports, purchase tickets to events, view or purchase archived videos of past games, and take virtual tours of the Walk of Fame and Wildcat Museum. Another site, iHigh.com, named Valdosta High as the “winningest HS football team in the nation” (i.High.com, 2013).

So cherished are season tickets that they’re handed down in wills and parceled out in divorce settlements, and so hopeful are fathers of siring future Wildcats that they’ve toted newborn sons from the hospital in cat-pawed Valdosta helmets. (Wieberg, 2004, ¶ 3)

The importance placed upon the continuing success of these athletic programs was evident, too, in the power wielded to affect school policy by full-time coaches and teachers who doubled as coaches after school. For example, the scheduling of classes had to take place around the requisite conditioning classes necessary for VHS’s athletes.

Now, for the first time we’re on an A-B schedule for some of our classes, and so far that transition’s been pretty seamless. . . . Only AP and IB classes. We had certain faculty members that refused to consider the A-B schedule. . . . These were faculty members in power. There were concerns about football; for example, they would take weight training every other day with A-B, which just wouldn’t work. Twenty-five percent of the day for football players is taken up with football practice and weight training. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Mr. Neckett felt that the athletics program at VHS had sufficient clout within the school to dictate how the new class schedule for the International Baccalaureate would look, an indication of the power athletics had to shape decisions even around an academic reform. Not surprisingly, the band, which plays at all the football games, also received preferential scheduling:

Some people believe that the IB kids will have preferential treatment with scheduling. I’m thinking particularly about what the band director said. He’s definitely not a supporter of the IB Programme. I think he thinks it’s going to hurt his program because the IB kids won’t be able to take band. Some of them played in the marching band, so it

would hurt to lose them. I think they're trying to accommodate it by scheduling planning third block for all the IB teachers, which frees up that block for the kids to take something else. I hope that solves that problem. (Ms. Allen, IB)

Although having common planning was a decided benefit for the IB teachers, Ms. Allen discerned that behind that scheduling was the band director's efforts to ensure his marching band members would still be available to perform at athletic functions.

Each school has its own distinctive characteristics, patterns of activity, physical structure, myths, rituals, people, and artifacts that enable researchers to piece together the school's cultural story (Goodman, 1996). In the case of Valdosta High, so prevalent was its stance as an athletic powerhouse that a visitor was unable to move anywhere in the school's common areas without being presented with proud testimonial of current or past glories. These artifacts—an elaborate and well-maintained website, entire corridors of trophy cases, large professionally prepared canvas banners lauding the Wildcats that were hung next to hand-lettered posters reminding students of an honor society meeting—all speak to a tradition that grew up around athletics.

Players still bang their helmets against the corrugated metal roof of the walkway outside the locker room before rushing onto the field here, the collective rumble like a storm coming up from the Gulf [of Mexico]. An end-zone billboard continues to welcome visitors to Death Valley, a bold declaration of trouble ahead. (Jubera, 2009, ¶1 & 2).

Yet there are signs that this mythology is growing threadbare. The third football coach in seven years was summarily fired in 2009 after a gut-wrenching 57-15 loss to rival Lowndes High School. Bazemore-Hyder Stadium fills less than 1/3 of its seats for most games. And Valdosta High, the “winningest” football team in the nation, has not won a national championship since 1998 (Jubera, 2009, ¶ 5).

There's a bad vibe going on. It'll take a special guy to come in here and get into the politics: who's sitting on the school board, whether there should be a Black coach or a White coach. [Being the football coach has] become a lot more complicated. (Jubera, 2009, ¶ 8)

Valdosta High's Status as a Struggling School

Indeed the community had expressed concern about VHS' repeated academic failing status, which had resulted in many students moving to private schools or to the Lowndes High district. Valdosta High's enrollment was down to 1,734 in 2010. Lowndes High, on the other hand, had four state titles to its name since 1999 and had swollen to 3,001 students in 2010 (Valdosta, Georgia, 2013).

Other equally potent evidence attested to the trouble within Valdosta High. Just as the physical condition of some areas of Valdosta High's building had been overlooked in favor of renovations to the more public façade and administrative offices, so too the undercurrents of racial inequalities still evident within the school had gone unaddressed for years despite the school's chronic underperformance on high-stakes testing.

I guess that does kind of present to an outsider that Valdosta may be separated into two schools, the school of the really got it and the school of the really don't, and there's a gap in achievement between the two. I don't think that's just perception. I think a lot of people see that, and we're trying to take steps to correct that. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Although in agreement with the concerns raised by the community, Mr. Neckett suggested that Valdosta High's administrators were aware of the racial inequities within the school and were actively addressing them.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as a School Reform Measure

When the issue of racial underrepresentation in college preparatory coursework was coupled with Valdosta High's continued underperformance on high-stakes tests, the Valdosta City School Board perceived the adoption of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) as a viable reform measure. They recognized that the IBDP would maintain what they felt were high standards for their higher-achieving students, while simultaneously providing an option for students who were capable of producing better schoolwork but had not felt either prepared for or invited to participate in more rigorous coursework. Ms. Larkins recognized that bringing the IB to Valdosta High was intended as academic reform, but she knew also that the school was beginning a very long process of improving students' scholastic performance:

I think [administrators] want to raise the bar for the inner city school and what we're doing. I don't know if this is the answer to that, but that is the hope, that it will raise the bar, and more students will go into that area because of what it offers. I don't know if that's going to happen, and it definitely won't happen overnight, because we have so many students we do need to raise the bar on, and it's going to take years to do that. (Ms. Larkins, Non-IB)

Valdosta High School already had a long-standing, well-attended Advanced Placement program, another rigorous college-preparatory program. Both AP and IB programs have been increasing in number in American schools as struggling schools have sought to infuse rigor into their course offerings. The presence of these programs has in some cases even been used as indicators of school quality (College Board, 2013a; Mathews, 2005).

Several factors have contributed to the growth of these two programs in the United States. One such factor is the programs' readily available curricula. The IBP sets forth extensive frameworks within which courses must be developed, even going so far as to provide a prescribed reading list, for example, with different categories for genre and country of origin from which Language A1 teachers must choose a required number of texts (International

Baccalaureate Organisation, 2012). Similarly, materials developed around the entire menu of the College Board's AP courses are marketed through their website and large book vendors such as Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com. In addition, the AP programs offer summer institutes and ongoing district-level professional development. Ongoing opportunities for teacher professional development during implementation, as well as on an ongoing basis, are available for both the IBP and AP programs. Such curricular frameworks are particularly attractive to schools with limited financial and personnel resources.

Another perceived benefit of providing AP and/or IB courses in high school is the belief that students will develop the requisite study skills for postsecondary school success. This preparation is especially significant for students who might become the first family member to attend college or who do not consider education a promising option for the future (Paige & Marcus, 2004, ¶50). Mirroring the individual course menu of the AP curricula, some IB schools encourage students who lack the academic competence necessary to pursue the full-fledged IB Diploma to take IB courses a la carte instead. These students earn an IB Certificate for each course for which they successfully take the examination, with the perceived benefit of having IB coursework on their high-school transcripts. Although colleges do not grant as much credit earned for IB courses taken as singletons (Mathews, 2008), the experience of having taken the coursework has proven to be beneficial. The National Center for Educational Accountability reported that students who failed to pass IB end-of-course examinations in high schools were twice as likely to graduate from college in 5 years as students who had taken no IB courses at all (Dougherty, Mellor, & Jian, 2006; Mathews, 2004, ¶9). Minority students reap even greater benefit: Hispanic and African American students were found to be three times as likely to graduate from college in five years if they participate in IB coursework (Dougherty et al., 2006).

Ms. Pegler and Ms. Allen both felt that students would not only be better prepared for rigorous college coursework but might complete their college studies more quickly with the college credit or placement afforded them by successful completion of the IBDP.

I'm looking forward to teaching [a course in the IB Programme], just because I want to be able to increase [students'] levels of understanding of the material that they're not otherwise going to get until they get to college. And right now, they're so susceptible of learning this information at this age that by the time those kids get to college it'll be a piece of cake. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

The overall feel of our school is that we expect all of them to go to college or tech school or something, and this will just help them get into college and get through college more quickly. (Ms. Allen, IB)

Perhaps more importantly, Mr. Neckett believed that students' success in this rigorous new academic program might provide other students with the impetus to attempt such college preparatory curricula.

IB is a comprehensive curriculum going across different subject areas. It's more of a commitment. We've got a good group of kids who are committed. The hope is when those kids come through and they're successful, it will inspire some of the other kids to elevate their level of achievement and help improve them. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Although the decision to pursue the IB Programme was made somewhat earlier, Valdosta High began its official application with the International Baccalaureate Organisation in February 2008. Ms. Rudge, one of the IB faculty, wrote the majority of the application, but she relied on the content area teachers selected to participate in the IBDP to provide the course outlines and materials lists that the IBO required.

In VHS's initial Application (2008) as an International Baccalaureate school, the teachers and administrators stated their intention to implement the IBDP with fidelity and to offer only the diploma option (Valdosta High School, 2008, p. 12). IB schools are allowed to offer both the full-blown diploma as well as certificates in individual courses. The IB Diploma means that the recipient has taken rigorous IB-approved academic courses representative of the Programme's

core values of promoting “intercultural understanding and respect” (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013e, ¶ 3). On the other hand, the IB Certificate option allows students to take individual IB courses in their areas of strength or interest; these students do not receive an IB diploma but rather a regular diploma, regardless of the number of certificates achieved.

The decision by Valdosta High to offer only the diploma option (Valdosta High School, 2008, p. 12) spoke to the faculty’s belief that fidelity to the mission of the IBO, combined with the perceived strength of the cross-curricular academic coursework, would be critical in contributing to student success. VHS had long experienced modest success with Advanced Placement courses taken by the academically talented students in their school, but they had not succeeded in reaching students who were academically marginalized by past nonparticipation in more rigorous coursework. Breaking the IB Diploma Programme up into stand-alone components would have only provided a similar approach to coursework that AP stand-alone courses already provided. Furthermore, allowing students to select individual IB courses without pursuit of the full diploma would not have provided the necessary support and academic scaffolding to students with the motivation but untried academic ability.

Fidelity to the originally intended design of the IBDP was critical to that program’s success at a low-performing school. One desired school reform product is frequently increased academic success for students. A case study of an urban high school in California, for example, indicated that high schools made the better choice when deciding to implement the full-blown IBDP rather than offer the options of stand-alone courses or certificates (Mayer, 2008, 2010). In this case study, not only did an IBO administrator express the belief that “fidelity [was] a nonnegotiable” (Mayer, 2008, p. 222) but also that this fidelity to the rigor of the IBDP was precisely what struggling urban schools needed to overcome years of previous academic

underachievement. Additional social supports also proved significant to the success of the urban students in this study (Mayer, 2008).

Valdosta High took a risk with the implementation of another academic program, even one as well-regarded as the International Baccalaureate. There were already several other programs in place at VHS, in addition to the Advanced Placement program, which had been in place for a relatively short time and were also intended as postsecondary preparation. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) targeted students who would be the first in their families to attend college. In addition, Keys to the Future, a partnership with Wiregrass Georgia Technical College and Toyota, encouraged students to participate in college, military or vocational preparedness with the goal of winning an automobile. The Career Technical department had students placed in the workforce in part-time employment. The Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) had been active for several years (Valdosta High School, 2012).

School Reform as Change

Fullan (2001) referred to the repeated application of change, or “innovation,” as problematic to a school’s culture. Multiple innovations, or “innovation overload” (Fullan, 2001, p. 52), can result in confusion to the community stakeholders and resentment or, perhaps worse, apathy on the part of key faculty and staff (Fullan, 2001). Hatch (2002) noted that, in a survey of school districts in Texas and California that were working with multiple school improvement initiatives simultaneously,

frustration and anger at the school level [had] never been higher. When attempting to garner new funds or develop new programs, over and over again, [the superintendent] hear[d] from principals and teachers, “We don’t want anything else. We’re over our

heads.” (p. 10)

Increasingly, multiple innovations are employed as school reform measures, “reforming again, again, and again” (Cuban, 1993), yet the innovations are not given time to fully mature into effectiveness. The process of institutionalizing a school innovation takes at minimum 3 to 5 years, with more complex changes requiring up to 10 years to fully develop (Fullan, 2001, p. 52). When such measures are abandoned because the desired change or reform product does not occur earlier, stakeholders may be left feeling defeated and pessimistic about future innovations (Cuban, 1993).

This “reform fatigue” (Healey & DeStefano, 1997, p. 13) had in fact negatively impacted the prevailing school culture at Valdosta High. The term “toxic” was itself used by a participant, Ms. Miggs (non-IB), who when asked how she would describe Valdosta High, replied, “Sadly in need of school improvement. The culture is toxic at this particular school.” Her perception was that teachers were feeling significant stress resulting from the school’s failure to make AYP for successive years. Repeated “Needs Improvement” ratings had resulted in the imposition of state oversight and frequent state site visits. Furthermore, budgetary constraints had resulted in work furloughs at a time when the economy was already suffering nationwide. Teachers interviewed expressed a belief that administrators did not value them as individuals but rather saw teachers as easily replaceable. One participant described the pervasive negativity in teachers’ reaction at first to the announcement of the IB Programme, a reaction to yet another reform measures:

I think when it was first floated, it was shut down in a hurry. Teachers are so afraid of change. I think it’s because we’re so worried because we’re inundated with so much new stuff that comes at us that we build up a resistance to it. You know, they’ve [administrators and state officials] have thrown a lot of stuff at us recently, “Try this,” “Do this instead.” And quite frankly, some of the stuff they throw at us is kind of silly. . . . You’re gonna tell us something one year and next year you’re gonna tell us something completely different. “Research shows this is true” and research is wonderful and everything, but then research is going to have something else next year to

totally go the opposite direction from this. I think we've seen so much of this that, whenever you try to bring something new and different and exciting, even when it's wonderful, there are barriers that come up, and unfortunately sometimes the barriers come from staff, they come from faculty. They're resistant to change. They're tired. And sometimes it's a fear it might put more work on them later, might affect them negatively, might take power away where they once had power or just change the order of things or the balance of the school. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

While not specifically naming "reform fatigue," Mr. Neckett vividly described its results upon a faculty and the resulting resistance teachers developed to future reforms, even those as well-regarded as the International Baccalaureate.

Other teachers alluded to the unhealthy school climate while unable to pinpoint a specific cause:

Going back to your question about climate. All of those [stressors] contribute to teacher morale. . . . You can't rule by fear. You can't not be consistent with what you expect from your teachers. You can't change procedures from one day to another, or from one week to another. You can't have a blankety-blank computer system that doesn't work if everything you need is on the blankety-blank computer. So, those are the factors to me that are causing people to not like what they do. (Ms. Miggs, non-IB)

Ms. Miggs's complaints centered around what she expressed as constantly changing and sometimes even unreasonable expectations of teachers by administrators. Adding insult to injury, Ms. Miggs felt that the support, either administrative or technological, was not there for teachers to do the work being asked of them. Even the ebullient Ms. Maylie expressed a sense of tension between faculty and administrators:

Any issues regarding morale, which you would think somebody in my position would know about, don't really come to me because I'm your resident Pollyanna. I am the positive person all day, every day. It is the way I grew up, for one thing, but I also believe it is essential in a school like this. . . . And if morale is low, then [reform] might be necessary in order to change the culture in the school. Because we do have some culture issues in the school, where teachers for example would rather be left alone instead of held accountable. This may sound kind of strange, but I like it when people come to my classroom. But we haven't established that same kind of rapport schoolwide with teachers. Many teachers feel it is a threat when somebody walks into the room, and it doesn't matter how much reassurance you provide, it's still an "us" and "them" kind of thing. (Ms. Maylie, non-IB)

In contrast to Ms. Miggs, Ms. Maylie felt that some of the morale issues at VHS stemmed from teachers' adherence to traditional models in which the teacher operated a sort of "fiefdom" (Palmer, 1997) within the four walls of the classroom, into which "the sovereigns of other fiefdoms [were] not welcome" (p. 142). In addition, previous experience with having other adults in their classrooms had been negative, even punitive. The oversight by the state Department of Education and local school board members resulting from VHS's challenged school status meant that these frequent observations were not for purposes of promoting the teacher's professional growth; teachers were observed in order to assure that they were in compliance with state and district initiatives.

Implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

Recruiting efforts among students who would benefit from the rigor and structure of the IBDP began nearly two years before VHS achieved its IBO World School status.

[Principal] Brett Stanton asked me to be the IB Coordinator, and I wrote the letter of intent, spent about 300 hours doing research on IB. I went to IB Coordinator training in Atlanta in summer of 2007. I came home and spent the entire summer recruiting the first IB class, which will become our first class of candidates. . . . Dr. Cason [now Superintendent of Valdosta City Schools District] at Sumter High School in South Carolina, where he had been a superintendent in that system, made the decision to bring IB into the Valdosta City School System. (Ms. Miggs, non-IB)

In June of 2008, only two short months after VHS made its initial application to the IBO, Gary Boling was named the new principal at Valdosta High, replacing Brett Stanton ("Gary Boling named new VHS principal," 2008; Ratliff, 2008a). Stanton had been there for the preceding 10 years, but he did not have any experience with the International Baccalaureate. A former social studies teacher and coach, Boling had previously led a middle school feeder to an IB high school in North Cobb County, Georgia. He thus came with a modicum of prior knowledge and training to guide VHS through its initial IBDP application process ("Gary Boling

named new VHS principal,” June 25, 2008, ¶ 6). Almost immediately after his appointment, Boling faced criticisms that his implementation of the IBDP at VHS was a waste of taxpayers’ money and that he had similarly mismanaged the finances at his previous school (Ratliff, 2008b). Community members felt “that the Black community was getting shafted, primarily because they felt that money was being taken from their programs to IB” (Ms. Allen, IB), and that programs such as vocational education, which had always had an overrepresentation of African American students, would be shortchanged or eventually eliminated.

The selected IBDP faculty, however, remained supportive of their new program as a welcome addition to the options already available at Valdosta High.

Regardless of how students were achieving or the so-called “haves and have nots,” every level of student needs improvement. Even with the honors and gifted programs, if there’s room for improvement, we need to improve those areas. You shouldn’t rest on and be satisfied with the results that you have. You should always strive to improve. Our superintendent had a vision for IB. He came from a district that had it. He felt it was an improvement over what we offered before. We’ll still be doing what we offered before. What we’re doing is offering more choices. We still have our AP program, our honors programs. It’s another choice. And since the superintendent and the administration were willing to do it, and it made sense for us to do it. . . . There’s a financial aspect of it, too. They may not have been willing to put the money towards it. And there was criticism here from some people in the community. “Why are you spending money on students who are already succeeding? These students are doing fine. They’re going to graduate, they’re going to college, they’re moving on and being successful. Why do you have to spend money on them when you also have another segment or population of the school who are not succeeding, who are dropping out?” (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Although Mr. Neckett appreciated the community members’ concerns regarding the future of popular vocational programs, he expressed his belief that the IB Programme represented a positive move toward providing additional rigorous academic choices for Valdosta High students. He also expressed the opinion that it was incumbent upon teachers to strive for continued growth within their academic curricula.

Community Concerns regarding Racial Equity within Valdosta High School

In 2008, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) brought the issues of access and representation by African American students to the forefront when it protested Valdosta High School's proposed adoption of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (Pinholster, 2008). The SCLC charged Valdosta City Schools with using the adoption of the IBDP at the site school as way of taking the focus off larger issues of race and access within the school. Dr. Mark George, assistant professor of sociology at Valdosta State College and education chairperson for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chapter of the SCLC, voiced his opinion that,

If you look at the history of every elite program—AP, honors, or gifted—it's clear that it serves the White kids disproportionately. So there's this long history of those programs not being available to students of color, demographically and statistically. (Pinholster, 2008, ¶ 12)

In an interview conducted by the *Valdosta Daily Times*, Dr. George accused Valdosta City Schools of using the proposed adoption of the IBDP as a whitewash to camouflage the board's failure to address lingering segregation issues. Noted Dr. George,

This school system, in our estimation, historically and in 2008 does not abide by IB principles, particularly in terms of cultural respect and openness. . . . To all of a sudden come up with a program that values diversity and cross-cultural understanding, when we don't even have that in this community, is disingenuous. (Pinholster, 2008, ¶ 9).

Recognizing that the IBDP implementation was a *fait accompli*, however, Dr. George said his protest was intended to refocus attention on these issues of racial tension (Pinholster, 2008).

Yet there was strong indication that the IBDP was intended by Valdosta City Schools' administrators to address the very historic underrepresentation of African American students in

more rigorous academic programs which Dr. George referenced. By the time Dr. Cason, Superintendent of Valdosta City Schools District, made the decision to bring IB into the Valdosta City School System, the IBO had for several years been tweaking its definition of program access to “enable[e] more students to experience and benefit from an IB education . . . regardless of personal circumstances” such as socioeconomic status or ethnicity (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2006, p. 5). The IBO was actively encouraging schools such as VHS with high percentages of low-income minority students to consider the IB at all grade levels. Further solidifying the IBO’s pledge to reach more low-income minority students, the Organisation received a three-year, \$2.4 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2009 to study how schools might help prepare low-income and minority students in grades 9 and 10 for the Diploma Programme. The high schools participating in this study mirrored VHS in terms of their facing “challenges in . . . creating more inclusive IB programming . . . [and] the very real pressure of state assessments and the focus on student performance on high-stakes tests” (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2011, p. 7).

In the spring of 2009, Valdosta High was granted full status as an IB World School (Jedlicka, 2009), and the first cohort of IB students began that fall. For the community, however, racial tensions continued to erupt. In 2009, Superintendent Bill Cason made the decision not to televise newly-elected President Barack Obama’s inaugural address in district schools (Carapucci, 2009; Pinholster, 2009a). Hundreds of disgruntled parents and SCLC members showed up at a Valdosta City School Board’s meeting held in an area elementary school to demand the superintendent’s resignation and to reiterate the perceived inequities within the district in the areas of faculty and staff. The Rev. Floyd Rose, President of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was one of the most

vocal of these community members calling for Dr. Cason's resignation. Rev. Rose made very clear his perceptions of the racial inequities within the Valdosta City School Board's administrators. He felt these perceptions prompted Dr. Cason's refusal to permit Black students to hear the address of the first United States' president of color:

Even though the Valdosta City School district is approximately 80% Black, the superintendent is White. The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning is White. The assistant superintendent for finance and operations is White. The curriculum director for grades Pre-K through fifth grade is White. The curriculum director for grades sixth through 12 is White. The director of special education is White. The director of Title I is White, the director of Title II is White, the director of Title III is White. The director of instructional technology is White. The director of nutrition is White. The director of student information is White. The principal of Valdosta High School, a school that is overwhelmingly Black, is White. The head football coach is White. . . . Except for one, all of the schools that bear somebody's names are White. The receptionist is White and the ultimate authority that our children face, the juvenile judge, is White. (Pinholster, 2009a, ¶ 7)

These same concerned parents and community members were largely correct regarding the inequities in the areas of administration at VHS, inequities which extended into the faculty and staff as well. Even as recently as the close of school, June, 2011, only 26 of Valdosta High School's 109 faculty members who responded to a school survey regarding ethnicity identified themselves as African American (Ms. Krook, personal communication, July 30, 2011). This low percentage of Black faculty at VHS is in stark contrast to the school's 70% African American student body. Of those same teacher respondents, 81 self-identified as Caucasian, or 74%,

compared to the school's 21% Caucasian student body. Percentage representation by teachers of the racial demographics of the student body was, therefore, almost directly the reverse.

Valdosta High School administrators worked diligently to dispel any community perceptions of the new IB program "not being available to students of color, demographically and statistically" (Pinholster, 2008, ¶ 12). Limiting enrollment in the program to neighborhood students, for example, greatly alleviated the community's fears that VHS intended to use the IBDP as a way to lure more academically proficient students, very likely not African American, from outside the district. The decision to not situate VHS's IB Programme as an academic magnet produced broad-based support for the program as an accepted part of school offerings. By way of contrast, some high schools have utilized the reputation of the IBDP to attract academically talented students from outside their school boundaries and thereby improve their talent pool. For example, Lincoln Park High School (2004) in Chicago introduced the IBDP as a federally-funded magnet program with the intent of "return[ing] the school to one of the highest [in] academic quality and accountability" (Conner, 2008, p. 336).

Although presentations were made to some private schools as well as to feeder schools to VHS, administrators made the decision to not permit students from outside Valdosta City Schools (but easily within driving distance) to participate. Community education events held by IBDP coordinator, Ms. Maldon, and other members of the school's administrative team led to a deeper understanding by both parents and students of the important role these stakeholders themselves played in the IBDP's success and the eventual success of the school. With this understanding came increased parental support as well as critical buy-in from students. Gradually the school saw an increase in parents' accepting the invitations for their student to participate in the IBDP in the fall of 2008. According to Ms. Maldon, several parents who had

previously expressed reluctance to consider the program returned the necessary documentation and brought their students to orientation.

Participant faculty who were teaching in the IB Programme at VHS were keenly aware of their school's racial demographics and were equally conscious of the obvious disparity between the racial composition of the student body and the racial composition of the faculty and staff. Yet some teachers who were interviewed expressed the belief that the administrators had carefully chosen the IBDP faculty from their existing faculty and that the community and press were unfairly castigating VHS administrators and faculty on this point.

In every department, you know, there's someone who's been selected to be the IB teacher. And I think [Maldon, the IB coordinator] did a really smart thing when she asked the kids who would you die for? Who would you be willing to work your fingers to the bone for? And those were the teachers she picked to pull in to do the IB, if they were willing. And I think that was a very smart decision to make on her part, because you need that kind of rapport with those students if you've got that kind of program. And, in other words, this assignment of responsibility was not from the top down, which sometimes it is, and sometimes teachers can be assigned who might be wonderful teachers but they're not going to have that kind of rapport with the kids, even if they are the same race as the majority of their kids. (Ms. Maylie, non-IB)

Ms. Maylie made the point that the teachers chosen to inaugurate the IBDP at Valdosta High were those teachers with whom students had existing positive relationships. Such relationships were viewed as critical to teachers' guiding students successfully through the first year of an unfamiliar and academically demanding curriculum.

Community perception of the IB Programme at Valdosta High gradually improved, according to the interview participants who reported positive comments and support among their personal contacts.

The other part of [the program] that I'm positive about is how the careful preparation for implementing IB here, for getting approval to be an IB school, has permeated the community in a very good way. So many people know about what's going on here and they are encouraging their children to come here. So the pool of students that are seeking to participate in the IB Programme in the future is huge. So even if we don't have the

bells and whistles that I would like to see, I think all of the foundation . . . has been carefully laid, and that we will soon see the benefits. . . . There was a group that imagined that this was going to be a White program. But it's not, at all, and I think that, as soon as they got the facts, opposition went away. Because, I'll tell you, the truth is that in the past the school had a reputation for having advanced classes that were predominantly White, and tech-career classes, that we don't have any more, that were almost wholly Black. And, if you study our demographics in the AP classes, in the last few years there's been a tremendous shift toward making the demographic in the IB and the AP programs reflect the demographics of the school. We have 80% Black students, and we have a ways to go, but I'm proud of the accomplishments we've made so far. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

Ms. Rudge's attestation to "the careful preparation for implementing IB here" reflected Valdosta High's fidelity to the full-blown IBDP curricula, including the diploma option. She also recognized the administrators' efforts to recruit students into the program in numbers representative of the demographics of the school.

Students at Valdosta High School

Faculty at Valdosta High shared many of the concerns of larger, more geographically urban high schools. For example, faculty quickly identified instances of gang signs and gang activity among the students. Gender identification issues and racial unrest also caused occasional outburst between students.

I think we do have a gang problem, but when you compare it to some large districts, it's very minimal, I think. We have tags once in a while on the buildings. I think there's an increasing sexual preference kind of difference. We have larger and larger groups of lesbians and it's become a kind of a problem. The girls who are in those groups are really mean, sort of bullies, and it's almost as if they recruit other girls to be in those groups, pressure them. It's really strange. Not so much with the boys, though. For the boys, it's still about the athletics. They wouldn't put up with any of that on the teams. And, I guess, as far as in the school goes, you know that there's always going to be racial differences, too. I don't think it's as bad as it was years ago, though. . . . It's usually individual things, like somebody calls someone the "N" word. It's not like it's a huge group. (Ms. Adams, IB)

Ms. Adams believed that some issues would continue to cause strife among students, regardless of administrators' best efforts to recruit equitably into one academic program within the school.

The unrest within the greater community of Valdosta arising from the question of the IB Programme and racial inequalities within the school had also resulted in undercurrents of conflict at Valdosta High. While speaking of interactions among her students, Ms. Larkins specifically recalled the town meetings regarding racial inequities at VHS and wistfully bemoaned the fact that students “bring stuff outside the community into our school.”

Oh, we still have bullying issues and other issues, I mean, it’s a bigger school. But like I said, the big things, race problems, if what happened in the community was not necessarily brought into the school environment, it would help with that, you know?
(Ms. Larkins, Non-IB)

Ms. Larkins recognized that part of this additional community impact upon students within the IB Programme resulted from the media attention upon the Black community’s concerns about VHS. Mr. Sharp, too, felt that some students’ attitudes reflected what their parents had expressed negatively about the new program at Valdosta High:

I know our kids talk a lot about what’s going on in the community, how some of their parents aren’t really sure that the IB is a good thing for our school because it’s expensive and the same kids who took AP courses, the smart ones, sometimes the financially better off ones, are going to get tapped to go to the IB, too. And they think it’s kinda just more for the haves, not the have nots. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

Students at Valdosta High shared other aspects of the urban school experience in addition to the issues of gender identification, gangs, and racial tension. Although some of the accoutrements of rural living were evident in the cotton fields and farm equipment within a short distance of Valdosta High, the students who attended the high school were for the most part not from agricultural backgrounds, and they exhibited some of the same deficits that students from more stereotypically urban settings endure. These deficits included a lack of life experiences which help to inform some content areas, such as the sciences and social studies.

We probably have an inner-city population, as far as not having a lot of experience with rural development. When I’m teaching biology, there’s a lot of things that I have to bring up that they haven’t had experiences with in the natural world and environment, such as

ponds or fishing or ecosystems. . . . Our kids, they haven't traveled much, don't have lots of exposure to the outside world. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

Our district is mostly children from inside the city. It doesn't have any of the county children in it. There are no farmers, none of those kinds of agricultural-type children here. A good percentage of them come from low-income families. Most of them have never been outside the state of Georgia, some never outside Valdosta. They've all been right here, in this area. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Both Mr. Sharp and Ms. Pegler addressed a common perception of students in urban settings, that is, that these students suffered from a deficit of life experiences that impeded their academic success. What in fact might have been lacking by students were experiences directly related to the content of the academic coursework, or, educators' understanding of what urban students in poverty required to make appropriate connections to academic content (Davis, 2012).

The student makeup of the IB Programme did not initially exhibit racial balance. In the 2009-2010 school year, the student population at VHS was comprised of 2% Asian, 71% African American, 3% Hispanic, 21% Caucasian, and 3% other ethnicities (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2013a). The cohort of 195 International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme students during its first year was 6% Asian, 42% African American, 2% Hispanic, 45% Caucasian, and 5% other (Ms. Maldon, personal communication, July 9, 2009). Thus, based on the school's demographics, African American students were underrepresented, and Asian and Caucasian students were overrepresented within the IBDP cohort. In the 2010-2011 school year, the number of IBDP participating students had increased to 264; similarly, the percentage of African American students in the cohort increased to 46% and White students to 47%, but still far different than the overall student demographics at VHS (Ms. Maldon, personal communication, July 9, 2009).

Although the student demographics within the initial and subsequent IB cohorts were not reflective of the school's overall demographics, the school did not perceive these data as

representing a failure on their part to recruit minority students into the Programme. Both Ms. Miggs, the first IB coordinator selected, and then Ms. Maldon, who replaced Ms. Miggs during the school's application process, described how they scoured student records searching for IBDP candidates, in particular those who were African American. Both teachers communicated that candidates' qualifications included the promise of academic ability as indicated by teacher recommendation, and, more importantly, students' voiced commitment to being successful. Perhaps as many as half of the African American students approached about participation in the IB Programme declined the invitation and chose to either take the available Advanced Placement courses on an a la carte basis or to remain in the typically less-challenging standard classes. At least one teacher interviewed expressed the opinion that these students had not been prepared academically for such a rigorous program or felt some peer pressure to avoid participation in those classes.

I've recruited lots of minority students into IB and AP courses, and they can do what is expected of them, but they're not used to it. Many lack the foundation. . . . Generally, being academically oriented is not seen as being cool within the majority of the African American culture. And my African American students tell me that. If they choose the advanced level classes, they're outcasts in their own race, which is sad. There's a huge negative peer pressure, lack of respect for authority. Coming to school to socialize, not to learn. Sleeping. Desperate need for school improvement. If the International Baccalaureate Programme can become more reflective of school demographics, I hope that will change things and have a positive impact. (Ms. Miggs, non-IB)

What Ms. Miggs described was a paradox for Valdosta High: Some African American students would not participate in the new IBDP because it was not "seen as being cool" (Miggs), but they might participate if more African Americans were in the program. Yet, how would African American representation increase if students would not participate?

Curricular Fidelity within the International Baccalaureate Programme

Valdosta High's administrators elected to keep the existing Advanced Placement courses and the coursework within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme separate whenever appropriate. Some high schools combined IBDP courses with their like counterparts in the Advanced Placement program. This happened regularly enough that the College Board addressed how to title a combined IB/AP course and still receive authorization as an Advanced Placement offering on its "Frequently Asked Questions" page (College Board, 2013b). This combining of course offerings may have been for financial purposes, because the numbers of students in each program did not in a school's estimation justify a full-time faculty member in that position. For example, students enrolled in IB Language A1, which is the home or native language, could share a classroom with students taking Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. However, the curricula of these two courses were intended to be very different. AP English Language and Composition was "designed to help students become skilled readers of prose written in a variety of rhetorical contexts and to become skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes" (College Board, 2013a, ¶ 1). The instructor was free to select texts that embody a wide variety of prose styles from many disciplines and historical periods. Teachers often tailored the reading in the course to the perceived or voiced interests of the students in the classroom.

Unlike AP Literature, in IB Language A1 students studied the analysis of literary texts drawn from a prescribed list of authors. The prescribed list of authors represented a variety of cultures and literary periods, and consisted of works of fiction, poetry, and drama. For Language A1, Higher Level, a minimum of 13 such works were studied over a recommended 240 hours of instruction—three works in translation; three works from different genres studied in depth; four works from the same genre studied in depth; and three works chosen in any combination, from

any author or genre (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2013d). Thus, in a classroom where the teacher must satisfy all of the very different requirements of both AP Language and IB Language A1, that teacher faced a conundrum on how to go deeply enough into either set of goals to adequately prepare students to pass the rigorous examinations, both AP and IB. By keeping the AP and IB courses in most disciplines separate from one another, the administrators at VHS supported their teachers' implementation of the appropriate curricula.

There were instances, however, when the comingling of AP and IB students did not detract from either's course of study; for example, IB Math Standard Level and AP Calculus fit very well together. In those situations, when VHS's administrators determined that students would not be disadvantaged by the combining of an AP course and an IB course, teachers had students from both courses in the same classroom.

However, there were implications for teachers of AP courses who did not accept a position teaching within the IB Programme at Valdosta High. As more and more of the students who would have been good AP course candidates began to choose the IB Programme, these AP faculty members were increasingly unhappy and concerned about the stability of their positions.

Those teachers who had that perfect AP world that was so wonderful, and birds were chirping, and flowers were blooming, and everything was going great? Their numbers, and they're starting to see it now, their numbers are dwindling, because the majority of those kids are choosing IB. What is starting to rumble now is those AP teachers with the perfect world, the perfect schedules, the perfect students, are now being threatened by the upcoming IB and their decision not to want to participate in the process is locking them out of what they feel like is their little world. Honestly, I'm concerned about the future of the AP program. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

If the IB program at Valdosta High was intended as a rigorous academic addition to an already extant AP program, the demise of the one as a result of the success of the other would be a decided loss to the school. Ms. Rudge attested to the efforts of administrators and faculty at

Valdosta High to keep both programs healthy and thriving. She disagreed with Mr. Neckett's perception that the AP program at Valdosta High was suffering as a result of the IBDP:

We were determined from the beginning not to let our AP program suffer because of IB, which meant that we would have to heavily recruit into AP classes, which if you look at our numbers you can see that we've done. We've been very successful at implementing IB without losing the healthy AP program that we had. And I'm not even interested in scores, AP or IB, in the end. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

Most participants believed that the presence of two college-preparatory options for students fulfilled the desired intention of providing students with choices which met their individual needs and aspirations.

I think the IB has included more students in the higher echelon academically and has offered an alternative to some students who were maybe intimidated by the idea of Advanced Placement. The Advanced Placement program here has been in place since the '70s. It was a well-oiled machine, but it could also be intimidating to some students. So, they may feel they can't face the prospect of, some of them felt they weren't smart enough or capable of doing it. Which isn't true, but that was their perception, that AP was only for the smart kids. And IB I think has broadened that perspective so that more students are attracted into those classes across the board. I think AP and IB go hand in glove. They focus on different things, and they're hitting at different aspects of a child. What's attractive in IB, the roundedness, may not attract the AP kid. The AP kid may want to go more in depth into one area instead of a variety of areas. (Ms. Maylie, non-IB)

Ms. Maylie honed in on the breadth of the IB Program, which was viewed as one of its strengths and in contrast to the per-course depth attributed to the Advanced Placement program. Ms. Maylie likewise commented on the appeal of the IBDP to the student who wanted an academic experience that was challenging overall as opposed to the student who, as she explained, might be "very interested or very strong in one area":

International Baccalaureate is designed for a scholar, and I use that word intentionally, who is willing to take the whole menu. If I went to Morrison's Cafeteria or Piccadilly and I said I want this entrée out of four or five, I'm going to skip this vegetable but I want the bread, that's the Advanced Placement student. However, International Baccalaureate, you walk in and you have a seven course meal from beginning to end. The scholar in the International Baccalaureate may be weak in one area but it's going to even out with the, I

think it's 34 points that they have to earn for the diploma. And I think it will pull those students up to the highest level that they're capable of to reach their potential. I really do. (Ms. Maylie, non-IB)

While Ms. Maylie was not teaching within the IB program at that time, she attributed to that program the potential to raise up the overall academic achievement of participating students.

Ms. Rudge, an IB teacher, conceded that both programs provided challenging academic coursework to students, and that one of the advantages of having these two programs in one school is the students' freedom to differentiate based on their perceived interests and abilities.

We felt that AP and IB are such different animals that they could serve different populations. I mean, IB does require the students to make a commitment in every subject area and for two consecutive years. AP is a program where a student like me who's weak in math could choose to take AP English courses instead. So I could tailor my advanced work into areas in which I'm really interested. Which appeals to a different sort of student altogether. So they actually service different populations, I think. Plus, we have an idea that if we raise the bar all the kids will come up, if our expectations are raised for even the highest group of students. . . . I think the educational process in both of these programs, with more and more students in them, is just a way to continue to pull up even the weakest students. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

Small Learning Communities within the International Baccalaureate Programme

The teachers within the IBDP also saw a benefit to the use of the cohort model with their students. Afforded the luxury, at least in the program's infancy, of special allowances for dedicated meeting times, scheduled common planning, and the understandably heightened interest and enthusiasm of administrators for their efforts, these teachers felt a heightened connection with their students and with each other.

We're working towards more collaborative planning, it's part of our school improvement plan, so collaborative planning has just been a big part of that. Our Programme is small enough so that there's one IB teacher per subject so there's no "department" to collaborate with. Next year we're going to have two teachers for most of the subjects, but even then, they'll be teaching different preps, one junior, one senior level. But collaboration is something we're working on schoolwide, and IB is just a part of that. . . . Now we do have almost all of our IB teachers with the same planning period. So we regularly have IB teacher meetings so we can hash stuff out, see where we stand, like

make sure that we all don't schedule exams on the same day, for instance. We talk about our kids, compare how they're doing. That can be really insightful. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Mr. Neckett was just one of several interviewed who specified common planning as being one of the most attractive and beneficial components of the rollout of the IB Program at Valdosta High.

It's been good with the way the IB teachers can sit and identify particular challenges with some of the students. They gave us common planning, you know? And we can sit and talk about what worked and what didn't work. . . . I think there's been a respect that wasn't there toward a program. There were always the skeptics, "I've got to see how it does first." But if they could see the changes in the students like we have. You've still got some who are struggling, in other classes, but for the most part they want to achieve, and they'll work until they get it. How has the atmosphere changed maybe? I think it's a positive thing that the school as a whole should work towards, because there are teachers who are now working together to get a group of kids to the point where they can take their IB exams, and they can get that diploma, because that's the whole goal. And I think the whole atmosphere towards IB has changed. I think it's a good change. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

In addition to the improved collaboration among IB teachers, Ms. Pegler mentioned the beginnings of changes in the attitudes and work ethic of the IB students. These improvements within the IB faculty and students were changes which Ms. Pegler felt would benefit the entire school, a shifting in culture towards an expectation of academic achievement.

Another positive outcome of the small learning community of students was the students' development of peer support and encouragement among those enrolled in IB. Students knew what their peers were experiencing in terms of work expectations and deadlines, and they began not only to self-direct their own work but to buoy one another in their struggles to be successful. In the interviews, teachers offered examples of students encouraging each other in meeting the demands of the IB courses.

I may have already told you this story, about a[n IB] child who came in and my IB children were there in the classroom and this other child came in and said she could not do her homework. And my IB kids said, "Why didn't you?" "Well, I just didn't have the time," she replied, and they chewed her out. "Well, you make time to do your homework because that's your education." That's a good positive sign. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Ms. Rudge also described a situation in which a student who initially struggled with IB coursework was not only self-motivated to be successful but was supported in these efforts by her peers:

This year, I have a student in IB who I thought was misplaced in my class, and she begged me to keep her. I told her if I saw her struggling, I would ask that she be transferred, but she just blossomed. Some of it I think is that her peers wouldn't let her quit. They just kept urging her on, giving her encouragement. I'm a firm believer that if you give a child a chance, the child will do what he or she needs to do. I think we should add more IB classes, an entire wing of just IB classes. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

In addition to providing peer support, the comparatively small size of the initial IBDP cohort of students allowed teachers to stay well-informed through collegial conversation about the challenges, academic and other, faced by these students. Some students who struggled academically benefited greatly from faculty's ongoing mentoring and tutoring, elements critical to a supportive school culture (Wilson, 2008, p. 15).

We had one student in my [academic] house, D. S., and he came to Ms. J [the guidance counselor's] attention, and she arranged the parent conference because he had three out of four failing grades. He's also a football player, and it was his advisor, his homeroom teacher, who noted what was happening to his grades and called it to [the counselor's] attention. She had the conference, and that initial conference I did not go to. But she told me about it, and what homeroom he was in, and so I went to meet him and to visit with him a few minutes. A couple days later I went to see his math teacher to see if he'd made up a test he said he would make up, and he had done it. I made sure we let the coaches know what was going on, so they were speaking to him about it. I sent an email out to all his teachers that this is the situation in all the classes, do what you can. He's passing everything. This week I checked on him again, that [conference] was like a month ago, and he had a 68 in one class, and as soon as I went to see him, he said, "Hey, I'm staying after school today to make up that test." [laughs] So it's that sort of drilling down to the individual student and making sure that the student knows that there's a host of people interested in his success. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

Ms. Rudge described in particular the intimacy of a small learning community such as the IB cohort. Such close working relationships among faculty and between faculty and students enabled teachers to become better acquainted with not only the academic needs of their individual students but also their social and emotional needs.

Well, I moved from a school that had a thousand or more students, more than this one, and when I walked in the doors here, the difference was palpable. I think the larger the school gets, the more impersonal it becomes, and with this small cohort, I have found that the relationships are much easier to build with the students. It's much easier to identify the ones who are needy before a crisis occurs. . . . That kind of smaller learning community inside the larger one has made it so easy to find the students early who are in crisis because the advisors look at their students and see when a student has been passing everything and suddenly they notice that he's not passing two classes. They notify us and we've had more parent conferences resulting from that tip or referral. . . . We have learned how effective that kind of standard intervention is if we just catch it soon enough and contact the parents soon enough, have the parent conference with the teachers soon enough, and then follow up, go and see the child in advisement or go and see him in the art class, observe him in the classroom and see. And we've caught a lot of students who were heading in the wrong directions via that. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

As Ms. Rudge mentioned above, conversations within this common planning time for IB teachers uncovered a number of potentially serious situations that were subsequently addressed through the interventions of teachers. For example, one female student's grades had begun to noticeably and uncharacteristically suffer, and IBDP teachers conferred during the common planning time to discuss how best to deal with this situation. They discovered that this same student had recently quit her track team after stellar success the previous year.

One of our students hadn't been acting like herself, grades dropping, dropped out of the track team, when she'd been a star athlete. We, several of us, asked questions about it, to her and with each other during common planning, and then we called a parent conference. . . . We actually got [this girl] diagnosed with mono that she wasn't aware of. She was tired and lethargic, but that's all she thought it was. She lived with her grandmother, which we didn't know, and her parents weren't around. The grandmother was old [and] nobody was really paying attention to [the girl]. We became very aware of her situation, and instead of her grades continuing to drop as much as they had, they did drop, but we were able to help her get back on top. She was getting very depressed, you know. "I'm not being successful anymore." And all that time she actually had mono. She was a good cross-country runner, and she couldn't run track because she was tired. She had several things in a row that were like, wham! wham! wham! as a result of the family background. So, hopefully, she continues on and finishes up strong. Her whole team of teachers is working with her to help. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

Telephone calls and a conference with the custodial grandparent led to a physical examination which uncovered the presence of mononucleosis. The student's academic and athletic slump had been directly related to her chronic illness; in a larger school, or one in which the student's

teachers had not had the opportunity to discuss her progress across all areas, this student might not only have failed her coursework but become even more gravely ill. Any future academic success would be in part due to the “whole team of teachers” (Mr. Sharp, IB) who took the time and interest in her to intervene.

In a second situation, conversations among IB teachers of another female student prompted a student conference, which then led to a parent conference with administrators and guidance personnel present. Unsatisfied with the results of this conference, and feeling their collective antennae raised by the student’s demeanor in the presence of the parent, teachers called area social services in for further advice.

I guess after years of teaching, you sort of can feel something is not right. But individually I might not have acted upon those feelings, you know? I might have mistrusted those feelings, especially when we had spoken with her and she was just adamant that everything was OK. It wasn’t until several of us came together with the same feelings that we began to feel like, hey, maybe there’s something more that we need to look at here. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

Ms. Rudge’s concerns were well justified. A subsequent investigation determined that the student was being physically and sexually abused at home, a situation that resulted in an intervention through Georgia’s Department of Human Services. IBDP teachers participating in this study attributed this rescue to their being able to confer about their students as a community (Ms. Maldon, personal communication, November 11, 2009).

I’m glad we did. I couldn’t have forgiven myself if I’d ever found out and we hadn’t done anything. But then again, we probably wouldn’t have found out. Makes you wonder how much more goes on that we never know about. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

In support of relationship-building within the program, IBDP faculty at Valdosta High School carefully cultivated a camaraderie within their small learning community by hosting several “IB family” events, including a barbeque at a teacher’s house and a spaghetti supper at

school. The entire IB faculty and any administrators who worked with IB students were invited, as well as the IB students and their families.

Yeah, I got the barbeque pit going, cooked some hotdogs and hamburgers; everybody brought something like chips or salads, desserts, lots of desserts! Gave the faculty a chance to let their hair down a bit, have fun with the students playing touch football, volleyball. Parents got into it, too. Nobody talked shop. I think that was the best thing about it. Everyone just enjoyed each other's company. Kids talked about it for days afterward. Heck, teachers talked about it for days afterward, too. It was pretty cool.
(Mr. Neckett, IB)

Teachers were able to interact with students in ways that allowed each to see the other as human beings, totally separate and apart from their roles as teachers and students. Parents and administrators shared a meal and possibly developed bonds that would serve them well in future discussions around their shared interest in a student. After such an experience, even after everyone had assumed his or her previous roles and responsibilities, none of the attendees at that barbeque would ever look at each other in quite the same way.

Another effort to build recognition and self-esteem within the IB program was the special acknowledgement at a school awards ceremony of the students who were entering the IB

Diploma program:

During Honors Night, we did recognize the pre-IB students that are going to be IB candidates for their 11th year. We called them up on stage and thanked them for attempting to become an IB graduate. Little bit of reward, and it was on Honors Night so they got to see all those seniors graduating with those honors, so I think it was a little bit of self-awareness, hey, I'm responsible for my education coming up, I'm stepping into a Programme I need to get ready for. We gave them a pin, congratulated them. It was more symbolic than anything, but that stuff means something to people. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

As an athletic coach, Mr. Sharp was perhaps more aware of the power of recognition and reward in motivating students to perform academically. At the very least, the action was symbolic of the hope and expectations that these students were embarking on a wonderful new venture which would prepare them for success in their future, whether that meant college or career.

The small learning community of IB students and faculty was beginning to be viewed as a positive instrument for potential cultural change within the entire school community.

We've got to build a team mentality among the IB students. Another benefit from this team mentality [is that] it will not only affect the IB team members, but it will promote a sense of community among the non-IB students as well. And who knows? Maybe among the rest of the teachers. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Teacher Self-Efficacy among IBDP Teachers

By the end of the first full year of implementation, Valdosta High IBDP teachers participating in this study also described an increased sense of self-efficacy. The aforementioned administrative support was certainly a part of these teachers' improved vision of the value of their daily work. In addition to this administrative support, IB teachers were sent to a variety of professional development opportunities for the IB Diploma Programme. Several IB teachers described these professional learning experiences as by far the most rewarding of their careers:

I got to go to IB training in Houston. And I was trained by someone who had more than 14 years' experience with the International Baccalaureate, and she was extremely knowledgeable. I just sat there and listened for three days, soaked it all up. It was a great experience. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Ms. Pegler, herself a late-career teacher, benefited from the expertise shared by a seasoned IB teacher. Mr. Sharp, on the other hand, was an early-career teacher, and what he took from the experience was the network of professionals with whom he anticipated collaborating as he taught the IB Diploma Programme in the future:

Me and another biology teacher, we're both team-teaching biology. First and second year. I'm only doing first year, and she's going to do second year. We flew out to Houston together and attended the IB training there together as well. It was just awesome. We came back with so many great ideas, but the best part was the networking, making connections with other IB teachers who we could contact in future for more ideas or help with implementation. I felt so much better when I got back, like I really had a handle on it. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

Additionally, those IB teachers who were interviewed articulated that their teaching experience was much more meaningful to them personally since their involvement with the IB Programme. Whether it was a combination of the increased rigor with the small cohort of mostly willing and eager students, or whether it was the novelty and excitement of being on the cutting edge of curricular change at their school, teachers described a sense of fulfillment which they said had hitherto been lacking.

The professional development we've had has been outstanding, really top notch. I felt that I as an educator was truly being stretched, using some academic muscles that maybe had gotten a little soft? [Laughs] I always considered myself a competent teacher, maybe even a very good one, but the IB has made me reevaluate everything, reconsider all my classroom habits and "tried and true" lessons and activities. I guess I did have a few favorites that I'd trot out, and my students would say sometimes, "My brother told me I'd be doing this or that in your class." Didn't think much about it then, but now it's like I'm always thinking about, "Is this really rigorous? Is this the best way to introduce this concept or idea? Is there a better piece of literature or poem or song, or a contemporary piece that the kids would already know, that would do a better job?" There's no "good enough" anymore. And you know, I don't know if I'll do over any of the lessons I taught in my first year of IB. I might just start over fresh. You have to bring your A-game every day, and I just love that. I really do. I feel reinvented. And, I'm a much better teacher for it. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

For Ms. Rudge, a late-career teacher who earlier in the study had confessed to wondering if she still even wanted to be a teacher, feeling "reinvented" was a powerful transformation. After having met her and watched her in action with her students as she masterfully led them through a lesson in her Theory of Knowledge class, her feeling that she was the better teacher for the professional learning was even more remarkable to me.

The convivial Mr. Neckett likewise spoke about how he felt he must alter his teaching practice because of the IB DP mathematics curriculum:

I've always been a kinda positive guy, if you can't tell. I'm pretty upbeat no matter what they throw at me, I can pretty much duck and dodge the bad stuff and keep smiling. But with IB, it's all good. When we started teaching the IB curriculum in math, I didn't really think that even after all the training I'd be doing anything radically different in my classroom. And maybe my teaching style hasn't changed all that much, I still play with

them a bit, a lot! And joke around. But I can tell you that my planning for my classes had to really go to the next level. I had to find some way to challenge these kids every day, or they were gonna feel like I was a slacker compared to the level of rigor they're getting in their other IB classes. There's no downtime now. Every day, I'm ready for them to come into the room like it's the first day of school. I think the fact that the same students are moving among the same IB teachers has made us all feel more accountable for really giving the kids a challenge. And those students, they're up for it, they're hungry and really competitive, most of them. It's a beautiful thing. (Mr. Neckett, IB)

Although IB teachers were, to use Ms. Rudge's term, "reinventing" themselves professionally, so too was Valdosta High as a community expanding its instructional vision to structure access and support for students representing a broad range of academic abilities. Critical to this expanded vision was the involvement and reeducation of all stakeholders (Posner, 2004).

The IB Programme at Valdosta High after First Year

Valdosta High School began its first year of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in 2009 with 25 students in its junior cohort. Of those students, 24 completed the Programme, with the death of one student in his senior year. Eleven of those 24 actually received their International Baccalaureate Diploma, a success rate of 46% (Ms. Maldon, personal communication, January 1, 2013). Although this might not immediately appear to compare favorably with the average first time IBDP pass rate of 68.53% for 2012 (IB Research, personal communication, January 15, 2013), one must remember that the IB's data includes all first time schools, including private schools which might be expected to have more students in the program who had been better prepared academically.

At the conclusion of the study, participant teachers expressed their perceptions that improvements could be seen among Valdosta High's IB students:

Anytime you have students who can accomplish more like these have and we have a program here that can do it, I'm all for it. I have two sons, third and fourth grade, and hopefully when they get here they'll be able to accomplish it, be successful. I think [the

IB Programme] leads to a really well-rounded student, not just strong in one category but in all categories. If you can make it through and graduate, I'm pretty sure you're going to be a successful person. (Mr. Sharp, IB)

Such an endorsement of the IBDP by an athletic coach such as Mr. Sharp would have been compelling, but to couple that endorsement with the statement that he would send his own children was doubly strong. Ms. Rudge saw growth in the students' work ethic, a quality which would serve them well beyond any postsecondary education:

Well, since I've seen [the students] over the year, they have changed their study habits. They are prioritizing. They're working toward goals, and up until this point the main goal was to graduate. But now the main goal is, "I've got to get this, I've got to get that, I've got this project due, I've got this assignment coming up, I've got They're prioritizing their time whereas, that didn't use to be something they had to do. And they've learned how to do it successfully. . . . I think there's been a respect that wasn't there toward a program. There were always the skeptics, "I've got to see how it does first." But if they could see the changes in the students like we have. You've still got some who are struggling, in other classes, but for the most part they want to achieve, and they'll work until they get it. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Likewise, IB teachers interviewed noted positive changes within the faculty.

How has the atmosphere changed maybe? I think it's a positive thing that the school as a whole should work towards, because there are teachers who are now working together to get a group of kids to the point where they can take their IB exams and they can get that diploma, because that's the whole goal. And I think the whole atmosphere towards IB has changed. I think it's a good change. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Ms. Pegler saw teachers working collaboratively with the expectation that they were preparing students to attain an IB diploma, no longer simply trying to endure the pressures created by Valdosta High students' previous academic failures. Teachers, too, felt more in control of their professional lives, and they believed that they were making a difference in the lives of students, a goal to which their vocation had originally called them.

IB students at Valdosta High made the local news several times after the study's conclusion, but each instance was for a positive and affirming action on their part. In May 2010, International Baccalaureate seniors who were also participating in the Upward Bound program, a

joint venture between Valdosta High and Valdosta State University, were recognized at a banquet for their academic and personal successes (Tanner, 2010). In October 2010, IBDP students of Ms. Allen displayed their artwork in Downtown Valdosta's Art After Dark program at a gallery (Poling, 2010). And also in October 2010, IB student Milo Mirate was recognized among 500-600 volunteers who supported the Second Harvest Food Bank Saturday (Castro, 2010). In August 2011, IB students distributed collection bags in their homerooms for books, clothes, baby formula, and toys for children in three orphanages in Djibouti, Africa (Denton, 2011b). Although such volunteer activities are a diploma requirement for IBDP students, the scope of these students' participation, both on a local and worldwide scale, attests to their commitment to the mission of the IBO.

More importantly, IBDP teachers and students were experiencing an increased sense of self-efficacy. They held each other accountable for completing the rigorous coursework and chided one another as colleagues:

And it's not as if, "I'm better than [the other IB students]," but, "Why don't they do this? Why don't they get themselves together and study for this?" It's like, "This is what I've got to do and I'm going to do this," versus, "Why aren't they doing this?" . . . They actually have disbelief that there are students not doing their assignments. . . . They are totally different creatures, totally different from what they were when they first started. And their idea is not, "Can I do this?" but, "When we do this" Today I was talking about the project that they have due the next year, not next semester but next year. We were going over, making sure they had enough statistical data to validate whatever their question is. . . . And they're going, "Yeah, I can do this. When I go home I can check on this." . . . These kids are becoming more confident. They have changed their study skills, their study styles. At the beginning it was like pulling hens' teeth, you had to them to get them to organize themselves, and now they are able to accomplish that. They can see that, "I've got this due, this due, this due, what's today? Oh, I've got this to do now," and their study habits are becoming more pronounced. (Ms. Pegler, IB)

Where once there were concerns within the faculty and the district regarding the students' lack of academic achievement, now there appeared within this small IBDP cohort the beginnings of a "new mindset" (Ms. Pegler, IB). Should their peers outside the Programme notice the IB

students' improved work ethic and admire their expressed self-confidence, they may begin to take more seriously their academic responsibilities and thus created within the school a foundation for future school success. An IB Diploma Programme within a high school with a reputation not only for athletic prowess but also for academic excellence would become an attractive option for students seeking a strong preparation for postsecondary work. The expressed wishes of one IBDP teacher to "have students who have made it through, [who can] then . . . testify and help us with recruitment and support in the community," (Ms. Rudge, IB), may in fact be realized in the future.

Conclusion

Valdosta High School's administrators determined to implement the well-regarded International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in an effort to infuse rigor into their school's curricula and to attract more students into college-preparatory coursework, in particular African American students for whom such options had previously been seen as limited. This case study took place during the year and one-half initial implementation of this program. Teachers within the IBDP, teachers not in the program who taught in the same content areas, and exceptional student educators were interviewed regarding their perceptions of how the IBDP affected school culture at Valdosta High School. Several of the IBDP teachers participating in this case study felt that the initial cohort of International Baccalaureate students benefited from the close-knit small learning community created for the IBDP faculty and students. Additionally, IBDP faculty expressed an increased personal self-efficacy as a result of their close work with IBDP students, with each other, and also with parents and other community stakeholders. Teachers in both IBDP courses and in other coursework described an improved work ethic and a lightening of the

pervasive sense of failure which had overshadowed the school during its several years of poor performance on state-mandated high-stakes assessment tests.

Understanding teachers' perceptions of the impact upon school culture from implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program has implications for state and local school administrators who seek curricular reform measures to assist students who are struggling academically. Further implications for the creation of a positive school culture exist in teachers' and administrators' commitment to curricular fidelity and the use of small learning communities. While the data is incomplete in this section, potential areas for followup with Valdosta High as well as for future research will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Summary and Discussion

The rationale for the present research study arose from a desire to understand the effects upon school culture resulting from the implementation of a particular curricular reform measure, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), at an academically underperforming high school. I chose to examine teachers' perceptions of the effects of such implementation because, after the initial administrative decisions were made about the selection and timing of the IBDP implementation, the teachers at the school were the primary drivers of the realization of the Programme. Valdosta High's IBDP teachers came together around a common purpose and helped write the application to become an IB candidate school. Theirs were the decisions regarding how the content of the IBDP curriculum might be tailored to their students' particular needs, including the choices of courses to be offered, materials to be purchased, and texts to read and studied. Not only would these teachers be primarily responsible for making certain that students in the IBDP were academically successful, they would also become the school's informal "culture-bearers" (Silko & Hirsch, 1988, p. 6), sharing the stories of their students' successes with future students, the remainder of the faculty, and the community at large. This development and sharing of culture among faculty and students was the fulfillment of a desire expressed during the first cycle of interviews by one of the IBDP teachers, Mr. Neckett, who anticipated the "trickle down" effect of team-building from IB faculty to students and non-IB faculty.

In the case of Valdosta High School, this "telling which continues" (Silko & Hirsch,

1988, p. 1) would result in a course of examples of student success that would create a new mythology of self-esteem and give stakeholders a point of pride beyond the school's well-documented athletic honors. As more African American students, emboldened by their peers' success, participate in the IBDP, Valdosta High might also feel somewhat redeemed in the eyes of the Black community which, despite their original misgivings, later supported the faculty and administrators who assured them that admittance was open to any student who was motivated to achieve.

Summary of Related Literature and Methodology

Areas of anticipated interest as related to this study comprised the initial review of the literature around topics. As participants' interviews progressed, however, they suggested themes which required additional research into the literature. Thus, the literature review provided background information as well as context for the story of the impact of the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme upon the school culture of Valdosta High School.

School Reform

The literature review revealed that the history of school reform in the United States began almost immediately after the first colonial schools were developed. The literature indicated a strong American predilection to be constantly in search of innovations and ways to improve programs and processes. In addition to this desire for innovation, however, the goals of reform measures in U. S. education have almost always had at their heart a desire for increased academic success on the part of the students in the classroom. The review included a brief history of educational reform in the United States, as well as an examination of reform measures

or programs which were sustained over time and which were found to be effective to some degree.

School Culture

The literature on school culture as an indicator of school health provided insight into the context for the present study of VHS and its faculty. Inasmuch as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme is now one of the fastest-growing curricular reform measures selected by schools in the United States (Mathews, 2010), increased knowledge of how implementation of the IBDP can positively affect school culture informs the work of those school districts whose administrators might select the IBDP as a reform measure in the future. If, as in the case of Valdosta High, the aforementioned schools are ones in which students have failed to meet standards set by their departments of education, such as failure to demonstrate adequate yearly progress on a state-mandated high-stakes test, the schools may over time have developed what could be described as “toxic” school cultures (Barth, 2002; Peterson & Deal, 1998). Such schools have faculty and staff which “are extremely fragmented, where the purpose of serving students has been lost to the goal of serving adults, where negative values and hopelessness reign” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28), potentially making the successful implementation of a rigorous academic reform more challenging.

These qualities of a toxic school culture were described by the participants in this study. Successive years of similar academic failure by Valdosta High students had brought social stigma upon the school as well as significantly stringent oversight by the Georgia Department of Education. These factors placed additional pressure upon the faculty of Valdosta High either to ensure that their students demonstrated annual academic gains or else to face the possibility of employment transfer or termination. State budgetary shortfalls resulted in work furloughs which

reduced each teacher's annual income. At the inception of this study, morale among some of the faculty was very low, and even teachers who had been at VHS over several years voiced concerns about their future and doubts about their vocations.

Peterson and Deal (1998) suggested that, in contrast to toxic school cultures, schools in which the cultures are more positive and healthy exhibit certain commonalities which could be ascribed to the small learning community of IBDP faculty and students. The participant IBDP teachers expressed a "shared sense of purpose, where they pour their hearts into teaching" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 29), a "joy" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 29), such as that described by Ms. Rudge when she described feeling "reinvented" as a teacher. The participating IBDP teachers developed "norms . . . of collegiality, improvement, and hard work" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 29), within their small learning community. They could communicate new stories "celebrat[ing] student accomplishment, teacher innovation, and parental commitment" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 29), such as their students' successful graduation with the IB diploma and the students' bonding over barbeques and community service projects. The IBDP teachers had become an "informal network of storytellers, heroes, and heroines provid[ing] a social web of information, support, and history" (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 29). During the course of the study, students' lives were changed by the efforts of caring, involved teachers who were given the time and support to get to know their students well and develop positive relationships with them.

Educational Access for African Americans

The data collected at Valdosta High School suggested several other topics in the literature of relevance to this study. Reviewing the literature on academic access for African American students in the United States was relevant because the implementation of the IBDP at Valdosta

High focused attention on the community's history of racial unrest and the widely-held perception that Black students had previously been denied access to more rigorous curriculum.

Several participant teachers expressed feelings akin to guilt that the African American students of Valdosta High had perhaps not always received equitable treatment in terms of access to rigorous college preparatory curricula, although Ms. Rudge (IB) expressed a belief that the school had made inroads in reparation of that situation. There was nevertheless irony in Valdosta High's selection of the IBDP as a means for promoting academic rigor and developing capacity in their students, particularly those who were African American. After decades of ostensibly relegating many African American students at Valdosta High to vocational track courses, not unlike Booker T. Washington's idea of making Blacks useful and self-sufficient, Valdosta High sought out a curriculum which is more "Du Bois-ian" in content. The IBDP was humanities-rich, international in scope, culminating in a Theory of Knowledge course which was cross-curricular, combining in the students' statement of how their study of the "trivium and quadrivium" (Du Bois, 1903, V, ¶ 12) affected their own world vision.

Small Learning Communities

The attestation by participant IBDP teachers to their increased collaboration prompted a review of the literature regarding small learning communities and their role in helping teachers implement change initiatives. Additionally, the cohort model employed for students in the IBDP at Valdosta High, itself a form of small learning community, promoted a perception of increased collegiality among both participating teachers and students within the Programme.

These areas of research into the existing scholarship informed this study of teachers' perceptions of IBDP implementation. In turn, these perceptions could have implications for educators whose reform initiatives contain elements of these areas of research. An attempt at

visualizing this reciprocal relationship is made through Figure 1. In Figure 1, the historical context of school reform and current reform initiatives, as well as individual school's need for academic reform, inform teachers' perceptions of the development and implementation process of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Subsequently, teachers' perceptions of the development and implementation of the IBDP both commend and in turn are affected by the need for educational access for African Americans, the importance of small learning communities, the importance of a healthy school culture, and teacher self-efficacy.

Discussion of Data Analysis

Data collection began with the identification of an International Baccalaureate candidate school which met the criteria for the case study. In the case of Valdosta High School, the students in the school were primarily African American and of low socioeconomic status. Additionally, the school had repeatedly failed to make adequate yearly progress toward state educational goals as demonstrated on high-stakes assessments. Participant teachers perceived the implementation of the IB program at Valdosta as intended to address the need to improve students' capacity to be successful on state-mandated high-stakes testing through exposure to a more rigorous academic curriculum. Data collection occurred over a year and a half through classroom observations of IBDP teachers and an examination of school-produced documents relating to the application process for the International Baccalaureate world school status. Public media were also utilized as sources of information on the Valdosta community's racial strife and initial opposition to the IBDP. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 teachers, four inside and five outside the IBDP program, at three different times – April and May, 2009; November, 2009; and April and May, 2010.

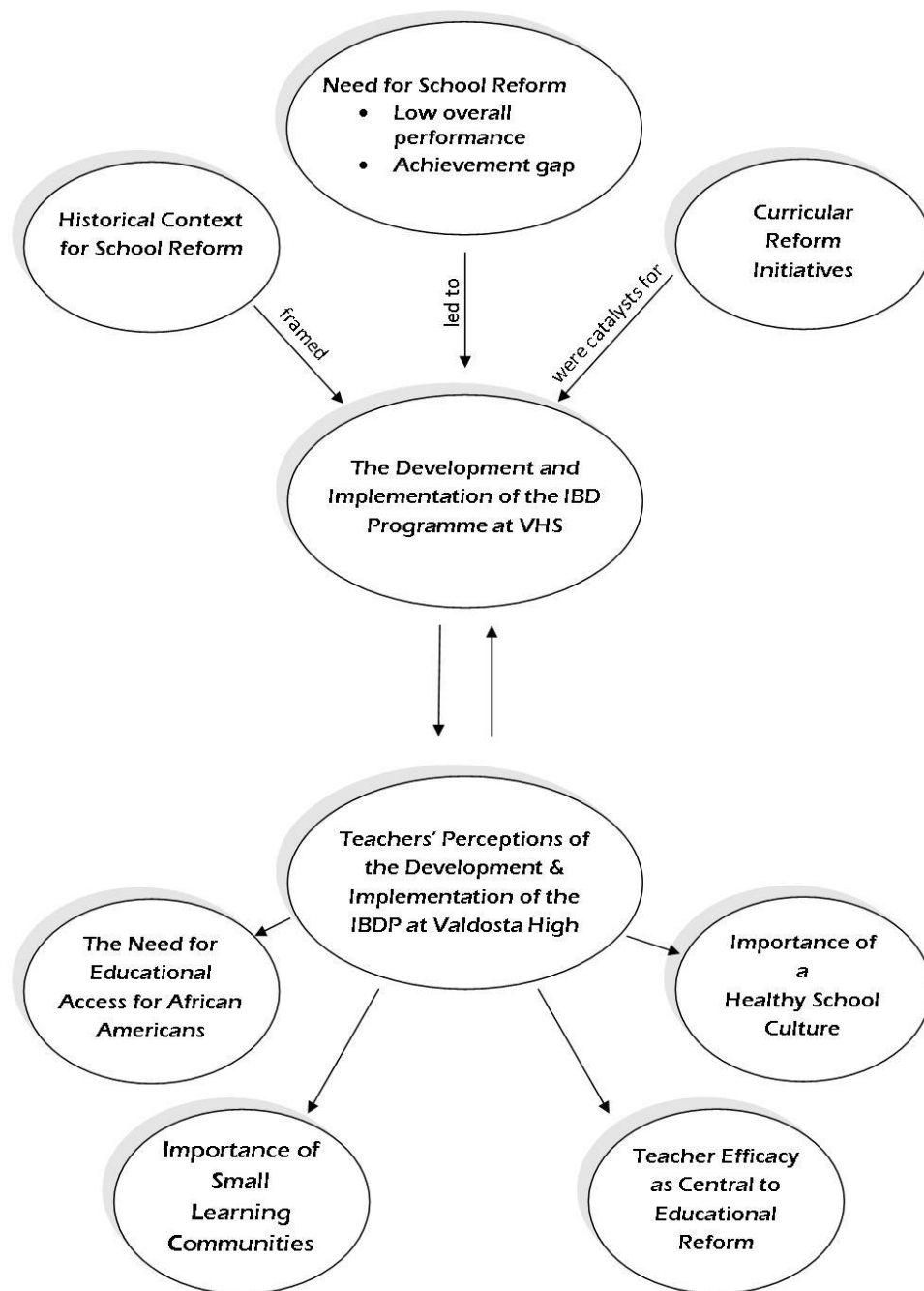


Figure 1: Reciprocal Relationship between Teachers' Perceptions and Research on School Reform

Using the processes of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) and narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), the study yielded cultural themes from which educators considering the implementation of the International Baccalaureate as school reform might well learn. Cultural themes are defined here using Spradley's (1980) definition of "elements in the patterns [of meaning] that make up a culture" (p. 141). These cultural themes fell within three larger domains or categories (Spradley, 1980, p. 141) of curricular fidelity, teacher self-efficacy, and access to education for African Americans.

Curricular Fidelity

The first cultural theme developed as the result of data analysis was that fidelity to a program's design supports cultural change within a school. Valdosta High administrators and IBDP faculty made the decision early in the implementation process to implement the IBDP with fidelity, as stated in their original application to the International Baccalaureate Organisation (Valdosta High School, 2008, p. 12). They chose to limit access to the IBDP to diploma students only, rather than offer students the option of earning a certificate in individual IBDP courses and not pursuing the entire IB Diploma Programme. This decision promoted cohesiveness among the IBDP cohort of students, who with the exception of one elective class travelled together among the faculty assigned to teaching the program. Administrators also determined to preserve the academic fidelity of the IB courses wherever possible by avoiding the temptation to combine these classes with their Advanced Placement counterparts. Although acknowledging that program identity through separate courses might not always be possible in the future, administrators scheduled the first year's IBDP classes as "singletons," classes for which there would be only one section (Merenbloom & Kalina, 2006) and kept Advanced Placement courses of like content areas as separate classes.

The Individual Baccalaureate Diploma Programme's students and faculty at VHS gradually developed a school-within-a-school atmosphere, small, intimate, and well-informed. The faculty nurtured this team spirit at several "IB family" events, including a barbeque at a teacher's house and a spaghetti supper at school. Students worked together on their required community service projects, which promoted further bonding. This creation of a small learning community of IBDP students and faculty within the larger school population supported Valdosta High's fidelity to the mission and curriculum of the program and thereby contributed to teachers' positive perceptions about its initial and anticipated future success.

Increased Teacher Self-Efficacy

A second theme was teachers' experience of a sense of increased efficacy when they were empowered and supported to implement a project in which they employed their love of teaching to make a difference in students' lives.

Schools exist to promote learning in all their inhabitants. Whether we are teachers, principals, professors, or parents, our primary responsibility is to promote learning in others and in ourselves. That responsibility sets educators apart from insurance salespeople, engineers, and doctors. To the extent our activities in school are dedicated to getting learning curves off the chart, what we do is a calling. To the extent that we spend most of our time doing something else in school, we are engaged in a job. (Barth, 2002, p. 8)

The participant teachers at Valdosta High expressed pride in bringing about nascent positive change in their school's culture by establishing an environment in which academic success was valued and celebrated. In the future, as new faculty or students join VHS, the "shared basic assumptions . . . taught to new members" (Schein, 2004, p. 17) could include success stories, one

after another, gathered as the Programme progressed. IBDP faculty participated as leaders in an environment that was experiencing “reculturation” toward whole-school change (Copland, 2003, p. 381), manifested in the belief that, rather than being known solely for its athletic programs, Valdosta High was becoming known in the community as providing academic rigor and promise.

The notion of being able to make a difference through one’s own efforts arose from the IBDP teachers’ perceptions of the relative success of the International Baccalaureate at Valdosta High. Seeing their students flourish within the more academically challenging IB Programme encouraged these teachers who had been disheartened by community rancor, test anxiety, and job insecurity. One teacher even voiced the opinion that she would feel successful even if students failed the IB examination for their diploma, because she had been able to “broaden [students’] horizons” (Ms. Rudge, IB) and help prepare them for the rigors of postsecondary education.

Furthermore, teachers interviewed thoroughly enjoyed the professional learning they undertook as a part of the IBDP implementation and claimed it was among the very best continuing education in terms of content and immediate applicability that they had ever experienced. Professional learning that challenged them as individuals and provided them a venue for collegial conversation and networking spoke to these teachers’ previously unmet needs as adult learners and educational professionals. Despite the curricular changes and the challenges from the community regarding the IBDP’s value and its appropriateness to VHS, the positive professional development experiences increased these teachers’ margins of power (McClusky, 1974; Merriam et al., 2006) by giving them increased confidence that they could successfully implement the IBDP in their classrooms.

Participants also articulated another perception of increased efficacy derived from their success in effecting the involvement and reeducation of members of the stakeholder community

(Posner, 2004). IBDP teachers interviewed felt that they needed to clearly articulate the school's vision for the program at Valdosta High and its intent to structure access and support for students representing a broad range of academic abilities and racial ethnicities. As teachers, the participants felt the reeducation of the stakeholder community to be as critically important to the success of the IBDP as student classroom performance. They did not want to waste the opportunity of this teachable moment to dispel any misperceptions that VHS sustained past racial inequalities through limiting access by African American students to more rigorous curricula. The eventual acquiescence, if not full embrace, of the IBDP by the SCLC and other community stakeholders who had expressed concerns felt rewarding and fulfilling to these teachers. They had been successful as educators, at least in this regard, which was a feeling they had not fully experienced in some time.

Finally, teachers within the IBDP enjoyed an improved sense of community among IB students, faculty, and administrators. The sense of community resulted in large part from the administrators' decision to have students move as a discrete cohort of IBDP students who participated in the same academic coursework. Participant teachers perceived that administrator support of the IBDP as a small learning community within the larger school population had contributed to its success and to their own increased commitment to the premise that, although all students can learn, many also benefit from a rigorous and relevant curriculum. A school-within-a-school atmosphere slowly developed, an academic intimacy, or *esprit de corps* (McCarthy, 1991), which sprang from both teachers and students being in relationship with other people who were helping them to learn.

Academic Access for African Americans

Thus, the theme of efficacy was tightly interwoven with the third theme developed through data analysis, that is, Valdosta High's African American students deserved increased academic access in reparation for past injustices. Participants expressed in their interviews, usually shamefacedly and with profound regret, a belief that the African American students at the school had long been underserved by the past statewide policy of student tracking. The IBDP teachers understood the intentional efforts by Ms. Maldon to recruit IB Programme participants from among the African American students in the feeder middle schools and in the private schools in the community as a redemptive effort for redressing these wrongs. These efforts to effectively build access in the beginnings of the IBDP served as a move toward providing an opportunity for all students with the drive and ability to develop the academic background that would enable them to secure postsecondary education and career opportunities for themselves.

The strong criticism that the Valdosta City School district and VHS' administrators initially faced from the African American community around the issues of race and access within the school deeply affected the faculty, and, as their comments have shown, revealed in some teachers a profound sense of guilt. The resulting transparency of the IBDP at Valdosta High and its open enrollment to all students in the Valdosta school district alleviated the community's fears of elitism. Rather than limiting participation to a school-selected group of student applicants or even to a group of students chosen by an impersonal lottery system, Valdosta High ensured that any student with ability and motivation could participate in its IB Diploma Programme. This produced broad-based support for the program as an accepted part of school offerings.

School Culture as an Indicator of School Health

The implementation of the IBDP at Valdosta High, done with fidelity to both the spirit and letter of the International Baccalaureate Organisation, coupled with teachers' perceptions of increased self-efficacy and the intentional efforts to include more African American students in this rigorous academic curriculum, effected a gradual improvement in the culture of the IBDP's small learning community of faculty and students and also in the perceptions of some non-IB teachers. Teachers in the IBDP, who had initially expressed stress and tentative hope about the IBDP despite previous failed reform measures, believed that they were establishing an environment in which academic success was valued and celebrated and where students were given encouragement and support. Non-IB teachers spoke of the rigor of the program and their belief that it could "pull those [low-achieving] students up to the highest level that they're capable of to reach their potential" (Ms. Maylie, non-IB). The "shared basic assumptions . . . taught to new members" (Schein, 2004, p. 17) became a string of small success stories, one after another, as the Programme progressed, stories not about the "winningest" sports programs but about students' efforts in a "winning" academic program.

Faculty thus demonstrated their participation as leaders in a "reculturation" toward a more healthy overall school climate (Copland, 2003, p. 381). Participant teachers expressed their perception of this reculturation in their belief that, rather than being known solely for its athletic programs, the site school was becoming known in the community as providing academic rigor and promise for all students.

The IBDP students themselves began to gradually adopt new attitudes and perspectives. Participant teachers in the IBDP spoke about students' willingness to stretch themselves academically, to grapple with more challenging projects and writing assignments which

previously they might have brushed aside. Students began to monitor the progress of their peers' within the IBDP cohort, chastising them if classwork or homework was not completed in a timely manner.

Finally, because the perceptions of these teachers offered “new stories of success” regarding life at this school, the teachers could, in future, enrich the culture of the school as a whole (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 179). The academic values of the IB small learning community were, as noted by Ms. Pegler, a “positive thing that the school as a whole should work towards.” Barth (1990) suggested that, “what needs to be improved about schools is their culture, the quality of inter-personal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences” (p. 45). If, then, the growth of the IB program at Valdosta High were to continue over subsequent years, resulting in greater collaboration among the faculty, increased teacher self-efficacy, and academic successes for students, both the school culture and its attendant practices should change from within.

Recommendations for Leadership

Qualitative research seeks to understand the complexity of human experience through the study of particular settings or the study of particular people. Therefore, the significance of one study is perceived by others who can identify how their contexts may or may not parallel the focus of a given study (Eisner, 1998). Thus, administrators and teachers working in school districts in which schools experience academic challenges might keep in mind the lessons learned in this setting as they move forward in their own efforts to implement a more rigorous curriculum.

As they contemplate the adoption and implementation of the IBDP as a school reform initiative, educators and administrators in districts with academically challenged schools may be

able to include in their plans recognition of the themes identified in this study. Dewey (1938/1998) argued that every experience, educative or mis-educative, is built upon those experiences of individuals who have preceded it. Likewise, educational experiences will and should modify the learning continuum for those who come after. Dewey claimed that growth sets the stage for further educative growth. Inasmuch as Valdosta High underwent a positive period of growth with signs of academic revitalization within the cohort of IBDP students during their implementation of the IB Diploma Programme, theirs was a highly educative experience for both students and teachers on which other schools can draw. For example, when a decision must be made regarding whether to implement the IBDP as a magnet program or as a curricular option for a neighborhood's assigned students, those with the power to make that decision should consider the example of Valdosta High's fidelity to the IB's original vision for their Diploma Programme. The role of the small learning community in strengthening relationships between students and faculty might be considered when implementation models for new academic programs are under review.

The results from this study can also expand the understanding of educators and policymakers regarding the powerful and complex relationship between school reform initiatives and the role of a given school's culture in addressing student achievement. Whether the choice is the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme or another academic program, administrators should consider how teachers might perceive the implementation of this program. The evidence suggesting that self-efficacy is a powerful motivating force for teachers might suggest methods of implementation that empower teachers to take ownership of the new program through leadership roles and creative input.

Barone and Eisner (2012) declared that a “truthful” master narrative could create “a politically powerful work of arts-based research that stands on firm ethical grounds, an aesthetically powerful work of arts-based research with the potential to change the world for the better” (p. 136). As political urgency calls for increased efforts to reform schools through curricular change, the influence of culture and community on school practices must be accommodated by school district administrators and building principals if we are to close the achievement gaps and foster academic success for all. An aesthetic urgency in school districts should operate simultaneously alongside that call for curricular reform, recognizing that rigorous academic curricula enable students, whatever their race, “to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes” (Du Bois, 1903, V, ¶ 12), and thereby promote the public good.

Recommendations for Future Research

Areas of further research include extending the initial study to examine the implementation of the IBDP over a longer period of time, perhaps several years, from the arrival of a 9th grade cohort of “pre-IB” students to their eventual graduation. These data would provide more information in several different areas, including the effectiveness of Valdosta High’s model for implementation of curricular fidelity and the diploma-only option upon graduation rates and the perceived benefit of a small learning community model upon postsecondary school readiness and achievement.

The two points in a school’s cultural metamorphosis—an assessment of the preexisting culture prior to the adoption of the IBDP and the reculturation which may result—are critical areas of the current study which might inform future researcher into the effects, if any, upon school culture resulting from the use of the IBDP as academic reform. The duration of the reculturation could also be examined as to whether the initial impact made by the IBDP

continued and perhaps even positively impacted students who were not in the IB Programme, or if instead the reculturation simply died out after a period of time.

The success of Valdosta High's efforts to encourage participation in the IBDP by African American students would also be a worthwhile study. Further case studies could be conducted at schools with a large number of African American schools to determine the IBDP's value as an academic reform measure at such schools. Specifically such studies might examine the degree to which the IBDP attracted African American students and whether these students were ultimately successful either in postsecondary academic achievement or in another measure, such as employability rates or income levels. Such research might suggest that the IBDP holds promise as a means for addressing the achievement gap of academically-able African American students.

Additionally, a study that disaggregated the IBO's data on the graduation rates of first-year IBDP schools and identified those schools which specifically chose the IBDP as an academic reform measure would provide more insight into a comparison of Valdosta High's initial 46% IBDP graduation rate against the IBO's 2012 average of 68.53%, which included all schools, public and private. The effectiveness of the IBDP faculty's instruction in preparing students for their written examinations would be made clearer, and by examining those schools with similar demographics, administrators and faculty might determine areas for future improvement.

Most importantly, however, qualitative studies can play a valuable role in developing a richer knowledge base regarding school reform and school culture. Research regarding small learning communities and their possible impacts on school culture could lend weight to the intentional use of this model in schools in which a negative or unhealthy culture might impede needed reform measures. Curricular programs, such as the International Baccalaureate and

Advancement for Individual Determination, which employ a small learning community, or cohort, structure for students and to some degree, their faculty, might be particularly effective in such schools.

Conclusion

The implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at Valdosta High acted as a change agent in the school's culture and established an environment, albeit within a small student community, in which academic success was valued and celebrated. Throughout the interviews, participating teachers shared stories that were becoming part of the anecdotal lore of the IB Programme, stories about students' spontaneous eruptions into applause at a peer's passing an exam, or weekend study sessions conducted at coffee shops by students who once would have preferred to practice a reliable center-quarterback exchange or cruise Valdosta Mall. Teachers themselves felt the benefit of the small learning community's cohesiveness; they reported being able to confer more rapidly with concerned teachers when they perceived a student to be having personal or academic issues. A number of serious situations, including a major health crisis and an instance of parental abuse, were discovered through what teachers attributed to their ability to exercise increased oversight of their students.

Further, positive perceptions by IBDP teachers and by some non-IB participants ushered in new points of pride regarding life at Valdosta High and enriched the culture of the school as a whole (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 179). The academic values of the small learning community began to extend across the school, with the recognition that curricular rigor was appropriate for many more students than had previously had the opportunity to participate. The motivation and positive attitudes of the fledgling IB Programme at the site school anticipated the inception of a

healthier culture among both IB and non-IB students and faculty. Ms. Rudge foresaw a bright future at Valdosta High for the Programme:

I think it will change us. We are provincial, and there's really no need for that. We have so many opportunities within driving distance to see what the greater world is like. Our IB Programme will help us. . . . Here's just a simple little example. In the canon of knowledge that we have here, it's been limited and standard and even I was one of those people who said, "You have to do *The Scarlet Letter*," and, "You have to do *To Kill a Mockingbird*," and, "You can't skip this book and that book," and "*Heart of Darkness* is essential as a senior." And since I've started IB training, for the first time for me in my late fifties, I'm wondering, "What are the best sellers in Spain? What're the kids reading over there?" Just to graduate [IBDP] students who are thinking in those terms will change our whole area. I never thought in those terms when I was coming through schools. I just did what I was told. And this [Theory of Knowledge] thing, you know, getting people to really think about others in a different way, trying to put yourself in someone's else's shoes, how could it not make a difference in our area? I hope it does. (Ms. Rudge, IB)

One could thus anticipate that growth within the IB Programme at Valdosta High would continue over subsequent years. As positive experiences with academic rigor increase for both IB students and their peers in other academic coursework, both the school culture and its attendant practices could change from within. Students within the IB Programme and perhaps other programs in the school will graduate having had positive experiences with academic success, and they will share these experiences in the community and encourage their own children to seek similar academic challenges.

Appendix A IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
1 UNF Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2663
904-699-2455 FAX 904-695-3457
Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Institution

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 8, 2008

TO: Victoria Crowell

VIA: Dr. Elinor Schelrer,
Department of Leadership, Counseling and Instructional Technology

FROM: Dr. A. David Kline, Chair,
UNF Institutional Review Board

RE: Review by the UNF Institutional Review Board IRB#08-170:
"Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects upon School Culture from the
Adoption of the International Baccalaureate Programme"

This is to advise you that your study, "Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects upon School Culture from the Adoption of the International Baccalaureate Programme," has been reviewed on behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board and has been approved (Expedited/Category #7)

This approval applies to your project in the form and content as submitted to the IRB for review. Any variations or modifications to the approved protocol and/or informed consent forms as they relate to dealing with human subjects must be approved with the IRB prior to implementing such changes. Any unanticipated problems involving risk and any occurrence of serious harm to subjects and others shall be reported promptly to the IRB.

Your approval is valid for 12 months. If your project continues for more than one year, please provide a continuing status report to the UNF IRB by **December 5, 2009**.

Should you have any questions regarding your project or any other IRB issues, please contact Nicole Sayers, Assistant Director of Research Integrity, at 620-2498 or nsayers@unf.edu

Thank you.

Appendix B

Email from Principal Brett Stanton Approving Study at Valdosta High School

IB Study

L. Colburn [lcolburn@wildcat5.gocats.org]

To: [Crowell, Victoria H.](#)

Tuesday, August 05, 2008 7:54 AM

You replied on 8/5/2008 8:56 AM.

Good Morning Ms. Crowell,

I am emailing you to confirm that Mr. Boling has approved for you to do your study here at Valdosta High School. He apologizes for not getting back with you sooner. Thank you for your time and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Lisa Colburn
Administrative Secretary
Valdosta High School
Phone:
Fax:
Email:

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

~Maya Angelo~

Appendix C

University of North Florida Human Research Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

Human Research Consent Form

Title: Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects Upon School Culture from the Adoption of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as a School Reform Measure

Investigators: Victoria Crowell

Affiliations: University of North Florida

Contact Information:

work
home

Approved By Institutional Review Board:

This is an important form. Please read carefully. It tells you what you need to know about this research study. If you agree to take part in this study, you need to sign this form. Your signature means that you have been told about the study and what the risks are. Your signature on this form also means that you want to take part in this study.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Refusal to participate in this research will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you otherwise are entitled.

You may discontinue participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits you are otherwise entitled to.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study involves research into the perceptions of teachers of the effects upon their school's culture from that school's adoption and implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme as a school reform measure.

How many participants will take part in this study?

Approximately 8-10 teachers.

What will happen in this study?

Teacher participants will be interviewed and tape-recorded using an investigator-developed set of questions designed to elicit teacher perceptions. Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed for relevant data. Participants will remain anonymous in the study.

How long will I be in the study?

IRB #
Status
Approval Date

UNF IRB Number: 08-170
Approval Date: 1/8/09
Revision Date: _____

Will there be audiotaping or videotaping? If so, will I get to view them before they are used? Who will review tapes besides the researchers? Who will have access to the tapes? When will they be destroyed? (Note – If tapes are to be used outside of the research project, a separate release form should be obtained.)

There will be audiotaping. No one will review or have access to the tapes besides this researcher. Tapes will be locked in file cabinet in researcher's home office for period of one year from publication of dissertation, then they will be destroyed.

Who can answer my questions?

You may talk to Victoria Crowell at any time about questions and concerns you may have about this study. You may contact Victoria Crowell at the University of North Florida, Bldg. 9, Rm. 2129, Jacksonville, Florida 32224.

You may get further information about UNF policies, the conduct of this study, the rights of research subjects or if you suffer injury related to your participation in this research project from the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. David Kline, at

UNF IRB Number: 88-170
Approval Date: 1/8/09
Revision Date:

IRB #
Status
Approval Date

One year.

Are there reasons I might leave the study early?

Taking part in this study is your decision. You may decide to stop at any time. You should tell the director of the study that you wish to stop. In addition, the director of this study may stop you from taking part if it is in your best interest.

What are the risks of the study?

There is a risk that by way of your responses, your identify may be guessed at or otherwise determined.

What happens if I am injured because I took part in this study?

There is no risk of physical injury.

(If more than minimal risk, will I be compensated if injured? Will medical treatment be provided? If so, what will it consist of? Where can I get further information on this matter?)

There is no risk of physical injury.

Are there benefits to taking part in this study?

Participants will benefit from furthering the scholarship in the area of school reform and the efficacy of the increasing use of the International Baccalaureate Programme as a school reform measure.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this study?

There are no other choices .

Are there any monetary or other compensation or inducements for my taking part in this subject?

None.

Are there any financial costs to me to take part in this study?

None.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

You do not have to take part in this study; but if you do, you may stop at any time. You will be told of important new findings or any changes in the study or procedures that may affect you.

You do not give up any of your rights by taking part in this study. Additionally, you will be provided a copy of the transcript of your interview and will have the option of challenging or correcting due to mistranscription any part thereof.

What about confidentiality?

Data from this study may be published or used in publications. However, your name and other identifying information will not be sent outside of UNF without written permission unless the law allows it.

Explain your method further

IRB #
Status
Approval Date

UNF IRB Number: 08-170
Approval Date: 1/8/09
Revision Date: _____

Will there be audiotaping or videotaping? If so, will I get to view them before they are used? Who will review tapes besides the researchers? Who will have access to the tapes? When will they be destroyed? (*Note – If tapes are to be used outside of the research project, a separate release form should be obtained.*)

There will be audiotaping. No one will review or have access to the tapes besides this researcher. Tapes will be locked in file cabinet in researcher's home office for period of one year from publication of dissertation, then they will be destroyed.

Who can answer my questions?

You may talk to Victoria Crowell at any time about questions and concerns you may have about this study. You may contact Victoria Crowell at the University of North Florida, Bldg. 9, Rm. 2129, Jacksonville, Florida 32224.

You may get further information about UNF policies, the conduct of this study, the rights of research subjects or if you suffer injury related to your participation in this research project from the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. David Kline, at

UNF IRB Number: 88-170

Approval Date: 1/8/09

Revision Date: _____

IRB #
Status
Approval Date

I have had an opportunity to have my questions answered. I have been given a copy of this form. I agree to take part in this study. I am over 18 years of age.

I am at least 18 years old. _____ (initials)

I have had the study that I am agreeing to participate in explained to me to my satisfaction. _____ (initials)

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions that I may have had regarding this study. _____ (initials)

I agree to participate in (study name) _____ being conducted by (PI) _____ and the University of North Florida.

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Signed Name of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent

Date

Signed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent

UNF IRB Number: 08-170
Approval Date: 1/8/09
Revision Date: _____

IRB #
Status
Approval Date

Appendix D

Interview Protocol April 30 and May 1, 2009

1. When you think about the school systems in Georgia, how would you describe your district?
2. Of the two high schools in this area, what's unique or special about Valdosta High?
3. How did you first hear about the International Baccalaureate Programme?
4. What do you know about how Valdosta HS became involved in the IB Programme? Why IB was chosen for it?
5. What are your perceptions from the site review? Were you get to participate in that process, and if so, to what degree and in what capacity?
6. How has the approval process go so far?
7. What changes came out of their recommendations?
8. How did you participate in developing the course outline? Did you work on any other parts of the report or application? How did that go for you?
9. What professional development have you participated in so far?
10. How is what you're teaching this year different because of the IB Programme?
11. Tell me about the types of students you have in your classes right now.
12. How do you feel the students within the school relate to one another? Overall how do they get along? Do you have a lot of factions or problems between grades? Any identifiable groups that have hostility toward others?
13. Are there any racial issues at the school, and if so, how do those manifest themselves?
14. How do the teachers get along with one another within the school and within the group that's going to be teaching IB?
15. At the school overall, how do the teachers relate to one another?
16. What was the reaction when IB was first announced?
17. What activities have the IB teachers that you're aware of organized for the students this year?
18. How long have you been teaching at VHS?
19. How has it changed since the IB Programme process began?

20. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the IB Programme at VHS?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol November 19 and 20, 2009

1. It's been six months; the last time I came was the end of April, May 1st. In what ways do you believe the school has changed since the IB Programme has been in progress?
2. How are you seeing students ramped up to be successful on the new Georgia standards? How are they being prepared now for the rigor of IB coursework? How is that culture changing?
3. In your opinion, are the AP and IB programs getting the best teachers?
4. How were the IB teachers chosen? Were they volunteers, or were they "volun-told"? Is there any crossover between AP and IB?
5. What other changes have you seen in VHS this year, attributable to the more intense rigor brought on by the IB Programme and the change in standards?
6. Has the level of collaboration among the teachers, within the departments or between them, changed since the implementation of the IB Programme?
7. What do you see as a [participant/non-participant] as the strengths of the IB Programme?
8. What would make it better?
9. How would you characterize the relationships between the IB students and the remainder of the students here at the school? Has that changed at all since the implementation of the Programme?
10. What about the other students in the school? Are the IB students still maintaining the same strong relationships they had with other students in the school? Do you see any change there?
11. Do you see the IB students rising to the forefront among the other students in terms of school leadership or activities?
12. If you had a chance to vote again for whether or not to do it, would you still vote for the IB Programme?
13. If Valdosta High has two schools in these two districts, and everyone has said that VHS has the advantage in terms of your gifted and AP programs and your honors programs, why put the IB Programme here? What was the intent with putting it here? Why did you need it?
14. Do demographics enter into the decision, and if so, how?
15. Do you think that IB will fix some of the issues with adequate yearly progress and the high stakes testing issues for schools like Valdosta?

16. When the school was recruiting for the IB Programme, what was the ratio of African Americans to total students that you were recruiting for the Programme?
17. Has the transfer of teachers into IB subject areas put a strain on the course load for the remaining teachers?
18. What about retention here? Are teachers happy? If not, to what do you attribute some of the general unrest?
19. How has your school year been thus far?
20. Any final comments?

Appendix F
Interview Protocol April 15, 2010 and May 13, 2010

1. What courses are you teaching right now?
2. Tell me about your first year as an IB teacher.
3. How has your practice as a teacher changed since you've been working with the IB?
4. What differences have you noticed in your students, over time? This group of students from beginning to end, versus students you've previously had in similar classes?
5. Tell me a little about the collegiality among the faculty, both within the IB and among the teachers not participating in the IB Programme.
6. Are there still any strong naysayers for the IB Programme here at the school?
7. How has VHS changed in the year that the IB Programme has been active? How has the school changed?
8. Have you participated in any professional learning this year relative to IB or any other type of professional development?
9. Tell me a good story about the IB this year.
10. Now tell me a bad story about IB this year.
11. Complete this sentence for me: "Valdosta High would be so much better if..."
12. How would you describe the level of support that you get from your administrators?
13. Can you comment about the different attractions of the Advanced Placement or IB courses for different kinds of students, or in your mind are they the same?
14. What would you like to see added to the present IB curriculum?
15. Any final comments?

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Curriculum Vitae
Victoria Crowell

EDUCATION

University of North Florida Doctorate candidate in Educational Leadership	Jacksonville, FL
University of North Florida M. A., English	Jacksonville, FL December, 2003
University of North Florida M. S., Special Education	Jacksonville, FL December, 1999
Florida State University B. A., Comparative Literature	Tallahassee, FL August, 1975

EXPERIENCE

District Cadre, Professional Development, Duval County Schools	2008-Present Jacksonville, FL
Clinical Faculty, College of Education, University of North Florida	2008-2011 Jacksonville, FL
High School English Teacher, Duval County Schools	1999-2008 Jacksonville, FL
Adjunct, University of North Florida	2007-2009 Jacksonville, FL

PRESENTATIONS

Crowell, Victoria. "Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects Upon School Culture from the Implementation of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme." American Educational Research Association [Conference]. New Orleans. 8-12 April, 2011.

Crowell, Victoria. "Moving the Crowd: The Effects of Student Choice in Literature upon Reading Achievement of African American Students". Southwest Educational Research Association [Conference]. New Orleans. 9-12 February, 2005.

Crowell, Victoria. "Private Displays of Affection: A Study in Sexual Trespass." To have been presented at Southern University at New Orleans Race, Gender and Class Conference [Conference]. New Orleans. 23-25 September, 2004. (Trip cancelled due to Hurricane Jeanne)