

ABSTRACT

PAVLIC, KIMBERLY SNYDER. "A Phoenix School": Accountability, Change, and Achievement. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance D. Fusarelli).

The United States has been consumed with disappointing levels of student performance compared to other countries for several decades. In 2009, in an effort to close the achievement gap, the U.S. Department of Education authorized a program to support States under The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Authorized under the ARRA of 2009, the Race to the Top Assessment Program provided funding to states to develop valid assessments, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement against standards designed to ensure all students gain knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace.

The Bumble County Public School System (pseudonym used) is located in the Southern States and was awarded a portion of the \$4 billion of funding during the second phase of the Race to the Top Program awarded to the state. The County decided to use some of the funds and identified four of the lowest schools to be restructured, known in the County as the Phoenix Schools. A team of educators at various levels in the County developed a plan for schools. The plan included: 1.) Any staff member working at a Phoenix School would need to reapply for their job, 2.) The latest technology to include Ipads, 3.) Additional staff support positions, 4.) Funding for intervention services, 5.) Central Services support, 6.) Professional Development for teachers, 6.) A one-time sign on bonus for those staff members new to the school, and 7.) Implement a pay for performance model for certified, non-certified, and administrators in the school.

The purpose of this case study was to examine the development of policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on federal guidelines

awarded from Race to the Top funding. The case study sought out to determine if the reshaping of one of the lowest schools in the district, Bee Elementary School, impacted teaching and learning. Teacher Working Condition Surveys, End of Grade Test Scores, and document analysis were looked at to answer the research questions.

This study addressed significant factors that could affect school reform impacting teaching and learning. Due to COVID-19, a more detailed account of the Phoenix Model was unable to be researched due to the lack of access of interviewing employees during the school reform. The study provided insight to the turnaround efforts of Bumble County Public School System and can serve as a tool for district stakeholders.

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"A Phoenix School": Accountability, Change and Achievement

by
Kimberly S. Pavlic

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APPROVED BY:

Dr. Lance Fusarelli
Committee Chair

Dr. William Harrison

Dr. Gregory Hicks

Dr. Henry Johnson

DEDICATION

I would like to first dedicate this dissertation to my role model, my hero, my confidant, my father who continues to watch over me from Heaven, Daniel J. Snyder. He taught me so many life lessons: the love of God, dedication, determination, having a great work ethic, perseverance, and most importantly to believe in myself as he did. Thank you so much to my mom, who taught me the love of learning and supported me through not only this endeavor, but many others in my life. I appreciate all the love you have shown me in my life. To the love of my life....my daughter, Sasha! Your grace and understanding when I had to work on schoolwork was more than appreciated. At such a young age you showed me support and motivation to keep working toward my dreams. Finally, to my husband Mark, who questioned but supported this journey knowing and trusting I was able to succeed.

BIOGRAPHY

Kim Pavlic was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Growing up she moved every two to four years. Through this experience she was able to come in contact with many people, places, and experiences she will never forget.

After High School, Kim obtained a Bachelors' degree in Marketing and Business administration from Robert Morris University and worked in her family businesses. She had a love of learning and decided to go back to school and wanted to do something to make a difference in the life of others. So, she decided to get her master's degree in Elementary Education from Duquesne University. Many years later she moved to North Carolina where she studied at North Carolina State University and received two master's degrees, one in Higher Education Administration and one in Elementary Administration.

She has been education for the past 21 years. She has had many roles during this time, classroom teacher, literacy and coach, mentor, professional development trainer and professional learning team coach. Kim's current role has been an instructional facilitator, where she has continued to learn and grow as part of the administration team.

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CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTION

“If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career.”

—President Barack Obama

Background of the Study

The United States has been consumed with disappointing levels of student performance compared to other countries for several decades. In 2009, in an effort to close the achievement gap, the U.S. Department of Education authorized a program to support states. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 provided the opportunity for states to earn money in a Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) of grants. The grants are cooperative agreements between the states and the federal government for three to five years, with awards ranging from \$1.5 to \$19.7 million per state.

The goal of ARRA is to enable grantees to design, develop, and implement SLDS to efficiently and accurately manage, analyze, disaggregate, report, and use individual student data. The long term goals of the program are to: 1.) identify successful instructional programs and through the use of research improve instruction, 2.) support informed decision making and through the use of research, identify successful instructional programs and improve instruction, 3.) graduates are prepared with the knowledge to enter the workforce or postsecondary education, 4.) make educational data transparent through local, state, and federal reporting, and 5.) allow for the usage of accurate and timely reported data (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the Race to the Top Assessment Program provided funding to states to develop valid assessments, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can

do, and measure student achievement against standards designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. These assessments are intended to play a critical role in educational systems; provide administrators, teachers, parents, and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning; and help meet the President's goal of restoring the nation's position as the world leader in college graduates by 2020 (Race to the Top, 2009).

The U.S. Department of Education and the Race to the Top grant competition focuses on improving early learning and developing programs for young children by supporting the various states' efforts to: (1) increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children in each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs; (2) design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services; and (3) ensure that any use of assessments conforms with the recommendations of the National Research Council's reports on early childhood (Race to the Top, 2009). Awards in Race to the Top will go to states that are leading the way with ambitious, yet achievable, plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive early learning education reform. Appendix B represents the states awarded monies since 2006.

Through the Race to the Top process, states are asked to advance reforms around four specific areas: 1.) standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and be competitive in the global economy, 2.) measure student growth and success by building a data system to inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction, 3.) recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers, and 4.) turn around the lowest-achieving schools (United States Department of Education, 2009).

The Bumble County Public School system (pseudonym used) is located in the Southern United States. This Southern state was one of the states awarded funding during the second phase of the Race to the Top competition. The Bumble County Public School System was awarded a portion of the \$400 million of funding given to the state. The County decided to use some of the funds and identified four schools to be restructured, known in the County as the Phoenix Schools. A team of educators at various levels in the County developed a plan for the schools. This plan included: 1.) All staff member working at a Phoenix School would need to reapply for their job, 2.) The latest technology to include Ipads, 3.) Additional staff support positions, 4.) Funding for intervention services, 5.) Central Services support, 6.) Professional Development for teachers, 6.) A one-time signing bonus for those staff members new to the school, and 7.) Implement a pay for performance model for certified administrators and teachers and non-certified personnel in the school.

Bee Elementary School (pseudonym) was one of the four lowest performing schools in the Bumble County Public School System. Their school math, reading and science test scores combined were less than 43% achievement. The State was awarded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 money, in the second phase of the program the state was awarded ARRA money to fund the state's effort to ensure that all students gain knowledge and skills to be college or workplace ready. So, the Bumble County Public School System decided to take a look at the four lowest performing schools and turn them around. These schools would go through a restructuring process of every employee in the building and be awarded additional funding to enhance instruction, technology, and resources. The Phoenix Schools would also be awarded a one-time signing bonus to teachers and administrators. A pay for performance bonus could be awarded to certified administrators and teachers at the end of the

year based on school performance, teacher performance, student performance, and the teacher evaluation instrument (See Appendix 1).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to examine the development of policy to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the federal guidelines awarded from Race to the Top. If the principals' role in a successful change process might be significant, how has an adjustment in leadership, as well as school personnel, influenced a sustained change process in a low performing school? Furthermore, the case study sought to determine if the reshaping of the school impacted teaching and learning. Therefore, to explore this process further, I examined Bee Elementary School, one of the Phoenix Schools in the Bumble County Public School System that underwent a metamorphosis during a school transformation process due to federal funding. I analyzed the particulars of the phenomena during this process of change.

Statement of the Problem

Due to low performing schools across the nation, more and more attention is placed on leadership as a factor of organizational performance that impacts student achievement. Several years ago, the Bumble County Public School System identified four low performing schools and decided to develop an initiative to reform these schools, known as the Phoenix Schools. Therefore, my three-part study examines: 1) what circumstances lead to reforming schools, 2) how the process was implemented and 3) how practices impacted teaching and learning in one of the Phoenix Schools.

Research Questions

In an effort to establish that the Bumble County Public School System represented a response to low performing schools in their district and utilizing Race to the Top funding, this case study examined the decision-making protocol of the school Phoenix Model and its influence on a sustained change process based on the district's criteria. The research questions are:

1. What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of one of the lowest achieving schools in Bumble County Public School System, Bee Elementary School?
2. How was the Phoenix School Model implementation of reform and changes in practice interpreted?
3. How did the decisions of Bumble County Public School System's Model change the impact of teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix Schools, Bee Elementary School?

Significance of the Study

The original idea in the Bumble County Public School System for reforming schools came about due to the Race to the Top money North Carolina was awarded. This money in turn would give the Local Education Agency (LEA) flexibility to prepare students to be college and workforce ready.

The advantage in this study of focusing on one of the Phoenix Schools in Bumble County, Bee Elementary School, a low performing school, is to examine the effectiveness of the change process. Implementation intentions may work best when you focus on one thing at a time so more can get accomplished. In order to clarify the importance of a transition in the change process it must be understood that change is external and transitional is internal. Change is

situational and transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation (Bridges, 2003). As a result, many educational changes are unstable due to lack of attention to the transition process. This research further advances educational knowledge by exploring how the school's transformation influences the overall change in the impact of teachers and student learning.

Significance for Practitioners

This study identifies and traces the beginning process of creating the Phoenix Schools and the initiative based on the circumstances due to the Race to the Top funding in the Bumble County Public School System. Determining through the influence of leadership and school personnel, the research could also provide district administrators with a model for a successfully created change implementation of low performing schools. The Phoenix School Model could provide an overall district-wide school model for low performing schools for future planning and support. Finally, the data collected may also inform county administrators about the implementation, stabilization, and sustainability of school change.

Significance of Leadership

In order to clarify the importance of leadership transition processes and the influence on the overall school dynamics, this study addresses this under-explored process. Wasely (1992) notes "three important points about leadership transitions. First, time is an important factor in reform. Second, leadership changes can disrupt projects drastically. Third, frequent turnover must be expected." Therefore, I expect that this study will have an impact on those who are involved in aspects of school reform and leadership transition, the effects of the merit pay system, and on the innovative practices impacting teachers and learning in the Phoenix school.

Summary

In summary, this study contributes to the body of literature that exists on reforming a school from the examined experiences of key stakeholders. Schools wanting to follow such a model will need to have recommendations that grow from the successes and frustrations in this case study, which in turn confirm the value of this study. The information gained will also be useful to other schools, school systems, State Boards, and governmental agencies who wish to address low performing schools.

This study establishes that the Phoenix Schools in the Bumble County Public School System represents a school transformation that was implemented to respond to the widespread needs of low performing schools in the state. The study could validate that a partnership among the U.S. Department of Education, the State Department of Education, and the County School System represents a model for school transformation which can exist anywhere in our nation.

Definition of Terms

To better understand the educational terminology in this study, the following terms are defined.

Bumble County School System: Refers to a steadily growing school system with more than 19,000 employees and 160,000 students. The 190 plus schools consist of elementary, middle, high schools, special/optional, and academies. This is the one of the largest school systems in the state and in the top twenty largest school districts in the U.S. based on enrollment.

Doable: means the human, political, and economic resources are seen as sufficient to implement the action strategies in the theory.

Meaningful: means that stakeholders see the outcomes as important and see the magnitude of change in these outcomes being pursued as worth the effort.

Merit Pay: A term used for describing performance related-pay.

Performance Pay: Earnings are linked to some measure of performances such as test scores or employee evaluations.

Plausible: means that stakeholders believe the logic of the model is correct: if we do these things, we will get the results we want and expect.

Testable: means that stakeholders believe there are credible ways to discover whether the results are as predicted.

Transformation: is limited to any change focusing on basic underlying beliefs.

Overview of Approach

The research method used for this study was an intrinsic case study. I conducted a case study of Bee Elementary School, one of the lowest achieving schools in the Bumble County School System. I analyzed teacher working condition surveys and End of Grade Test score documents obtained over the past ten years. I reviewed articles and being an employee of the district, I was able to review documentation the district sent out to employees from the onset of the Race to the Top money initiative and the fruition of the Phoenix Schools.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 1, the researcher provided the context of the study, the purpose of the study, and posed the research questions. Terms and definitions were explained along with the significance of study for leadership and practitioners. A brief explanation of the research methodology was also given. Chapter 2 will review a detailed explanation of the model, including merit pay and various literature studies relating to leadership and school reform theory. Chapter 3 will give an account of the methodology explained based on the site selection, data collection, validity, reliability, ethical issues, and study limitations used to answer the research

question. The findings are presented in Chapter 4. A discussion of the findings of the study is included in Chapter 5, along with implications of the study for research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

Research indicates that academic achievement is still a major concern for the United States and that most past educational reform efforts to improve student achievement have not produced the intended results (McNeil, 2000). Public schools in the United States are often afflicted by internal and external forces during school reform initiatives, which may result in a profound impact on student academic achievement and overall school success. Educational researchers and reformists have studied some of the dynamics that may influence school effectiveness for decades.

The Phoenix School Model was initiated due to low performing schools in Bumble County Public Schools System and the funding awarded from the Race to the Top program was utilized. Bee Elementary School was one of the lowest performing schools in the district and went through the restructuring process. The components of the Phoenix School Model were created by a team of educators at various levels in the District. This plan included: 1.) Any staff member working at a Phoenix School would need to reapply for their job, 2.) The latest technology to include Ipads, 3.) Additional staff support positions, 4.) Funding for intervention services, 5.) Central Services support, 6.) Professional Development for teachers, 6.) A one-time sign on bonus for those staff members new to the school, and 7.) Implement a pay for performance model for certified, non-certified, and administrators in the schools. The principal was selected by the district based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders. (See Appendix C.)

One component of this school reform process is merit pay, something the district had never put in place before. Through a review of the merit pay initiative component, the literature

will provide historical information and the difficulties of having a system of merit pay in place as one of the components of the change process in the Phoenix Schools.

The second component of the literature review will establish the context for educational reform-a national context. The Bumble County Public School System in response to the Race to the Top grant from the federal government initiated a school reform process. At the core of this process, the Bumble County Public School System was specifically determined to improve the lowest four performing schools. An intervention strategy for reform was developed to support the district, which was how the Phoenix School Model was put in place.

The third component of the literature review is on effective leaders. Masters (2010) suggests effective principals will set high expectations across the school, that effective teaching strategies will be used, and that principals will act as instructional leaders in communicating, promoting, and modeling evidence-based approaches which may include:

- teachers set high expectations for every student's progress and ambitious targets for improving classroom performance
- all teachers implement teaching methods that have been shown to be effective in promoting successful learning for all
- teachers create classroom learning environments in which all students are engaged, challenged, feel safe to take risks, and are supported to learn
- teachers work to build students' beliefs in their own capacities to learn successfully and their understandings of the relationship between effort and success
- teachers provide regular and timely feedback to students in forms that make it clear what actions individuals can take to make further learning progress.

A review of the literature is a necessary component to build a framework for this case study of “A Phoenix School”: Accountability, Change, and Achievement.” The concepts as they exist in the research will serve as an underlying assumption that reforming a school through changing the staff, offering merit pay, and having an effective leader will improve school performance.

Merit Pay

Research on merit pay can be traced back almost 150 years ago (Nelson, 2001). Today, most school systems use a single scale salary schedule. However, merit pay is being recycled in today’s time. Merit pay systems can be based on a number of factors: student performance, educational experiences, team performance, and leadership responsibilities (Perkins-Gough, 2007). When was merit pay first implemented, what exactly is merit pay, how does merit pay work, and examples of merit pay models will be examined. Merit pay is nothing new to the field of education.

The history of teacher compensation can be traced back to the mid 1800’s, when England experimented with a system called “payment by results”. This model relied on annual exams administered by an inspector. The results would determine how much money the government would give to the school. This controversial system lasted a little more than three decades (Dillon, 2008). This is nearly the same length of time the United States has thought about alternative ways to pay teachers.

In the early 1900’s, merit pay was introduced after World War I, but most plans disappeared during the Great Depression in the 1930’s. By 1950, approximately 97 percent of the school systems in the United States had adopted a single salary schedule. Pay for exceptional performance surged in popularity following the 1957 Russian launch of Sputnik amid concerns

about science education. By the early 1960's, more than 10 percent of school systems were experimenting with some form of merit pay, but due to the lack of interest, teachers' unions, and funding, pay for performance ideas resulted in the loss of many plans by 1972. After the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which recommended that teacher salaries be professionally competitive, market-sensitive, and performance-based on education and experience levels (McCollum, 2001). Almost all state educational systems implement some form of merit pay, but most plans are based on years of experience and educational levels as a step.

Attracting and retaining teachers through effective compensation was the goal over 50 years ago for the Ladue School District in suburban St. Louis, Missouri. Based on the Ladue School District's research, they determined that creating a balance between teachers' commitment to the needs of students and their desire for more improved financial rewards, a new evaluation program was developed. In 1953, this program was created using six teachers and an administrator determining the criteria for this new process. The criteria included the use of technology to support instruction, the use of best teaching practices for a diverse student population, planning and preparation skills, knowledge of the approved curriculum and subject matter, and the effective delivery of instruction. Maintaining the learning environment that encourages mutual acceptance and respect, evaluation of student performance, and the ability to provide for the individual difference to motivate students all comprised this system. These requirements changed as needed and did not include student achievement. This system is based on points that are combined at the end of the year summative evaluation from the administrator. The monetary value is based on the allocated funds from the school board in addition to an annual pay increase. Since this program is based on a teacher's interpretation of their own performance, there is not the need for competition among the teachers or teaching to the test.

Since the beginning of this pay program, teachers were a driving force in the development of the system, and they confirm that this system works. The fact that teachers have the opportunity to increase their salary through performance--coupled with collaboration and goal setting--teachers are receiving enhanced intrinsic motivation to their profession (Morice & Murray, 2003).

Now heading toward the new 20th century, British public education was controlled by national standards; a standard examination that focused on reading, writing, and mathematics, monetary grants based on examination results, performance pay for teachers, merit grants to exemplary schools, and incentive grants for curricular and procedural policy regulations set by the national standards. Comparing that to 20th-century America, payment-by-results schemes are a product of mistrust. Accountability is a key word in the legislatures and agencies that are to support schools (Nelson, 2001).

One of the first steps toward making change in teacher compensation is because of the onset of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). A second step for the development of new ways to pay teachers was the emergence of funding from the private sector. This is known as “knowledge-and skills-based pay.” The third important step paving the way for workable change in teacher compensation was the report of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, which recommended several strategies for enhancing teaching as a profession. This proposed that teacher salary structures should provide pay increases on the basis of teachers’ knowledge and skills, as well as offering incentives for improved performance. A final step for paving the way for teacher compensation is avoiding the pitfalls that hindered merit pay plans in the past and focus more on knowledge-and skills-based pay and on the school-based performance incentives tied directly to student achievement (Odden, 2000).

In 1999, Lowell Milken, chairman and founder of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), operated by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NEIT), was launched. The Milken Family Foundation alone has created and paid for a teacher compensation model that is being used by more than 130 schools in 14 states (Dillon, 2008). TAP is a program for teacher advancement that tries to attract, retain, and promote teachers. The four elements that sold the program among school districts are: multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional development, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation. Today, more than 275,000 educators have benefited from the NEIT partnerships.

In 2005, Minnesota introduced a hybrid of base pay adjustments and cash incentives through its Quality Compensation or “Q Comps” program. The effort encourages teachers to pursue higher levels of responsibility among the faculty, calls for a comprehensive system of teacher evaluations and observations, and offers regular job training and classroom support (Dillon, 2008).

A year later in January 2006, Houston became the largest district in the nation to approve a merit pay plan by tying the bonuses to student test scores. This was composed of a three-tier system worth a \$1,000 bonus at each level. This system rewards teachers on the basis on improvement, not just exemplary scores. In the first tier, the award will be given to all teachers in the school that have an acceptable or higher rating in the state’s accountability system. The second level rewards teachers when their students’ scores improve in comparison to nationwide norms. The third tier gives bonuses to reading and math teachers whose students exceed other districts in standardized tests (Cook, 2006). In 2016, the Houston Independent School District needed money from the State to continue the controversial merit pay system in place. Today,

they are being more creative in offering higher pay incentives like longevity increase, step increase, company car, and low performing school employee increase.

Critique of the Merit Pay Literature

Although the single salary schedule, which pays individual teachers on the basis of their years of experience and educational degrees, has been used by every state for more than 50 years, it seems to always be under attack (Odden, 2000). Today, many school districts are experimenting with paying teachers for performance and education. The literature is in disagreement as to what such programs should look like.

Since much of the controversy of merit pay focuses on the issues of, “What is being measured?” and, “How well is it measured?” traditional performance systems seem less favorable toward merit pay. Many factors of employee’s performance go beyond the job. Supervisors create subjective evaluations. The appraisal rating categories could include “satisfactory”, “somewhat exceeds expectations”, and “substantially exceeds expectation” to name a few. These titles measure little about the level of competencies or how much the employee has improved. In regard to teacher performance, are the appraisals for teachers the same for all? New teachers are provided with more assistance for the first three years of teaching. Their evaluations include a full lesson during their observations. Veteran teachers have a few snapshots throughout the year. When analyzing this for merit pay, who has the upper hand for doing a better planned out lesson in the eyes of the administrator? The pursuit of these criteria may cloud the ratings of merit pay and that they may be an end of increasing performance and the achieving criteria does not insure performance. Focusing on ratings may limit continuous improvement, problem solving, and possibly intrinsic motivation among

teachers. Organizations seem to be at a crossroads with performance appraisals and merit pay. These practices must be redesigned in ways that clearly add value or be eliminated.

Other problems with merit pay systems are accuracy, validity, and reliability. Since merit pay usually is based on student achievement, what would make merit pay attractive to teachers? When student achievement is measured by student performance, we are measuring the response not of an isolated individual but of the system that moment as it impinges on the student. The teacher is not an isolated person but stands at the end of the spectrum to include the principal, school board, parents, and the community (Holt, 2001).

The Coleman Report concluded that students' success in school was almost entirely dependent upon their socioeconomic background. Dr. Coleman and his co-authors argued that desegregating school and neighborhoods would improve students' performance; they found no evidence that improving the quality of teachers or classroom instruction would have similar effects (Glenn, 2002). Therefore, why has student performance in low-performing schools been a factor in deciding merit pay? During the next few decades, a number of studies challenged this conclusion. The common intuition is teachers have significant effects, at least for some students, some of the time. Some teachers are more effective than others (Glenn, 2002).

The current trend in merit pay is to reward teachers who meet measurable goals in student progress (Cornett, 1995). Industry's efforts at performance-based pay scales have proven most effective when an employee's performance is almost entirely a result of the employee's skill or application of the work. Some forms of merit pay appear to improve the quality of students' educational experiences. Observations, anecdotes, and teacher perception surveys indicate that successful programs clearly identify the school's goals, take working conditions into account, develop accurate measurements, and offer meaningful rewards (McCollum, 2001).

Holt (2001) argues that any attempt to differentiate between teachers by means of an audit of their professional knowledge and skills is an attempt to determine merit pay.

Performance-Pay for Teachers: Designing a System that Students Deserve is the first report produced through the Teacher Solutions model developed by the Teacher Leaders network. This is an online community of approximately 300 teacher leaders across the United States. Eighteen of these teacher leaders concluded that despite the complexities of implementing performance pay, the time has come for new forms of professional compensation that differentiate among teachers' level of effort and performance. Their recommendations are as follows: (a) start with a solid base pay system that encourages teachers to advance in their profession, a career ladder, (b) supplement the base-pay system with performance-pay system that is open to all teachers, do not limit rewards, (c) reward teachers who help their students make significant gains over time, both individual and team efforts, (d) provide more pay for additional degrees and professional development, (e) allow flexibility so that school and districts can advance their specific learning goals, (f) encourage collaboration, (g) offer incentives to teachers in low-performing schools only if the teacher can demonstrate that they are effective with the high-needs students, (h) reward leadership, and (i) include accomplished teachers in planning and implementing new compensation policies (Perkins-Gough, 2007). The purpose of this report was to spark conversation among educators and policy makers. One would have to agree this group of educators was able to include all of the aspects related to the trials and tributes of merit pay initiatives.

Merit Pay Implications

Diversifying the way teachers are paid by basing their pay through performance is gaining support. Most educators became teachers because of the intrinsic satisfaction of working

with children. Based on the research from Morice and Murray, they found that teachers cite low pay as one of the major reasons for leaving the field of education. It was also found that teachers derived satisfaction from seeing students learn more but that they also valued salary bonuses for meeting performance improvement targets.

Measuring performance is incredibly difficult. There are many poor teachers going through the motions that need to have some sort of rude awakening to change their teaching style or possibly select a new profession. McCollum (2001) shared Georgia's plan for merit pay giving each school's faculty the opportunity to design a proposal that is similar to a school improvement plan. Teachers are required to give thought and understanding to the profession and take the extra steps to create goals and then achieve them. Based on the research, merit pay can work if implemented properly. Overall, merit pay can benefit the school system, individual schools, the students, the community, but also the recruitment and retention of teachers with respect to merit pay.

Merit Pay Programs

Much research can be found in regard to the history, implementation, perceptions, and opinions in regard to school accounts of teacher satisfaction in regard to merit pay. Little research has been documented specifically in regard to the data driven effects merit pay has on teachers and student achievement.

Governor's Educator Excellence Grants in Texas

Through a piloted, performance pay program in Texas, during the 2005-2006 and the 2008-2009 school years, over \$10 million in federal grant money was distributed to schools that achieved high scores on state tests (Stutz, 2010). The program, Governor's Educator Excellence Grants (GEEG), was not as successful as many thoughts, according to researchers from the

National Center on Performance Incentives at Vanderbilt University. Unfortunately, the GEEG program did not demonstrate any improvement in student test scores (Stutz, 2010). The state recommended a \$3,000 minimum bonus; however, the bonuses averaged \$1,982 during the first year and \$2,094 during the second year.

The merit pay program showed a more dramatic result in teacher retention than on student achievement. Teacher turnover surged among teachers who did not receive an award. The turnover rate for teachers was affected by the size of the bonus; the larger the bonuses, the more likely teachers were to stay at their schools. Finally, the study cautioned that achievement gains shown by merit pay schools were small and could have resulted in part from other initiatives at the schools (Stutz, 2010).

ASPIRE: Accelerating Student Progress. Increasing Results & Expectations

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) has one of the largest and most successful bonus programs in the nation. The program, ASPIRE, which began in 2007, has provided over \$113 million in performance pay bonuses with more than \$40 million expended in January 2010. Bonuses were given to teachers whose students made the biggest gains academically and ranged from \$25 to nearly \$25,000. This resulted in almost 90% of the eligible employees earning a bonus. Bonuses were paid to schools based on their test scores, as well as to individual teachers based on their students' scores. The school board has used this pay system as a method to attract and retain the best teachers (Mellon, 2010). Research can be found for this program through 2016. Due to COVID-19, HISD cancelled this program for at least the 2019-2020 school year.

ASPIRE uses "value-added" as the principle measurement of a student's academic growth. The value-added approach recognizes that students have different levels of capability

and come from different environments, and that these factors will influence a student's rate of educational progress. As Sanders (2000) describes it, if education is seen not as stair steps but as a ramp – upon which students in the same grade will be at different points – school effectiveness can influence the speed at which students' progress up that 'ramp'. Value-added approaches seek to gain a clearer impression of a student's progress by comparing their level of attainment to other students of similar ability and background.

Instead of applying for Race to the Top money, Texas applied for the newest round of Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants aimed at awarding top educators at schools with the largest number of poor students with bonus pay (Hacker, 2010). Texas was awarded more than \$248 million in federal grant money in September 2010, with money appropriated to both charter and public schools to create or expand already existing pay plans in Houston and Fort Worth (Hacker, 2010). Through these grants, teachers are evaluated on student academic gains along with other measures including classroom observations.

Pay for performance programs may use multiple measures to evaluate teacher performance and incorporate elements found in career ladder or knowledge and skills-based pay plan. Some of the controversies of pay for performance research may have resulted in the decisions Bumble County Public School Systems included as a component of merit pay in their Phoenix School Model, offering sign-on bonus and performance-based bonuses to employees. Some researchers note that schools serving disadvantaged populations were less likely to receive bonuses could imply that instruction quality is lower than higher achieving schools. (Springer, 2009)

School Reform at the Federal Level

The ongoing need for educational reform in American schools has gained momentum since the onset of governmental reports. As a result, states, districts, and schools are seeking federal money designed to assist with the elimination of the achievement gap and reach the goal of learning opportunities for all student to be college or work-place ready. A review of the literature shows that the difficulties of implementing national school reforms are similar to the difficulties of implementing state reform initiatives (Walker, 2004).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

President Johnson signed the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to provide funding for instructional technology, mathematics, and science instruction as part of his War on Poverty initiative. The 1994 reauthorization of ESEA expanded this work by laying the groundwork for standards-based reform. It mandated that all states develop content and performance standards for K-12 schools (Rudalevige, 2003), which was one of the recommendations of the earlier *A Nation at Risk* report.

Goals 2000

In March 1994, President Clinton signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. He said that:

“We insist, with Goals 2000, that every student can learn. We insist that it's time to abolish the outdated distinction between academic learning and skill learning. We know now that most academics has practical application, and that, more and more, practical problems require academic knowledge. And I hope to goodness we don't do anything else - we've finally erased that divide so that we can teach our young people to learn in the way that best suits their own capacities and the work they have to do. But I am absolutely

convinced that there is not a single, solitary problem in American education that has not been solved by somebody, somewhere. What we have done as a nation is to resist learning from each other, to resist institutionalizing change, to resist, therefore, holding ourselves accountable for results as a nation.” (Goals 2000, p.1)

Clinton added that what the government was trying to do with Goals 2000 was to say: “here are the goals, you figure out how to get there, you learn from each other. Come up with aggressive plans, we will help you fund them and go forward, but you are in charge. The federal government can't tell you how to do it, but we can help you get it done. What this Goals 2000 movement, with the School to Work program, with the adult education program, with the retraining program and the re-employment program, what it all seeks to do is to give America a system by which at the grass roots level we can fulfill the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* for all our people.”(Goals 2000, p.1)

The intent of Goals 2000 was to bolster reform (Goals, 2000). The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was specifically intended to support achievement of Goals 2000 by providing additional funding for primary and secondary education, improvement of standards, instructional and professional development, and more accountability (Improving America's Schools Act, 1994, 2011). By 2001, only 22 states had adopted standards promoted by Goals 2000. Those goals required high school students to take at least four years of English, three years of math, three years of science, three years of history and/or social studies, and half a year of computer science; college-bound students were required to take two years of a foreign language.

The Goals 2000 Act allowed the federal government to have a new role in its support for education. However, there were misconceptions about GOALS 2000 which led to divided feelings about the act. Some people are concerned that GOALS 2000 would lead to a federal government takeover of local education. "The main goal of the GOALS 2000 Act is to encourage local school systems into meeting educational needs, help students reach their potential, increase parental involvement, and improve teachers' skills." (Goals 2000, p. 1)

Another misconception is that GOALS 2000 created a "national school board" and that the board will control what is taught in the classroom. In fact, GOALS 2000 created the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) for the purpose of providing an independent review of the model of national and state academic standards. Despite the carefully delineated authority given to NESIC, many people are still concerned. The Secretary of Education, upon the recommendation by the National Education Goals Panel on January 28 of 1995, asked President Clinton not to appoint the NESIC. Other options have been discussed and four bills introduced to Congress would eliminate the NESIC.

The National Education Goals were created to be a unified effort of the Bush and Clinton administrations stating:

By the year 2000:

1. Every child will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matters including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, art, history, and geography; and every school in America will

ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.

4. The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

5. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

6. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

7. Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

8. Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children. (Goals, 2000).

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 under President Bush ushered in another wave of school reform. It incorporated increased involvement by the federal government in education by holding states and schools more accountable for student progress (Talley & Keyed, 2006). Under NCLB, each state was required to create not only standards but also assessments to measure how well students achieved the standards. NCLB imposed sanctions for those schools and districts that are not improving according to state-determined benchmarks also referenced as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). NCLB, yet another reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, adheres to the philosophy that all children can achieve and thus a school system should have “no child left behind.” This echoes the philosophy underlying the *A Nation at Risk* report.

In order to demonstrate progress toward the proficiency goal established by the federal government, states must set annual achievement targets or benchmarks. An annual achievement target is the percentage of students required to score in the proficient or above range in order for the school to be on target to have all students proficient in literacy and mathematics by the year 2013-2014; attaining these targets is more commonly referred to as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). To determine AYP, the law also stipulates that schools must test 95% of their student body and must disaggregate achievement data for specific subgroups, including subgroups for poverty level, ethnicity, race, limited English proficiency, and disabled status (NCLB, 2001). Elmore (2004) contends that a major problem with NCLB is that it requires the largest gains from the lowest-performing schools while not addressing issues of funding and instructional capacity.

The main goals of NCLB were to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students so that, by the end of the 2013-2014 school year, all students completing third grade will read proficiently; by the end of that same school year, all students will score proficient in reading and mathematics; and, in every core academic subject, there will be a highly qualified teacher (“Overview,” 2005). Essential elements of NCLB were formulated around four major reform principles which include: 1) accountability for results, 2) flexibility and local control, 3) expanded options for parents, and 4) an emphasis on teaching methods proven to work in order to close the achievement gap (Meier & Wood, 2004).

By requiring that all students, including minority and economically disadvantaged students, meet minimum proficiency requirements or risk federal sanctions, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) ushered in a new era of accountability and motivated schools to implement strategic reform efforts to reach the goals set forth by this federal mandate.

Race to the Top

The Race to the Top (RTT) program implemented under President Barack Obama is unique because it is by far the largest competitive grant program that the federal Department of Education has ever administered. Under RTT, states spearheaded efforts to create plans tailored to their students' needs. States also designed plans to turn around some of their lowest-performing schools using new ideas that engage students and transform school culture. In addition, states are providing more access to courses that are designed to prepare students for life after high school, such as language immersion, career and technical training opportunities, STEM courses, and AP classes.

Forty-six states and the District of Columbia submitted comprehensive reform plans to compete in the Race to the Top competition. Thirty-four states modified state education laws or policies to facilitate needed change and 48 states worked together to create a voluntary set of rigorous college- and career-ready standards.

The four key areas of reform include:

- Development of rigorous standards and better assessments
- Adoption of better data systems to provide schools, teachers, and parents with information about student progress
- Support for teachers and school leaders to become more effective
- Increased emphasis and resources for the rigorous interventions needed to turn around the lowest-performing schools

Herr (2003) contends that each time there is a change in national presidential administrations, there is likely to be a proposed shift in the emphases that educational practice and policy should

address, creating a constant process of “starting over,” looking for new solutions to enduring problems (p. 1).

The Institute for Research and Reform in Education

Due to individual schools’ context uniqueness and other factors, few low-performing schools have the capacity to implement ambitious reform efforts for increasing achievement without external support (USDOE, 2001). The Institute for Research and Reform in Education (IRRE) is a nonprofit organization with more than 50 experts working in specialized teams to provide strategic consultation, professional development, and technical assistance to their partnering schools. They serve approximately nineteen high schools in five states implementing the First Think First framework. They strive to survive changes in schools and are grounded in two fundamental principals: first telling the truth in what they see and then work with them to find customized and creative ways to meet the challenges of change. Second, they help build capacity to strengthen and sustain the work beyond their involvement (IRRE, 2014).

For more than 14 years, IRRE partnered with schools, states, and districts to develop more engaging, personalized, and rigorous learning environments for low performing schools. First Think First was created based on the previously stated commitment strategies wanting to lead to more meaningful improvement in students’ commitment and achievement. IRRE created a framework bringing five core strategies for transforming the school experience for students in ways that dramatically improve their academic performance and commitment. The strategies are:

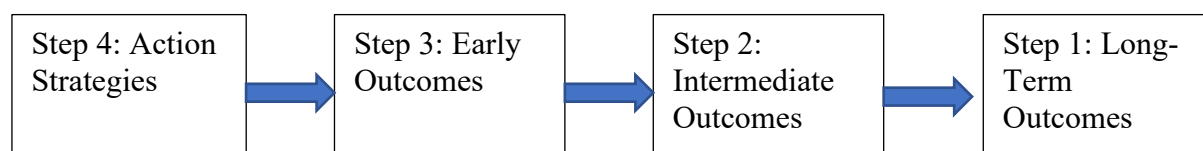
- Strengthening instruction
- Effective use of data
- Personalized learning communities
- Advocating for students and families

- Building system capacity to strengthen and sustain reform

Weiss (1995) defines a theory of change as a theory of how and why an initiative works.

A theory of action strays from the path of an initiative by taking action and making details of the initial new outcome. The quality of change can be judged by how plausible, doable, testable, and meaningful the theory of change is. Next, look at the intermediate outcomes, then move toward long-term outcomes to see if the earlier actions and strategies have been achieved (see Figure 2.1 below, Connell & Klemm, 2000). This approach recognizes the theory of change can change as it is tested over the course of the initiative.

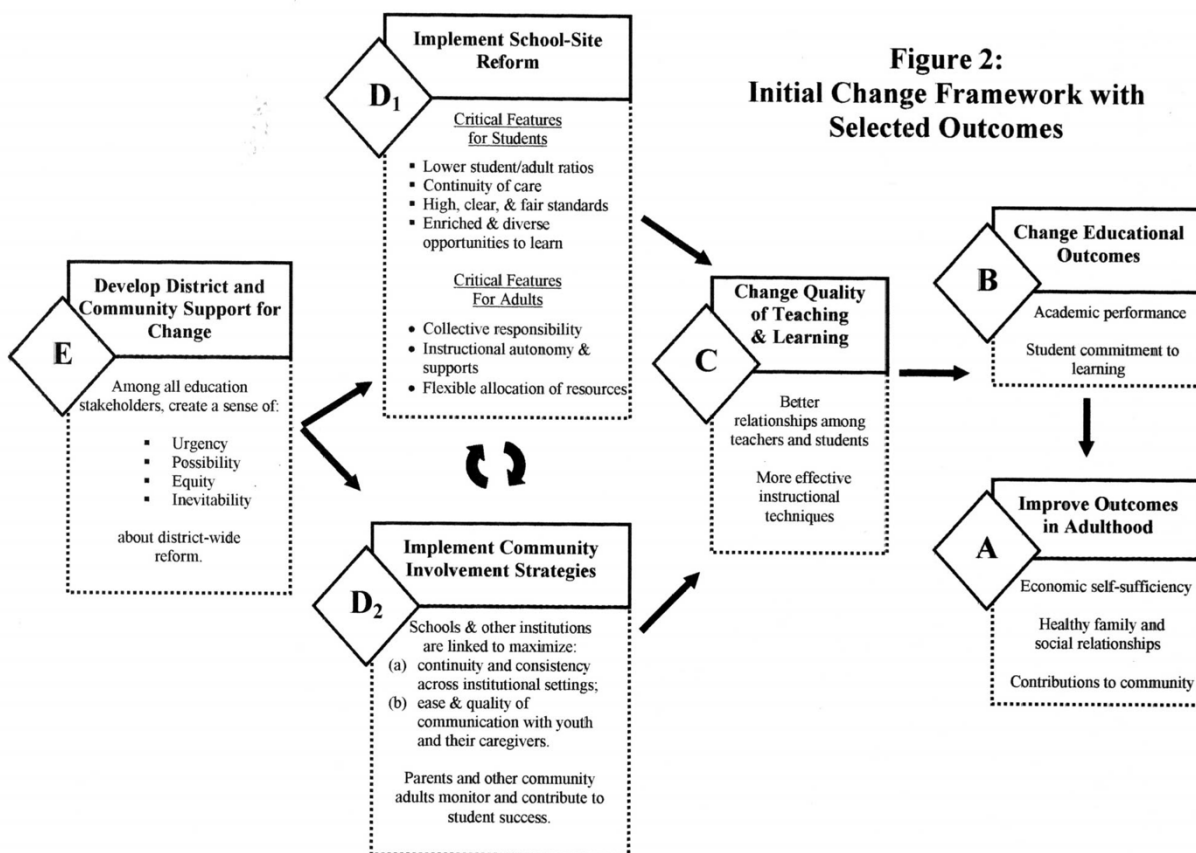
Figure 2.1 Steps in articulating a theory of change



Source: Connell & Klemm, 2000

Figure 2.2 was created by IRRE for use in a project involving three urban school districts. IRRE's role was to design a process whereby these three urban districts could guide their ongoing and future reform efforts. This particular framework reflects IRRE's and others' synthesis of research on youth and organizational development, intensive observation of successful urban schools and developing expertise in change at a school district level (Connell & Klemm, 2000).

Figure 2.2 Initial Change Framework with Selected Outcomes



Source: Connell & Klemm, 2000

Comprehensive reform becomes more tractable when a change framework with a few key elements can serve as a lens for examining current practices and planning future ones. Importing a framework directs early discussions toward common goals and understandings of what needs to be done and away from protective explanations. An imported change framework helps attach the reform agenda to a credible and testable knowledge base and detach it from particular personalities and positions. To ensure a framework brought in from the outside works is based on deliberate and careful dialogue, credibility, and the time and support to understand each element of the framework (Connell & Klemm, 2000).

Some researchers believe theories of change improve the evaluation of educational reform initiatives. Meaningful change can occur by frameworks that focus on the local initiatives' districts come to believe are true. Therefore, gaining the investment of time, funding, and trust can ultimately create a positive result for school reform initiatives, effecting the end result of improved student achievement.

Strategies of School Reform in the United States

School reform restructuring movements have not been particularly successful to date and are the subject of comprehensive literature. All of this could be due to the complex nature of schools and the restructuring process. Over the past 20 years, Dimmock and Walker (2000) reviewed a number of school reform strategies and briefly commented on the findings:

- **Time on task:** Increase the amount of time students spend on academic work. Not much research because allocated time may not affect instructional outcomes because the time may not be used wisely. Increase in student engagement may be more beneficial.
- **High Expectations and Challenging Academic Standards:** Are all students' background ready for this higher learning?
- **The Quality of Teaching:** The approach to teaching and the direct instructional strategies. Use higher order thinking skills, dialogue among students, and cooperative work practices.
- **School Restructuring:** (1) Change in the organization and management. (2) Personalized school environment. For example, a reduction in class size, (3) Encourage teacher participation in decision making, and (4) Problem solving and more teacher leadership.

Evidence suggests that all of the above can affect student achievement, but only when they occur in strongly focused instructional improvement initiatives. The Phoenix School Model embraced on many of these strategies: time on task with an extended day and after school programs, high expectations in core curriculum set for all students, quality teachers recruited, and a school restructuring model implemented.

Say Yes to Education: Syracuse

Say Yes to Education was born in 1987 by George Weiss, promising about 100 economically disadvantaged 6th graders from one of Philadelphia's toughest neighborhood, if they could persevere and graduate high school, he would pay for their college education. In 2008, Say Yes to Education: Syracuse represents the organization's first initiative to expand Weiss' original idea to a full community effort.

Say Yes to Education is a nonprofit organization linked to school improvement for the revitalization of a city . The Syracuse City School District has gone through some trying years, and student outcomes have not been encouraging. Say Yes to Education invested millions into the Syracuse project. This was a demonstration model to test the idea that a resurgence of public education will make real estate more attractive, draw businesses, and industry, bolster the tax base, and lead to urban revitalization.

Teachers are one of the most important elements in producing improved outcomes for struggling students. Unfortunately, not all students have effective teachers. Say Yes to Education in Syracuse has several driving forces (Maeroff, 2013):

- Foster the intrinsic motivation of teachers and students
- Engage educators and students in the continuous improvement of instruction and learning

- Inspire collective teamwork
- Allocate resources in strategic ways that support educational goals
- Foster site-based accountability and learning autonomy based on a belief that lasting change does not come top down
- Support professional development that enables educators to act on behalf of new expectations and responsibilities
- Provide rigorous curricula that have been proven to work with similar groups of students
- Promote data driven decisions using a student monitoring intervention system
- Recruit, develop, and retain effective teachers and administrators who have incentives to do good work

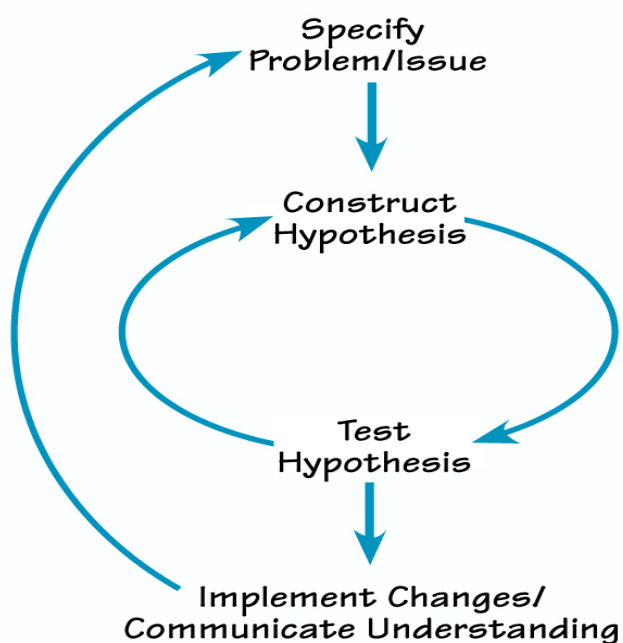
Say yes to Education is a program, not a District. The greatest challenge in Syracuse was the district's need to improve teaching and learning. The district could place site directors, hire social workers, extend learning time, but the ability to bring about change in the classroom was limited. This challenge fell on the school system, not the Say Yes to Education program.

The experience in Syracuse demonstrates the kind of change to which Say Yes to Education aspires. Say Yes to Education's fundamental belief is (1) changing scholastic outcomes depends not just on working with the school system, but on mobilizing an entire community and (2) that meaningful change stems not from addressing just one issue at a time, but from confronting a whole gamut of issues. Say Yes to Education continues to hope that Washington will recognize the organization's work as a model for demonstration projects in America's small to medium sized postindustrial cities (Maeroff, 2013).

School Transformation

Shaping a districts future will require a deliberate action to sustain the improvements created. Districts should give up trying to solve problems and focus instead on seeking opportunities for advancements. The policy making for school reform in general has three components: structure, process, and people (Duffy, 2004). In order to transform an entire school system, change leaders in that system must know what a system is and how it functions. They must know and understand what is meant by a system thinker. Figure 2.3 are the steps in the systems thinking method and the four stages.

Figure 2.3 Steps in the Systems Thinking Method



Source: Duffy, 2004

School transformation is not a quick fix for a school system and does not occur overnight. School District transformation must be navigated by strategic leaders who truly are system

thinkers who see both visible and invisible effects of change (Duffy, 2004). Only when you have a sufficient understanding of the situation should you begin to implement change.

Transformational leadership requires leaders who can motivate followers to work for long-term goals instead of short-term self-interest and to work toward achievement. Bass's (1995) research identifies five factors of the Dimensions of Transformational Leadership as followed:

- Charisma: the ability to instill values, respect, and pride to articulate a vision
- Individual attention: paying attention to followers' needs and assigning meaningful projects so followers can grow personally
- Intellectual Stimulation: helping followers rethink rational ways to examine situations and encouraging followers to be creative
- Contingent Reward: information followers what must be done to receive the rewards they prefer.
- Management by Exception: permitting followers to work on tasks without being interrupted by the leader unless goals are not being accomplished in a reasonable time at a reasonable cost.

Transformational leaders have an informal style with people. The approach is of this type of leader is we are in this together so let's see what we can do to be creative and solution orientated. The focus is on coaching and facilitating rather than directing and commanding.

Leadership

Although one might assume that leadership would inspire a vast amount of research, the topic has been far less studied than one would believe it to have been (Marzano et al., 2005). Furthermore, in the latest comprehensive review of the literature over the past 35 years, Marzano

et al. found that only 69 out of 5,000 articles actually examined the relationship between leadership and academic achievement. They also found that the research that has been conducted on school leadership is “quite equivocal or perceived as such” (p. 6). These findings make it clear that further study is still needed to identify those leadership attributes important in the academic achievement of students and school reform initiatives.

Organizational cultures are in part identifying leaders who can lead successfully within the context of school reform. Fullan (2001) asserted that finding solutions to complex problems is a responsibility of leadership. Describing how leaders are often placed in complicated situations in which they are expected to succeed using simple, one-sided solutions, Fullan argued that leadership requires confronting problems that have never yet been successfully addressed.

In a study, Hallinger et al. (1996) found that the direct actions of the principal had an indirect effect on school effectiveness. However, there was no direct effect of principal leadership on student achievement. These findings suggest that principal leadership is directly related to school effectiveness, which, in turn, indirectly influences student achievement.

Although Hallinger et al.’s study (1996) highlighted the importance of contextual influences on leadership, there remains limited data on the experience of schools designated as low performing. An explanation for the lack of studies examining the perspectives of schools undergoing external sanctions may be the difficulty in gaining access to such sensitive social contexts (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). In addition, much literature is focused on helping to improve rather than investigating these schools. Within the context of change, leadership may present additional challenges to school leaders. Some of these challenges are helping teachers deal with instructional changes, high stakes testing accountability, and global awareness for 21st Century learners.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) examined survey data from 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students. They found that the effects of principal leadership on student engagement were weak but significant. Seeking to identify the elements of leadership that directly impact student engagement, the researchers performed a regression analysis to determine the strength of the relationship between principal leadership, purpose and goal setting, culture, planning, structure and organization, and information collection. They found principal leadership to be significantly related to all of these school conditions, suggesting that although leadership is weakly related to student engagement, leadership is strongly related to the overall condition of a school.

Nicolaidou and Ainscow (2005) also addressed this gap in the literature by investigating four schools in the United Kingdom placed under “special measures.” The interviews and observations the researchers conducted over two years allowed them to identify the unique characteristics and challenges of schools facing extreme difficulties. In the beginning of their study, the major concerns facing all four participating schools were related to the core functions of teaching and learning. Later, a number of other significant issues were identified. During this period of study was a very emotional time for all of the schools; personal attitudes and beliefs towards “special measures” had negatively influenced working relationships and hampered improvement efforts. The researchers observed a culture of denial in which many staff members refused to acknowledge the reality of their situation, disengaging themselves from any responsibility. Viewing the entire identification process as the responsibility of others, mainly “administration,” they were extremely hostile towards change and mistrusted the external consultants and support services provided. Many staff members also reported feelings of uselessness and failure.

Finding and retaining teachers continues to be frustrating. Teachers who seem to build relationships, have a calling to teach, display passion and perseverance tend to stay in the field of education. Barth (1990) and Fullan (2001, 2003) have alluded to the enormous pressures' teachers are experiencing in today's schools. Many teachers are leaving the profession defeated because of their inability to reach all of their students. High stakes testing, lack of administrative support, excessive paperwork, and stress has increased the number of teachers deciding to leave the profession.

Fullan (2001) explained, "Change consists of great rapidity and nonlinearity on the one hand and equally great potential for creative breakthroughs on the other" (p. 31). Although change is complex and unmanageable, many scholars believe that change can be successfully undertaken (Barth, 1990; Fullan, 2001). The key to leading a successful change effort is in fully understanding the complexities of change (Bridges, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Schein, 1992). The process of having employees reapplying for their jobs during the Phoenix School Model allowed administration to employ professionals they felt had a positive outlook, collaborative nature, and willingness to conform to the changes the school was about to undergo. Changes teachers had to adhere to during the Phoenix School Model was to participate in professional development, be open to support personnel come into the rooms to help students, use data to drive instruction, learn teaching strategies using technology, have an extended school day, and be an active participant in school decision making.

A supporting and caring environment, setting high expectations, providing clear administrative goals, and allowing for meaningful participation in decision-making plays a significant role in teachers developing resilience. Teachers building collaborative relationships, where they can learn from each other, provided with sound professional development, having

control over their classrooms, and proficiency of their subject area were important aspects of the Phoenix Model and the changes that occurred at Bee Elementary School.

Conclusion

In this chapter, an exploration of merit pay, historical information on school reform at a National level, and various literature studies relating to leadership and school reform theory have been reviewed. The subsequent chapters will inform the methodology of the current study's research, findings, and implications. The remainder of this analysis includes an examination of the case study of Bee Elementary School related to organizational practices of the Phoenix School Model in Bumble County Public School System.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The central premise of this study was to examine the accounts associated with the essential roles that districts enact to achieve selected systemic reform. Given the complexity of district systematic selection of school reform, the researcher conducted a qualitative research study. As an intrinsic case study, the researcher's goal was to examine the creation of the selected reform school. First, this case study investigates the motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of one of the lowest performing schools in Bumble County Public School System (pseudonym used) due to Race to the Top funding awarded. Second, this study examined the Phoenix School Model implementation process and changes in practice of Bee Elementary School through describing the program in place at the school. Finally, this case study examined how the impact of such reform on the teaching practices, merit pay, and student learning based on Annual Yearly Progress of Bee Elementary School. Through these lessons being learned, this case study contributes to the literature on merit pay, school reform, and leadership.

Research Design

According to Bogdan and Biklan (1998), "A case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p. 54). An intrinsic case study becomes such because, "We are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest" (Stake, 1995, p. 4). This is not a study to correlate data among a variety of schools. However, the study will look at the Adequate Yearly

Progress data, merit pay, teacher working conditions survey, and describe the fundamental change of how the Bumble County School System implemented the Phoenix School Model.

According to Stake (1995), “Case study research is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case” (p. 4). For the purposes of my school system reform study, “. . . the case (was) preselected” (p. 4). Patton (2002) categorized the selection of a case for study reasons as purposeful: “The logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting information-rich cases. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 46).

Yin (2003) argues that the system can be studied with one of three types of case studies, depending on the purpose: exploratory case studies, explanatory case studies, and descriptive case studies. Exploratory case studies are often used to define the framework of a future study. “In this type of case study, fieldwork and data collection are undertaken before the final definition of study questions and hypotheses” (Yin, 2003, p. 6). Explanatory case studies, on the other hand, seek to define how and or why an experience took place. Their purpose is to suggest “clues to possible cause-and-effect relationships” (Yin, 2003, p. 7). Because these studies sometimes suggest causality, they risk the chance of being challenged on the basis that one case does not make for a true experiment. Finally, the descriptive case study is used to develop a document that fully illuminates the intricacies of an experience (Stake, 1995). These are often used to present answers to a series of questions based on theoretical constructs (Yin, 2003).

Since the idea for this entire study is based on knowledge of and access to one particular school, this case study may be considered explanatory in nature (Yin, 2003). It is my goal in exploring the motivation behind the school reform efforts, the implementation process, and for outcomes associated with the Phoenix School, Bee Elementary School, through gathering documentation, as well as through reviewing descriptive data of Bee Elementary School throughout their transformation process.

Site Selection

Since my interest and focus is on one of the Phoenix Schools in the Bumble County Public School System, I utilized networking to determine a proven leader in the county assigned as the principal of Bee Elementary School. My perception of the best leader is determined from the years of service the person worked in Bumble County, their track record of success in implementing change, the assumed leadership role for which they were recruited, and the willingness to open their school to the study.

I selected Bee Elementary School (pseudonym used) as the site for this study due to the school's low performance ranking in the Bumble County Public School System. The school was selected purposefully due to the accessibility of the principal, the leadership qualities hand selected by the County to initiate the school reform, and the principal's successful track record within the system.

Sample Selection

In order for the Bumble County Public School System to comply with the awarded funds by the Race to the Top guidelines, Bee Elementary School was selected because it was one of the lowest achieving schools in the county. As a model for other low performing school success, the findings of this study may possibly provide insight to district leaders in the Bumble

County Public School System. The researcher took an integrative analytic approach using data consolidation and case analytic strategies to gain an in-depth understanding of the case (Stake, 1995).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the circumstances behind the district policy to implement a vision of change as a systematic selection of school reform innovations in the Bumble County School System. The literature on research of innovative programs in education suggests that more qualitative studies should be conducted in order to better understand what is happening within the particular learning environments. O’Connell, Rust, and Freidus (2001) share that to truly understand innovative programs, it is imperative to not only ask what is happening, but to observe the happenings. “Investigators of innovation must elicit meaning and explanation from the participants and use these understandings to begin to stitch together a broad picture” (Popkewitz, Tabachnick, & Wehlage, 1982, p. 21)

The fundamental research questions are:

1. What are the district’s motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of one of the lowest achieving schools in Bumble County Public School System, Bee Elementary School?
2. How was the Phoenix School Model implementation of reform and changes in practice interpreted?
3. How did the decisions of Bumble County Public School System’s Model change teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix Schools, Bee Elementary School?

Data Collection

Since my interest and focus was on one of the Phoenix Schools in the Bumble County Public School System, I utilized networking to determine a proven leader in the County assigned as the principal of Bee Elementary School. My perception of the best leader was determined from the years of service the person worked in Bumble County, their track record of success in implementing change, the assumed leadership role for which they were recruited, and the willingness to open their school to the study.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bumble County Public School System has suspended all new data collection from teachers, students, and parents through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, interviews in my data collection was unable to occur. I decided to leave what my intentions were in the research methodology section for review.

For this study, I will use three methods of data collection: document analysis, interviews, and descriptive statistics. Of these data collection methods, document analysis will occur first. Next, interviews will be conducted. Subjects to be included in this research will be a district office representative, the principal, and two teachers. Finally, the obtainment of descriptive statistics will be reviewed not to compare, but to answer the research question if the school's reformation process changed teaching practices and learning.

The second type of data I will be collecting is from interviews (See Table 3:1). Considering the work of LeCompte and Preissle (1993), this type of interviewing is referred to as "key-informant interviewing" (p. 166). Their definition is, "Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge, status, or communicative skills and who are willing to share their knowledge and skill with the researcher. They are . . . chosen because they have access. . . to observations denied to the researcher" (p. 166). This is especially important in this study since I,

the researcher, am not involved in any of the planning or administrative selection of the Bumble County Public School System's motivating factors of reforming the lowest performing schools in the County. The interviews will provide a snapshot into the events of the many meetings and conversations that were held during the planning period, contributions of the leadership, and if merit pay played a role in improving teaching and student achievement.

I will contact each interviewee by email or telephone. I will explain to each of them the purpose of my research study and request an hour of their time for the interview. I will have a conversation with each interviewee about confidentiality. I will assign a pseudonym to each participant and explain that I will contact them to review any comments or quotes I want to use in my research and there will not be any monetary rewards associated with participating in this research.

Interview questions will be developed in advance (See Appendix D). I will explain to the interviewees that not all interview questions may be used in the research. Each interviewee will play a different role and bring a different set of experiences to the school restructuring process. Due to this potential possibility, I will need to remain flexible with my participant questions. I will interview a district representative, the principal and two teachers; one who was at the school prior to the reform and one new teacher who experienced the transition from the beginning. All potential participants will be emailed directly through their public email addresses. Administrators will be contacted based on their knowledge of the Phoenix School Model process. They will not be informed of the other participants. Selection of the participants will not be re-identifiable due to the large number of employees in the District and selected by the researcher. Due to convenience sampling and the access of potential participants, the sample size numbers will be small.

The third method for data collection selected for this study will be descriptive statistics. I will attempt to gain access to the following types of descriptive data for Bee Elementary School: End of Grade test scores, teacher working condition surveys, school demographics, and obtainment of funds from the pay for performance model.

Table 3:1 Research Questions and Related Data Sources

RESEARCH QUESTION	SUBQUESTION	SOURCE	INTERVIEW QUESTION
What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of the four lowest achieving schools in Bumble County Public School System?	When and where did school reform appear in federal legislation?	District Administrator, Collection of Documentation, Race to the Top Website	What events led to the development of the Phoenix Schools?
What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of the four lowest achieving schools in Bumble County Public School System?	Were the Phoenix Schools a response to federal/state legislation?	District Administrator, Collection of Documentation, Race to the Top Website	What are the key or critical factors that influences the schools reform?
What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of the four lowest achieving schools in Bumble County Public School System?	Federal? State? District?	District Administrator, Collection of Documentation, Race to the Top website, Bumble County Public School System Website	What are the original funding sources?

Table 3:1 (continued)

What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of the four lowest achieving schools in Bumble County Public School System?		District Administrator, Collection of Documentation	Who were the primary persons involved in the design of the Phoenix Schools?
How was the Phoenix School implemented and interpreted?	Federal? State? District?	District Administrator, Collection of Documentation, Principal, Teacher, Bumble County Public School System Website	What instruments were used to determine a Phoenix School's eligibility to be funded?
How was the Phoenix School implemented and interpreted?	What elements or activities were essential to ensure long-term success of the Phoenix Schools? Has anything been put in place to sustain the Phoenix Schools over time?	District Administrator, Collection of Documentation, Principal, Teacher	What was expected of the Phoenix School's to implement during the reform process?
How was the Phoenix School implemented and interpreted?	Pay for performance model? Extra resources?	District Administrator, Collection of Documentation, Principal, Teacher	In your opinion, are there strategies in place to support the implementation of the Phoenix Schools?

Table 3:1 (continued)

How did the innovated practices of Bumble County Public School System's reform decisions impact teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix School?		District Administrator, Principal	In your opinion, is there a shared responsibility to report on the Phoenix Schools to the federal, state or local district?
How did the innovated practices of Bumble County Public School System's reform decisions impact teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix School?		District Administrator, Principal, Teacher, Documentation Collected	In your opinion, what initiatives have been success/failures?
How did the innovated practices of Bumble County Public School System's reform decisions impact teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix School?	How many teachers were able to achieve this requirement? How do you feel about pay for performance?	Principal, Teacher, Documentation Collected	What role has merit pay played at the Phoenix School?

Table 3:1 (continued)

How did the innovated practices of Bumble County Public School System's reform decisions impact teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix School?	Teacher working condition survey? End of Grade Test Data? Teacher Turn-Over Rate? School Demographics? Obtainment of pay for performance funding?	Principal, Teacher, Documentation Collected	In your opinion, what changes have you seen at Bee Elementary School?
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Data Analysis

“The process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 155). “Bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data is messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 154). Researchers in the field identify several strategies that apply to a case study approach: a) ethnographic analysis, b) narrative analysis, c) phenomenological analysis, d) constant comparison method, e) content analysis and analytic induction, f) pattern matching, g) explanation building, h) time-series analysis, i) logic models, and j) cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Data analysis, according to Glense (1999), “involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p. 130) while conducting a study. This definition is appropriate to this study of the creation of the Phoenix School, based on the data collection methods of document analysis and interviews that I used in completing this project.

As the data is collected, I will analyze the descriptive statistics, conduct a document analysis of the implementation process, and code the interview results. I will use written memos to myself to maintain a log of thoughts, reactions, or themes that developed. As Glense (1999) suggested, I will use “analysis files” (p. 131) to track useful information that can include categories such as interview questions and quotes, people to be interviewed, themes, and ideas for different areas of further studies. The use of coding and categorizing of the data will assist in reducing the amount of data collected.

Coding is a process used to systematically analyze data in qualitative research. The key type of coding I used is open coding. Open coding is like beginning to work on a puzzle. You have to get organized to sort out the pieces bit by bit (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

When performing open coding the researcher attempts to keep his or her mind as open as possible to new ideas, to approach the data in an impressionistic way, and to gain multiple levels of understanding and interpretation. Data will be looked at successively, with a slightly different focus applied each time – based upon the categories and properties that have already emerged. In open coding, the researcher writes down anything and everything (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). One never knows what idea may become relevant later on. The researcher should write down all their ideas about the data. These memos then become data which can also be coded.

There are as many different ways to do coding as there are researchers. Some prefer to use note cards, others to write directly on the data, while still others like to use complex data analysis software. When done by hand, some workers prefer colored pens or markers, while others insist on preserving a margin along the side of every page of notes or transcript so as to write down coding memos. For my part, I will use hand coding. Through this experience, I will

establish a coding system for the documents and interviews to be conducted, which in turn may permit me to establish certain themes.

Validity and Reliability

Issues of validity exist in qualitative research just as they do in quantitative research. According to Stake (1995), in case study “. . .we have ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (p. 109). He continued by stating that we need . . . efforts that go beyond simple repetition of data gathering to deliberative effort to find the validity of data observed” (p. 109). With this in mind, procedures will aid in “increasing trustworthiness” (Glense, 1999, p. 32) of this case study.

In this case study, I will address internal validity by taking steps to ensure the findings match what the participants actually state. This will be accomplished by first using triangulation to cross check a variety of sources of data to verify findings as they develop. Inferences may be drawn from the document analysis and checked against actual conversations with the interviewees. According to Patton (2002), “Using a combination of data types – triangulation increases validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach” (p. 306). Also, as stated by LeCompte and Preissle (1993), “Triangulation prevents the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions...” (p. 48). Second, member checks will be used to verify data and interpretations with the participants who provided this information. The third procedure is an attempt to offer “rich, thick description” (Glense, 1999, p. 32). According to Glense, the purpose of this is to write so that the reader enters the research context. With the information collected from interviewees, peer examination will be used to seek input. The fourth process will be to review the initial requirements of the school reform documents and determine if the processes put in place were accurate. Finally, researcher

biases will be addressed by “clarifying the researcher’s assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study” (p. 205).

To address reliability, I will provide a detailed account of document and data collection, as well as interview feedback throughout the duration of the study. As emphasized by Lincoln and Guba (1985), qualitative research may best be thought about in terms of being dependable and consistent in data collection and results. “The question is then not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected,” (p. 206). To ensure reliability within the study I will provide a clear description of participant positions and use triangulation.

Generalizability

My purpose in conducting this intrinsic case study is not to replicate another study or to compare this case to another. The goal of this study is to understand and learn. The fact that case studies are not necessarily designed for purposes of generalizability is documented in the literature on qualitative research. Stake (1995) concluded that, “We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on the understanding of the case itself” (p. 8).

Limitations of the Study

The use of qualitative methods will limit the generalizability of the study. The study draws on the views of unique participants within the working dynamics of a school system. The study is therefore necessarily subjective and specific to this particular context. This is a case study on one school. I will analyze documents from Bumble County Public Schools System that

related to the implementation of one of the Phoenix Schools, Bee Elementary School, due to the Race to the Top funding.

Data will be gathered from a small sampling of individuals involved in the school reform process. The role of the person, the length of time working in the county, and accessibility and willingness in the process will determine the actual sample selection. The principal is ultimately responsible for the shape of the school's transformation.

My own subjectivity about the Pay for Performance and requiring all staff members reapply for their jobs will be placed aside. It is my desire to tell a story that is unfolding, and in doing so contribute to the educational literature on school reform.

Ethics and IRB

Human subjects will be used during this case study. Participants will be asked to answer a variety of questions and share their experiences through this school reform process.

- The Institutional Review Board at North Carolina State University must approve the study prior to conducting the research.
- Bumble County Public School System must approve the study prior to conducting research.
- Participants will be allowed to stop or withdraw from the study at any time.
- All data will exclude names of participants to protect the privacy of the school system and participants.
- Data related to this study will be kept on a password-protected computer of which only the researcher has access.
- Data will be saved to an external hard drive and will be secured in a filing cabinet of which only the researcher has access.

- All printed material will be kept in a filing cabinet of which only the research has access

During the IRB approval process, the initial proposal had to be adjusted due to the changes with COVID-19 and the human subject requirements. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bumble County School System has suspended new data collection from teachers, students, and parents through the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, I was unable to conduct interviews.

Summary

The story of the Phoenix School's inception, the interpretation held by the leaders, and the actual implementation of the schools is worth telling. Through these methods of data collection and analysis, it is my goal as the storyteller to... "find the most effective way to tell the story. . ." (Janesick, 1994, p. 215) and to shed light on the implementation of possible future Phoenix Schools. The methodology that was used in conducting this study, "A Phoenix School: Accountability, Change, and Achievement," included site selection, research design, data collection, data analysis, role of the researcher, validity, and the issue of generalizability have been presented. Ultimately, this research methodology permits the reader insight into one special school, with the possibility of many more to come. The purpose of the design of this research study is to develop a final product that is ". . .for all who are interested in schools and children, but most especially for teachers, administrators, and others whose daily work brings them into direct contact with classroom life the goal is simply to arouse the reader's interest and possibly to awaken his concern over aspects of school like that seem to be receiving less attention that they deserve" (Jackson, 1968, p. vii).

COVID-19 adversely impacted my study. I was unable to conduct interviews and the potential to obtain access to some documents was impaired.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study was to examine the development of policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the Race to the Top funding awarded. Since the principal's role in a successful change process might be significant, how has an adjustment in leadership, as well as school personnel, influenced a sustained change process in a low performing school? Due to a change in school personnel, does the influence of a bonus pay system influence the reform process and/or substantiate change? Furthermore, another purpose of the case study was to determine whether reforming of the school impacted teaching and learning. Therefore, to explore this process further, I will examine Bee Elementary School, one of the Phoenix Schools in the Bumble County School System that underwent changes during a school transformation process due to targeted federal funding and analyze the available documents during this process of change.

The data collections in this study are appropriate to the research questions and consistent with the methodology aligned with case study analysis. During the time of this research, interviews were unable to be conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bumble County School System was not approving research to be conducted at this time. Therefore, the analysis of the three research questions were derived from described data documentation. These descriptive data documents helped to explain the overall turnaround process with regard to student performance, school leadership, and the impact of teaching and learning and other metrics associated with the state's accountability system indicating the school's composite and designations.

Background of the Case

The Bumble County School System is a steadily growing school system in the Southern part of the United States with more than 19,000 employees and 160,000 students. The 190 plus schools consist of elementary, middle, high schools, special/optional, and academies. The Bumble County School System is one of the largest school systems in the state and in the top twenty largest school districts in the U.S. based on enrollment.

The Phoenix School Model being researched is Bee Elementary School. The school serves about 400 students. The student body is made up of about 25% African American, 50% Hispanic, 15% white, and 10% other. Approximately 75% of the students receive Free or Reduce lunch. The school ranks in the bottom 10% of schools in the state.

The original idea in the Bumble County Public School System for reforming schools came about due to the Race to the Top money the state was awarded in 2010. The District received \$10.2 million over a 4-year period. Some of his money, in turn, provided resources to the Local Education Agency (LEA), allowing it more flexibility in preparing students to be college and workforce ready. Four of the lowest performing schools were identified and known in the county as the Phoenix Schools.

In order to clarify the importance of a transition change process: Change is external and transition is internal. Change is situational and transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation (Bridges, 1993). As a result, many educational changes are unstable due to lack of attention to the transition process. This research further advances educational knowledge by, exploring how the leadership transition influences the overall change in reforming a school process and the impact on teachers and student learning.

Reviewing the research generated documents, multiple tables in Chapter IV have been created. The tables depict Bee Elementary School teacher working condition surveys from 2010-2020, leadership changes, and school performance from 2013-2019; interjecting where change was applied to answer the research questions.

In an effort to establish that the Bumble County Public School System represents a response to low performing schools in their district and utilizing Race to the Top funding, this intrinsic case study explored the decision-making protocol of school reform and its influence on a sustained change process. The fundamental research questions are:

1. What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of one of the lowest achieving schools in Bumble County, Bee Elementary School?
2. How was the Phoenix School Model implementation of reform and changes in practice interpreted?
3. How did the decisions of the Bumble County School System's Model teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix Schools, Bee Elementary Schools?

Research Question #1: District Motivation and Circumstances

To answer the first research question, "What were the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of the one of the lowest achieving schools in the Bumble County Public School System?", the researcher reviewed historical data of the district, including measures of student performance (Table 4.1). Based on data obtained from online historical data accessed due to being an employee of the district, Bumble County accepted Race to the Top funding and put a plan in place for the four lowest performing schools. This transformation process included: 1.) all school personnel needing to reapply for their position, 2.)

funding provided for more support personnel, 3.) funding for technology, 4.) the potential for receiving merit pay based on performance, 5.) a signing bonus to work at one of the four schools, and 6.) professional development.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

To understand the true significance and nature with the Phoenix School Model turnaround, it was important to align the numbers and measures collected within the data recorded by the state. In one of the Southern states where the Bumble County Public School System is located, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was a series of targets that schools, school districts, and states must meet each year. The ultimate goal was for 100% of students to score proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-14. Each of the 10 subgroups defined for a school: school as a whole, American Indian, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, White, economically disadvantaged, defined as students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), limited English proficient students (LEP), and students with disabilities (SWD) have to meet specific targets.

All students in membership in the school as of the first day of testing are included in the participation targets. However, only the students who have been in membership in the school for 140 days are included in the proficiency targets. A school must meet all its targets in order to make AYP. If a school misses even one target, the school fails to make AYP. Also, for schools and districts that receive certain federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, failing to make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject area (reading or mathematics) results in mandatory interventions such as offering students the option to transfer to other schools, supplementary tutoring for economically disadvantaged students, or even reconstituting the school with new staff in more extreme cases. Haynie, 2010.)

In order for the Bumble County School System to determine the need to implement the Phoenix Model, Table 4-1 shows the historical data of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) from 2002-2012. The state sets target goals that schools must meet to make AYP under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. It is interesting to see the pattern of the district not meeting academic growth from 2004-2011. Due to this continual downward trend, the district was accurate in determining the need to make decisions around implementing a plan for the lowest performing schools. A year after the Phoenix School Model was implemented, the district made academic growth. Based on the data, it could be concluded that the motivation and decisions of the district to implement a reform model were successful.

Table 4.1 AYP Data for Bumble County Public School System Historical Data from 2002-2012 Prior to Implementation of the Phoenix School Model.

Year	Academic Growth	AYP Targets
2002-2003	Met	65 out of 75
2003-2004	Met	68 out of 73
2004-2005	Not Met	66 out of 73
2005-2006	Not Met	71 out of 76
2006-2007	Not Met	67 out of 76
2007-2008	Not Met	63 out of 76
2008-2009	Not Met	69 out of 76
2009-2010	Not Met	67 out of 78
2010-2011	Not Met	59 out of 82
2011-2012	Met	86 out of 91

Source: Bumble County Public School System Adequate Yearly Progress Reports

Due to COVID-19 and not being able to conduct interviews in the Bumble County Public School System, the researcher was unable to determine some of the questions posed in Table 3.1 that would have assisted with answering research question 1 in more depth. Such as: Who were the policy makers? How much money was awarded for the pay-for-performance? What were the elements for the long-term success of the program? to name a few.

Research Question #2: Implementation of Reform and Changes in Practice

Based on research question 2 and the Race to the Top funding, the role of the district was to set parameters for the turnaround model for schools to receive the Race to the Top money indirectly based on the Phoenix School Model. Bumble County decided to have teachers and all school personnel re-apply for their positions. Principals and teachers were given signing bonuses (see Table 4.4 and Table 4.5) for agreeing to work at one of the low performing schools. The superintendent at the time generated a list of highly qualified teachers based on EVAAS data and generated a letter asking those teachers to consider working at one of the low performing schools. Signing bonuses were given.

Additional intervention teachers and instructional coaches, Promethean Boards, iPad and Chromebooks, and extended days were also part of the plan from the district. Money was set aside for school leadership teams to be created as part of an effort to change school culture. The state also decided for the district to have standardized tests created from an outside vendor to determine student achievement at the end of the year. Teacher evaluations would be based on these assessments for one-sixth of their total performance. There was over \$835,000 spent on performance bonuses, more than \$1.48 million spent on hiring bonuses for the four identified schools, each school received six extra teachers, new technology was purchased, and professional development for staff was provided.

The role of the administration was to implement the changes of the Phoenix School Model provided by the district administrative leaders. In this study, district administration had to implement change strategies, simultaneously developing a process and structure for implementing critical school improvement initiatives. Due to COVID-19, access to all of the specific details was unable to be obtained. The Effective Teacher Framework Model was put in place by the district that monitored the fully licensed and highly qualified teachers and administrators. This system was accessed online through the Districts intranet. The system also provided professional development opportunities, video demonstrations of effective teaching practices, literacy resources, and face-to-face professional development. Administrators were responsible for maintaining highly qualified employees in their buildings. Due to this initiative in 2012-2013, the Bumble County School System spent \$32 million of the Race to the Top funding for school-based professional development, including 950 opportunities of professional development; 13,000 district employees participated in the professional development opportunities.

The following tables present in chronological order the findings of this study over a period of 10 years. Table 4-2 indicates the change in administration during the time of the turnaround to today. Notably, there are varied levels of expertise and experience within the administrative team. It is important to note that the three principals in the current study served at different time periods throughout the turnaround. Principal Black, the initial principal of the turnaround, served Bee Elementary School from 2010-2014. He served in this position for about three and a half years prior to retiring. Prior to that, Principal Black worked at the district level. Principal Flower moved from the Assistant Principal position into the Principal position and remained there for approximately two and a half years before moving to a secondary school

principal position and then on to a senior administrative position in the district. Employee Stinger started out at Bee Elementary school during the turnaround period as an administrative intern. He then moved into a staff position, then an Assistant Principal position, and then to the Principal position in 2016, before also moving to a district level position.

Table 4.2 Timeline of Administration at Bee Elementary School

2010- 2011	2011- 2012	2012- 2013	2013- 2014	2014- 2015	2015- 2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018- 2019	2019- 2020
Prin. Black (Retired) Asst. Prin. Flower				Prin. Flower (Until Jan.) Asst. Prin. Stinger		Prin. Stinger			Principal Yellow
Admin. Intern Stinger	School Employee Stinger								

Source: Bee Elementary School website data past and present.

Research-Generated Documents

Historical documents were generated in order to analyze student performance, teacher working conditions, and other state accountability measures. The research-generated documents prepared for this analysis included: North Carolina School Report Card for school years 2013-2019, overall student performance, composite performance, teacher experience, and turnover, as well as the Teacher Working Conditions Survey for 2010-2020. The following analysis includes findings from each document and delves deeply into the critical components of the school turnaround period with regard to the school leadership.

Overall Student Performance

As state accountability measures mandate, school performance is based on a myriad of metrics. One of those metrics is student proficiency on high-stakes, standardized assessments. For comprehensive elementary schools, the assessment by which students are measured is the End-of-Grade (EOG) tests.

AYP Results for Bee Elementary School

Table 4.3 represents Bee Elementary School AYP reports. Of the six years of data, Bumble Elementary made AYP except from 2014-2015. One reason the school may not have made AYP that academic year is due to a shift in administration. Another reason for this could be due to North Carolina's decision to drop the Common Core Standards. This created a re-norming of end of grade testing. As research tells us, change in school leadership and state testing can lead to a drop in student achievement if the focus is not tailored to the needs of students (Loughridge & Tarantino, 2005).

Table 4.3 Adequate Yearly Progress Results for Bee Elementary School

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Overall Performance	D	C	C	C	C	C
Academic Growth	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Performance Grade	53	55	58	56	60	57

Source: Bee Elementary School State Report Card

Teacher Working Conditions Survey

The Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS) is a statewide survey of school-based licensed educators to determine if they have the supports necessary for effective teaching. Developed in the Office of the Governor as part of the Governor's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative (2002-2008), the work continues the biennial statewide survey out of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The results of this survey are one component of the ongoing process for collaborative school and district improvement plans. Results are also used as artifacts in the educator and administrator evaluation instruments in the state. More of the findings will be covered from the Teacher Working Condition Survey when answering research question 3.

Technology

One of the components put into place for the Phoenix School Model was the additional support and finding of technology. The following is a list Bee Elementary School received as part of the Phoenix School Model: wireless connectivity, interactive whiteboards and a document camera in core classes, new faculty laptops, 1:1 student technology devices, instructional software, and student enrichment programming to be used during and after school hours. The researcher concluded that all of these resources would benefit a school due to her personal and professional experiences in education.

Merit Pay

Merit pay can be difficult to determine a fair system to put in place for a school system. The Bumble County Public School System created a Phoenix School Bonus plan structure. (See Table 4.4, Table 4.5 and Appendix A.). All employees in the building had an opportunity to receive the bonus if they were new to the school or reapplied for their position. The bonus

installments were paid in December and June to eligible staff members. This accounted for staff members who were hired late or left the school early. No individual would be able to receive more than one bonus from the Bumble County Public School System. Staff could receive a sign on bonus as well as a bonus for the whole school, performance evaluation, or individual teacher growth.

Table 4.4 Bumble County School System Sign-On Bonus Structure Per Position Type

Principal	\$7,000
Assistant Principal	\$5, 000
Teacher/Certified Staff	\$2,900
Non-Certified/Support Staff	\$1,000

Source: Obtained from Bumble County Public School System

Table 4.5 Bumble County School System Performance Based Bonus Structure Type

Principal	\$7,000
Assistant Principal	\$5,000
Grades 4-5 Teacher	\$3,400
Grade 3 Teacher	\$3,400
Grades PreK-2 Teacher/Certified Staff/All Grades Teacher (Specialists)	\$2,400

Source: Obtained from Bumble County Public School System

While politics is inevitable in any organization, political inference in the operation of school systems can often lead to changes (Hui, 2014). After the first three years of the Race to the Top funding, the school board changed from a Republican majority to a Democratic majority in 2014. With this came the firing of the superintendent and the discontinuation of the Race to

the Top Phoenix School Model Reform program. This was due to the Board's mixed opinions on pay for performance and allocation of funding to the details of the Phoenix School Model (See Appendix 1).

Research Question 3: Impact on Teaching and Learning

Research Question 3 (RQ3) explores the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS) and attempts to marry the changes in the responses to the components of the Phoenix School, Bee Elementary School. The Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS) provides a great deal of insight into the minds of the staff during the years of this study. The items on this survey are designed to help administrators and district personnel evaluate the feelings and attitudes of the staff in key areas that are known to have a major impact on the culture and climate of the school. While reviewing this data, we need to keep in mind this is a survey given to staff every two years. Plus, during the Phoenix School Model, teachers were required to re-apply for their positions. Therefore, one may consider that the opinions from 2010 could be based on the prior year and a different staff.

Facilities and Resources

Table 4.6 shows the changes from 2010-2020 in the area of facilities and resources based on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS). One component of the Phoenix Schools was to provide professional development, access to instructional materials, and the space needed to provide the best instruction for students. During the Phoenix School reform process, teachers' opinions of sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials went from 76% -93%. This is a 17% increase. Once the Phoenix School reform funding ended, the opinions of teachers reverted back to what they were before the reform initiative. The same data showed a similar pattern for the areas of teachers having sufficient access to a broad range of professional support

going from 81%-89% from 2010-2014 then dropping by 10% in 2020. Finally, the physical space teachers had increased by 4% over the past 10 years, remaining relatively consistent.

Table 4.6 TWCS Responses of Facilities and Resources from 2010-2020

Survey Item Question	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials	76%	93%	93%	86%	77%	76%
Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional support personnel	81%	95%	89%	100%	96%	86%
The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning	84%	90%	89%	90%	93%	88%

Source: State Teacher Working Condition Survey website

Teacher Leadership

According to Table 4.7 on the TWCS, between 2012-2016, teachers had the strongest agreement with the statement they were encouraged to participate in school leadership roles. During the years of 2012-2016, teachers' responses in the area of teacher leadership were higher overall. 2010 showed almost the lowest scores of the 10 years except for in 2020, where teachers are recognized as educational leaders dropped. We could conclude due to the Phoenix School reform model, the administrative team of Mr. Black and Mr. Flower valued teachers taking on leadership roles.

Table 4.7 TWCS Responses of Teacher Leadership from 2010-2020

Survey Item Question	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Teachers are recognized as educational leaders	80%	95%	95%	93%	88%	79%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction	91%	95%	98%	91%	83%	86%
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues	88%	90%	98%	98%	86	83%
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles	86%	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems	83%	87%	86%	100%	86%	83%
In this school we take steps to solve problems	83%	92%	90%	95%	87%	86%
Teachers are effective leaders in this school	83%	97%	91%	100%	93%	95%
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	78%	86%	91%	95%	78%	65%

Source: State Teacher Working Condition Survey website

School Leadership

Strong leadership has been one of the most consistent findings of successful schools: school building level, district level, and state level (Whitney, Maras, & Schisler, 2012). Based on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS), from the years 2012-2016, as seen in Table 4.8 below, scores appear to be higher than in 2010 and 2018-2020. This decrease could be contributed to the change in administration. Even though Mr. Stinger had been a part of the school community from the onset of the Phoenix School reform process, during the time Mr.

Stinger became principal, the results for school leadership began to decrease in almost all of areas in the 2018 TWCS. Lack of experience as a principal could have played a part in this decrease since it was his first year as a principal. Research concludes that even the most well-prepared assistant principals encounter a steep learning curve upon assuming the principalship.

Table 4.8 TWCS Responses of School Leadership from 2010-2020

Survey Item Question	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
The faculty and staff have a shared vision	85%	100%	87%	-	88%	86%
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school	59%	87%	79%	95%	82%	74%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them	57%	78%	78%	91%	75%	62%
The school leadership consistently supports teachers	82%	95%	87%	95%	91%	81%
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction	91%	98%	95%	97%	98%	93%
The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning	97%	100%	100%	98%	98%	95%
Teacher performance is assessed objectively	83%	94%	98%	100%	93%	92%
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching	81%	84%	98%	100%	97%	95%
The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent	85%	85%	98%	100%	83%	90%

Table 4.8 (continued)

The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school	82%	94%	89%	100%	82%	80%
The faculty are recognized for accomplishments	66%	87%	94%	100%	89%	78%

Source: State Teacher Working Condition Survey website

Instructional Practices and Supports

Over the past 10 years, based on the TWCS as seen in Table 4.9, teachers feel like they use data to drive instruction aligned to the Standard Course of Study. The largest area of need teachers consistently feel is having the autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery. This could be due to the constructs the district puts in place of the scope, sequence, and pacing of the curriculum. Also, the area of teachers assigned to classes to maximize their likelihood of success consistently was lower than other areas. This could be attributed to the fact that many elementary schools do not departmentalize or have the autonomy to create their own class lists.

Table 4.9 TWCS Responses of Instructional Practices and Support from 2010-2020

Survey Item Question	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices/Aligned with ScoS	81%	88%	100%	98%	98%	100%
Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices	92%	95%	97%	-	94%	95%

Table 4.9 (continued)

Provide supports translate to improvements in instructional practices between teachers	82%	95%	93%	-	95%	80%
Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction	97%	93%	95%	-	98%	90%
Teachers are assigned classes to maximize their likelihood of success with students	79%	66%	85%	-	79%	67%
Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery	73%	54%	77%	-	74%	70%
Teachers believe almost every student has the potential to do well on assignments	-	-	88%	97%	98%	95%
Teachers believe what is taught will make a difference in students' lives	-	-	98%	96%	95%	98%
Teachers require students to work hard	-	-	98%	98%	97%	98%
Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how work is assessed	-	-	91%	93%	95%	93%
Teachers know what students learn in each of their classes	-	-	91%	97%	96%	88%
Teachers have knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by other teachers at this school	-	-	80%	96%	93%	83%
Teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction	94%	100%	91%	-	98%	100%

Table 4.9 (continued)

Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices	91%	84%	93%	-	95%	87%
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Source: State Teacher Working Condition Survey website

Analysis of Overall Responses on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Looking at Table 4.10 on the TWCS, teachers overall felt their school was a good place to work and learn. There was an increase from 84% in 2010 to 98% in 2016 and 2018. Then in 2020 there was a significant decrease of 10% to 88%. This could have been a result in a new administration or the result of the Principal Stinger leaving. Potentially, new administration can cause significant change to a school based on their philosophies and vision. It could also be speculated since Principal Springer was a part of the school as an intern from 2010, the vision, mission, and philosophies were carried over through his different roles and experiences at the school. Not much was able to be determined of Principal Flower due to COVID-19 and not being able to conduct interviews in the district.

Table 4.10 TWCS Responses of Overall from 2010-2020

Survey Question	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn	84%	88%	91%	98%	98%	88%

Source: State Teacher Working Condition Survey website

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study. As previously noted, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly interrupted data collection and necessitated some changes in the planned design and execution of the study. As such, the researcher collected what data was available. The

results provided important insight into the process, beliefs, and conditions on the Phoenix School Model. The results of the Phoenix School Model process indicated that the teachers felt that the model positively impacted the school between 2012-2016. The comparison of the working condition survey showed most teachers felt fairly comfortable with the school before implementation of the new model but declined by 10% in 2020. The researcher was able to determine this based on the generated data collected answered from the TWCS. The results show positive feelings among the teachers in almost every section for positive school cultural change. Chapter 5 provides an analysis and discussion of the findings of the study and their overall implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this case study was to examine the development of policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the federal guidelines awarded. Since the principal's role in a successful change process might be significant, how does an adjustment in leadership, as well as school personnel, influence a sustained change process in a low performing school? The case study sought to determine whether the reshaping of the school impacted teaching and learning through reviewing the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS) and other research-generated documents. Therefore, to explore this process further, Bee Elementary School was explored as one of the Phoenix Schools in the Bumble County School System that underwent a change during the school transformation process due to federal funding and was analyzed by the particulars of the phenomena during this process of change.

The study was conducted for Bee Elementary School which had been fairly unsuccessful and maintained, on average, poor student achievement. To improve the school's chances for success, the school implemented the Phoenix School Model. The goal of the Phoenix School Model was to provide comprehensive school reform strategies and solutions for the four lowest schools in Bumble County Public School System. The data collection within this study was appropriate to the research questions and consistent with the methodology aligned with case study analysis. The study analyzed researched historical data of the Phoenix School Model and how that, in turn, affected the academic achievement of the students. During the time of this research, no new research, including virtual interviews were able to be conducted due to COVID-19 and Bumble County Public School System not approving research to be conducted for the 2020-2021 school year. Therefore, to answer the three research questions of the Phoenix

School Model, research-generated documents were reviewed. Research-generated documents helped to explain the overall turnaround process with regard to student performance, school leadership, and the impact of teaching and learning associated with the state's accountability system indicating the school's composite and designations.

In an attempt to establish that the Bumble County Public School System represents a response to low performing schools in their district and utilizing Race to the Top funding, this case study explored the decision-making protocols of the school reform process and its influence on a sustained change. The fundamental research questions were:

1. What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of one of the lowest achieving schools in Bumble County, Bee Elementary School?
2. How was the Phoenix School Model implementation of reform and changes in practice interpreted?
3. How did the decisions of the Bumble County Public School System's Model change teaching practices and learning in one of the Phoenix Schools, Bee Elementary School?

Discussion of Findings

The researcher reviewed data from the past six Teacher Working Condition Surveys, from 2010-2020, to determine how the teachers felt about the school before, during, and after the implementation of the Phoenix School Model. This analysis used specific items that address significant factors that could affect school reform impacting teaching and learning. The significant factors included in the analysis were Facilities and Resources, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Instructional Practices and Supports, and Overall feeling about the school. The researcher reviewed the timeline of administration changes at Bee Elementary School as well as Annual Yearly Progress from 2010-2020. The years analyzed marked the period of time

before, during, and after full implementation of the Phoenix School Model. These three data sources were used to answer the research questions of this study.

Research Question 1: What are the district's motivation and circumstances to embark on a major reform of the four lowest achieving school in Bumble County?

Based on data obtained from online historical data accessed, due to the researcher being an employee of the district, the Bumble County Public School System was awarded a portion of the \$400 million of funding given to the state from the Race to the Top funding. Bumble County decided to use some of the funds and identified four schools to be restructured, known in the county as the Phoenix Schools. A team of educators at various levels in the county developed a plan for the schools. This plan included: 1.) any staff member working at a Phoenix School would need to reapply for their job; 2.) the latest technology to include iPads were provided and infused throughout the schools; 3.) additional staff support positions; 4.) funding for intervention services; 5.) central services support; 6.) professional development for teachers; 6.) a one-time sign on bonus for those staff members new to the school; and 7.) implementation of a pay for performance model for certified, non-certified, and administrators in the school.

The study revealed that from the criteria set, there were over \$835,000 spent on performance bonuses, more than \$1.48 million spent on hiring bonuses for the four identified schools, each school received six extra teachers, new technology was purchased, and professional development for staff was provided.

While politics is inevitable in any organization, political interference in the operation of school systems can often lead to changes (Hui, 2014). After the first three years of the Race to the Top funding, the school board changed from a Republican majority to a Democratic majority in 2014. With this came the firing of the superintendent and the discontinuation of the Race to

the Top Phoenix School Model Reform program. This was due to the Board's mixed opinions on pay for performance and allocation of funding to the details of the Phoenix School Model (See Appendix 1). In Chapter 2, the literature review on merit pay controversies confirming if they are equitable for teachers holds true with the belief Bumble County Public School System Board of Education.

Research Question 2: What did the reform of one Phoenix School, Bee Elementary School, look like through the implementation of the school transformation?

Based on the data obtained, Bumble County was using the Race to the Top federal grant money to provide \$1.3 million a year on extra teachers that the schools used for things such as reducing class size and providing additional intervention support. Bee Elementary school was one of the schools which received this money.

During the onset of the turnaround period, the Bumble County School District appointed Dr. Black to be the principal of Bee Elementary School. Principal Black served as a significant turnaround leader, raising student achievement and providing several positive experiences for teachers as reflected on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Dr. Black inherited a low-performing school with a challenge to implement the Phoenix School Model, along with potentially changing the culture of the school. Principal Black worked as the leader of the school from 2010-2014. Assistant Principal Flowers worked alongside of Principal Black until he took on the role of principal in 2014-2016. In 2016, Principal Flowers left Bee Elementary School to become a middle school principal then on to an administrative role at the district. By this time, the Phoenix School Model was dissolved in the district; however, data demonstrates the school was maintaining consistent growth and feedback from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey until about 2016.

Due to COVID-19, the researcher was unable to conduct interviews. However, it can be speculated based on the data that the change in personnel, extra personnel support, resources for students, and professional development played a role in the increase of student achievement and the school meeting Annual Yearly Progress goals. The merit pay initiative was unable to be determined based on the Teacher Working Condition Survey.

Data showed during this reform period, school leaders used data to help teachers drive instruction. Teachers felt they have a say in their role and felt supported by the administration, as well as were recognized for their accomplishments. One area that grew significantly during this time for teachers was the comfort level for raising concerns with the administration. This increase would show a reflection on administration during the time of implementation of the school reformation. Overall, by the end of 2014, 91% of the teachers felt like Bee Elementary School was a good place to learn and work compared to the onset of the Phoenix School Model in 2010 at 84%.

Research Question 3: How did the innovated practices of Bumble County school reform impact teaching and learning in one of the Phoenix Schools?

In reforming the school, evidence exists that the leaders of the school, Principal Black and Assistant Principal Flowers, worked diligently in shifting mindsets of the stakeholders within the building. This shift in mindset, from low to high expectations of students and teachers, was essential in developing the belief of success for Bee Elementary School. Based on the staff changes and the mindset of employees that all students have the capacity and potential to be successful was represented in the teacher working condition survey. After the transition of the Phoenix School process, teachers needed to be motivated in order to redesign their instructional practices, which would move the school from being labeled low performing to a competitive

learning environment. The potential shift in mindset was potentially the foundation for providing the cultural exchange needed to increase and sustain higher student performance with the support of the Phoenix School Model of professional development, extra support personnel, and a change in personnel at the school level who potentially wanted to be at Bee Elementary School to be a change agent under the direction of Dr. Black.

In conclusion, the findings of this study, for the most part, were consistent due to the implementation of the reform. Prior research regarding school takeovers revealed regardless of the demographic characteristics of a school district, districts which have been subject to takeover often have three things in common: political corruption or influence, poor student achievement, and some degree of financial mismanagement (Wong & Shen, 2003b). Some of these things were prevalent in Bumble County School System.

The Say Yes to Education program (Maeroff, 2013) also represented similar expectations and outcomes of the Phoenix School Model. Both initiatives provided extra time for students to learn, recruit, develop and retain effective teachers, provide rigorous curriculum with accountability and learning autonomy, and provided ownership of the school improvement process with having a voice.

While politics is inevitable in any organization, political inference in the operation of school systems can often lead to changes (Hui, 2014). After the first three years of the Race to the Top funding, the school board changed from a Republican majority to a Democratic majority in 2014. With this came the firing of the superintendent and the discontinuation of the Race to the Top Phoenix School Model Reform program. This was due to the Board's mixed opinions on pay for performance and allocation of funding to the details of the Phoenix School Model (See Appendix 1).

As a current teacher in a school district which has been operating with low performing schools and changing the reform model often, this researcher has witnessed the effect that political influence and financial management decisions can have on student achievement. Reviewing Figure 2:1 by Connell and Klemm, the Phoenix Model encompassed all of the steps except for Step 1 Long-Term Outcomes. Due to the political change with the Board members, the Phoenix School Model dissolved, and the monies were absorbed for this initiative. As an “insider” in the District, the researcher had first-hand knowledge of the time frame of this initiative, as well as the actions taken after for low performing schools. The actions of changes in procedures and processes of low performing schools have changed at least three times since the Phoenix School Model. These changes have occurred without the financial support, resources, and additional staff that were provided during the Phoenix School Model. Low performing schools in the district currently have not shown the growth since the Phoenix School Model was in place.

Challenges and Implication for Practice

The first finding from this study indicates that the district focused on improving student achievement by means of the Phoenix School Model. The turnaround of Bee Elementary School began under the leadership of Dr. Black’s appointment as principal in 2010 through 2014 when he retired. Mr. Flower was the Assistant Principal at the time, then sustained the journey when appointed principal from 2014-2016. The Phoenix School Model was dissolved in 2014 once the school board changed political affiliation and decided to do something else for low performing schools. None of the elements of the Phoenix School Model was applied to future decisions on low performing schools in the district.

Based on the Race to the Top money, Bee Elementary School was identified as one of the lowest performing schools in the district. The school was awarded additional staff, technology, professional development, and new leadership. These things provided a wealth of support to the low performing school as reflected in the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Due to COVID-19, interviews were unable to be conducted. Therefore, the researcher was unable to ask questions of staff and administrators to see the impact of these additional resources compared to potentially losing them a few years later. The other challenge of not being able to interview staff relates to the change in leadership and how this impacted the culture and turnaround of the school.

Also, without knowing if there was a decrease in additional intervention personnel, the school may have been tasked to sustain the turnaround with less-instructional personnel, fiscal money, and professional development. Teachers who once depended on extra personnel for support of students now have to potentially create the additional strategies and interventions on their own, which could become increasingly harder with larger class sizes for a single teacher to manage.

The implication of these challenges suggests the need for additional district support of schools identified as low performing in the way of ongoing fiscal support and equitable structures for resources. The current study has some implications for practice that points to the need for additional financial resources so schools can make more informed decisions based on their own students need for success and to have professional development to meet the needs of the teachers to improve student achievement. All of this is based on the decreases seen in the Teacher Working Conditions Survey after the Phoenix School Model ended.

There are also limits to sustainability within the Phoenix School Model. Since the Race to the Top program and funding ended, the district would be hard pressed to find future funding to support the implementation of the Phoenix School Model. Potentially, each year more schools could be identified as being a low performing school. The district would potentially have a hard time providing extra personnel, increased access to technology, time for staff to engage in professional development, and money to support bonuses at a large scale across the district.

Another limitation to the study is due to COVID-19 and the district suspended all research initiatives and interviews were unable to be conducted. Therefore, the researcher was unable to fully assess the implementation of the Phoenix School Model at Bee Elementary School. Since interviews with teachers and staff were not able to be conducted, only a partial picture of the implementation of the Phoenix School Model was only able to be presented. If these interviews could have been conducted, this may have impacted or altered the conclusions of the case study.

The current study has clear implications for practice. It points to a need for principals, specifically those leading low performing schools, to expand their capacity of working directly with teachers to develop a culture in the building and focus on how to continue to turn around the school. The Teacher Working Conditions Survey validates these implications from the past four years when leadership has changed. Now the work could continue to take a deeper look at other states or districts with the intention connected with principals and school reform.

The current study can be used as a comparison model for what the district has in place now for low performing school compared to that of the Phoenix Model. As an insider, the focus now seems to be on benchmarking students and providing interventions for learning gaps. Bumble County Public School System may benefit from conducting focus groups of teachers

who were a part of the Phoenix School Model for suggestion and feedback of their experiences. The Teacher Working Condition Surveys showed an increase in teachers wanting to have a voice in decision making about curriculum, processes, and to feel supported for leadership.

Finally, the School Board of Bumble County Public School System can review the data from the Phoenix School Model and compare that to the other school systems in the state that were awarded Race to the Top funding. If the outcomes were similar, the potential of the district and state may need to determine how they can embrace these outcomes and allocate funds to support a system of school reform.

Implications for Research

The purpose for this study was to examine the development of policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the federal guidelines awarded from Race to the Top funding. The results offer an understanding of how the school can affect the level of student achievement in a school building. When the survey results show lower percentages in 2014, a change in administration happened in 2014, and a drop in Adequate Yearly Progress occurred during this time. Full implementation of the Phoenix School Model can change the impact of the school's culture and more specifically the thoughts of teachers and the feelings about what was important at the school. A possible explanation of lack of higher student achievement is that a drop in student achievement is expected at the onset of any new change in a school (Fullen, 2001).

This study contributes to the body of research and the development of school reform. It is clear that the Phoenix School Model had been successful when the school had a new principal with a new vision, mission, and changes in the school's philosophy, coupled with the additional staff and resources for professional development. The study focused on one of the Phoenix

Schools in the district; however, future research might be conducted with the other three schools that went through this change. Such research would assist the district in determining the future of this program compared to that which may be currently in use. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to conduct in-depth case studies of districts that have gone through a similar process of change.

A case for practical consideration of the Phoenix School Model can be made when district leaders want to improve a low performing school similar to the school in this study. The results show that the implementation of this program can build a framework that enhances positive behaviors among staff, demonstrate a clear vision, offer support, and the understanding that teacher accountability and low achievement in a school can result in an increase in student achievement. Another way to apply what has been learned by this study is for principals and district leaders to review the culture and climate of a school. The study supports the notion of using the Teacher Working Conditions Survey results and student achievement data to identify practices and attitudes that lead to changes within a school.

Lastly, this study could be further supported by a mixed qualitative and quantitative study or a control group of students to measure achievement and school culture between similar schools. The study would run over multiple years to address factors such as school demographics and changes in staff and/or administrators. Interviews could be conducted with all stakeholders, including students and members of the school community. The additional research on this topic including students' perspectives of the turnaround process and their observations of significant factors which led to improvement would advance the work, scope, understanding, and complexity of reforming low performing schools.

Conclusion

The desired outcome of this research was to examine the policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district. Race to the Top was designed to encourage higher state standards, create new data systems, improve teacher effectiveness, and strengthen low-performing schools. States were asked to describe their current policies and outline their goals to meet the initiative's criteria. This is how Bumble County established their norms to embark on this federal funding opportunity. Therefore, by putting these policies in place, the goal was to raise proficiency standards after Race to the Top was implemented and this was shown based on the annual yearly progress data.

Leadership is a critical role that principals instantly step into when they are placed in a school. The principal cannot lead effectively without the support of the local district. Therefore, it is important for district leaders to be authentic, forward thinking, resilient, optimistic, and consistent. Bird et al. (2013) suggests that a superintendent's behavior concerning leadership should promote ethical changes aligned with executive actions conceptualized through school improvement practices. Since principals are the driving force behind the overall success of their schools, Lock and Lummis (2014) suggest districts provide principals with opportunities to make financial, operational, and program autonomy decisions in exchange for this responsibility.

Within this structural frame, the leadership of Bee Elementary School implemented a strategic plan, the Phoenix Model, appropriate for the school that addressed low achievement. Bee Elementary School made the changes associated with the parameters of the Phoenix Model and at the same time built a common belief system set around desired growth, development and achievement. Based on the Teacher Working Condition Survey, the culture was shaped to enhance standards and expectations of a framework focused on hard work, teacher voice, and

open lines of communication. Together, each of these provide some evidence as to the significance of the beginnings of the turnaround which took place at Bee Elementary School.

This study provided insight to the turnaround efforts of the Bumble County School District focused on one school, Bee Elementary School. It took into account the circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the federal guidelines. Furthermore, the case study determined if the reshaping of the school impacted teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning.

This study also will serve as a tool for district administrators, principals, teachers, students, and parents. Throughout this process, I was given the opportunity to reflect as a scholar, practitioner, and developer. My research adds to the body of work that already exists on the topic of school reform. My program evaluation on the Phoenix School Model will be new for the school district because to the best of my knowledge, the program has not been previously evaluated in these terms. Although the Phoenix School Model no longer exists in Bumble County Public School System, based on my findings it may be worth taking another look. This will make me an available researcher for the local school district because it is important to continue the evaluation of any implemented program for low performing schools.

Leaders cannot operate based on their feelings; teachers cannot be reluctant to change; and the district cannot neglect to provide essential resources. In the future, I hope the school district will become more consistent in the implementation and evaluation of low performing school reform models; this may help ensure that these schools achieve success. After all, success is not something that happens sporadically; it is intentional and strategic.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Phoenix Schools Bonus Plan

Signing bonus

- Staff members new to the school will receive the bonus, provided they are selected by way of the interview process. Furthermore, the interview process will include the use of a highly defined interview rubric/profile. Individuals “placed” at the school by the school system will not receive the bonus. This plan also allows individuals on the schools’ 2010-2011 staff rosters to receive the bonus if retained for the 2011-2012 school year after being selected as a result of the interview process.
- This payment will be given to eligible employees in ½ installments at the end of December and June. An eligible staff member simply needs to be a member of the staff at those times of the school year to get the bonus.
- The bonus also will be given to staff members new to the school for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years in an amount to be determined at a later date based on the availability of funds for this initiative.
- No individual can receive more than one signing bonus from BCPSS under this plan. In other words, if a person moves from one Phoenix School to another one, he/she cannot get the bonus at the new site as well.
- CNS staff members, bus drivers, and custodians are not eligible for a signing bonus. This decision is due to the fact that these groups will not be a component of the reconstruction process of each school’s staff.

Bonus structure per position type:

Principal	\$7000
Assistant Principal	\$5000
Teacher/Certified Staff	\$2900
Non-Certified/Support Staff	\$1000

Performance Bonus

The following six categories per position type will be established for this bonus:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Grades 4-5 Teacher
- Grade 3 Teacher
- Grades PreK-2 Teacher/Certified Staff/All Grades Teacher (Specialists)
- Non-Certified/Support Staff.

Explanations of action needed to satisfy the evaluation criteria:

Whole School Growth = The school's "performance composite" on the ABC's Accountability Model is 75% or greater and the school's performance satisfies at least one of the following two criteria:

- a. The school attains "High growth" on the ABC's Accountability Model.
- b. The school has all "green" ratings on EVAAS on 4th Grade Reading, 5th Grade Reading, 4th Grade Math, 5th Grade Math, and 5th Grade Science.

Individual Growth (Grades 4-5 Teacher) = The teacher's performance leads to at least one of the following outcomes:

- a. The teacher is rated "above average" on EVAAS in all tested areas based on his/her students' performance.
- b. 75% of the teacher's students meet expected growth targets on their Reading and Math End-of-Grade tests on the ABC's Accountability Model.

Note: "Individual Growth" only applies to teachers in grade 3, grade 4, and grade 5.

Note: The teacher has to be the "teacher of record" to qualify for this part of the bonus.

Individual Growth (Grade 3 Teacher) = 75% of the teacher's students must score "at or above Level III" on their Reading and Math End-of-Grade tests on the ABC's Accountability Model. (This standard is the only one applicable to the Grade 3 Teacher "individual growth" measure.)

Note: "Individual Growth" only applies to teachers in grade 3, grade 4, and grade 5.

Note: The teacher has to be the "teacher of record" to qualify for this part of the bonus.

Evaluation Growth = The staff member achieves an average of at least a "Level 2" rating on the different standards included in his/her year-end evaluation. The "Level 2" rating coincides with the following per position type: Accomplished (Principal), Accomplished (Assistant Principal), Accomplished (Teacher), Above Standard (Certified Staff), and Exceeds Expectations (Non-Certified/Support Staff).

Note: An exception to this rule will be applied to the Windy Elementary staff members. Windy Elementary, as a part of the TIF grant, will use the TAP model for the calculation of "evaluation growth."

Note: A staff member will not satisfy this requirement if a single rating on any standard on his/her year-end evaluation does not reflect "proficient" or "at standard" performance.

Note: When computing the average rating, rounding of results will not be permitted.

Bus drivers are not eligible for a performance bonus due to their lack of involvement in the daily operations inside of the school.

Bonus structure per position type

Principal	\$7000
Assistant Principal	\$5000
Grades 4-5 Teacher	\$3400
Grade 3 Teacher	\$3400
Grades PreK-2 Teacher/Certified Staff/All Grades Teacher (Specialists)	\$2400
Non-Certified/Support Staff	\$1000

Special Notes/Issues to Resolve

- Every staff member who is eligible for a signing bonus is eligible for a performance bonus. However, some staff members are eligible for a performance bonus but not a signing bonus.
- The performance bonus will be paid at the start of the 2012-2013 school year for each school's performance during the 2011-2012 school year. Likewise, the performance bonus will be paid at the start of the 2013-2014 school year for each school's performance during the 2012-2013 school year. If carryover of unused funds to the start of the 2014-2015 school year is permitted, the performance bonus will be paid at the start of the 2014-2015 school year for each school's performance during the 2013-2014 school year using unused funds from the previous years. However, the 2013-2014 performance bonuses per position type may not be as large due to the availability of funds at that time.
- At Windy Elementary, money from the TIF grant can be used for a teacher's performance bonus and a teacher assistant's performance bonus under this plan. However, TIF grant money cannot be used for a signing bonus for any staff member at the school or a performance bonus for any clerical/non-teacher assistant support positions at the school.
- A staff member who is not 100% employed at a Phoenix School will receive a percentage of any bonus, signing or performance, for which he/she is eligible that matches his/her employment percentage at that particular school.
- This entire plan is contingent on the school system's receipt of the "Race to the Top" funds in the expected amounts.
- Payments to employees under this plan are considered "special duty" pay for service at a Phoenix School. Such payments are not considered part of an employee's base pay. Furthermore, the elimination or reduction of this pay for an employee does not constitute a "demotion." In addition, no expectation for this pay to extend beyond the years outlined in this plan exists.
- If a Phoenix School staff member leaves the school prior to the end of a school year, he/she will not be eligible for a performance bonus. This standard applies to staff members who leave BCPSS and ones transferring to a new school in BCPSS. Obtained from BCPSS

Appendix B

U.S. Department of Education Government Program State List

U.S. Department of Education			
2006	2007	2009	2009 ARRA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska • Arkansas • California • Connecticut • Florida • Kentucky • Maryland • Michigan • Minnesota • Pennsylvania • Ohio • South Carolina • Tennessee • Wisconsin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arizona • Colorado • District of Columbia • Indiana • Kansas • Maine • Nebraska • Nevada • New Hampshire • North Carolina • Oregon • Utah • Virginia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arkansas • California • Connecticut • Florida • Georgia • Hawaii • Idaho • Illinois • Iowa • Kansas • Kentucky • Louisiana • Maryland • Massachusetts • Ohio • Oregon • Pennsylvania • Rhode Island • Texas • Washington • Wisconsin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arkansas • Colorado • Florida • Illinois • Kansas • Maine • Massachusetts • Michigan • Minnesota • Mississippi • New York • Ohio • Oregon • Pennsylvania • South Carolina • Texas • Utah • Virginia • Washington • Wisconsin

Source: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS>

Appendix C

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

Standards for School Leaders

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- learning goals in a pluralistic society
- the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans
- systems theory
- information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- effective communication
- effective consensus-building and negotiation skills

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the educability of all
- a school vision of high standards of learning
- continuous school improvement
- the inclusion of all members of the school community
- ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults
- a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices
- doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members
- the vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities
- the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders
- the vision is developed with and among stakeholders
- the contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated
- progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders
- the school community is involved in school improvement efforts
- the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and actions
- an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision and goals are clearly articulated
- assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals

- relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals
- barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed
- needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals
- existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals
- the vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- student growth and development
- applied learning theories
- applied motivational theories
- curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement
- principles of effective instruction
- measurement, evaluation, and assessment strategies
- diversity and its meaning for educational programs
- adult learning and professional development models
- the change process for systems, organizations, and individuals
- the role of technology in promoting student learning and professional growth
- school cultures

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling
- the proposition that all students can learn
- the variety of ways in which students can learn
- lifelong learning for self and others
- professional development as an integral part of school improvement
- the benefits that diversity brings to the school community
- a safe and supportive learning environment
- preparing students to be contributing members of society

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect
- professional development promotes a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals
- students and staff feel valued and important
- the responsibilities and contributions of each individual are acknowledged
- barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed

- diversity is considered in developing learning experiences
- lifelong learning is encouraged and modeled
- there is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff performance
- technologies are used in teaching and learning
- student and staff accomplishments are recognized and celebrated
- multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students
- the school is organized and aligned for success
- curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined
- curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies
- the school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis
- a variety of sources of information is used to make decisions
- student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques
- multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students
- a variety of supervisory and evaluation models is employed
- pupil personnel programs are developed to meet the needs of students and their families

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development
- operational procedures at the school and district level
- principles and issues relating to school safety and security
- human resources management and development
- principles and issues relating to fiscal operations of school management
- principles and issues relating to school facilities and use of space
- legal issues impacting school operations
- current technologies that support management functions

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching
- taking risks to improve schools
- trusting people and their judgments
- accepting responsibility
- high-quality standards, expectations, and performances
- involving stakeholders in management processes
- a safe environment

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

-

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community
- the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community
- community resources
- community relations and marketing strategies and processes
- successful models of school, family, business, community, government and higher education partnerships

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- schools operating as an integral part of the larger community
- collaboration and communication with families
- involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes
- the proposition that diversity enriches the school
- families as partners in the education of their children
- the proposition that families have the best interests of their children in mind
- resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on the education of students
- an informed public

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- high visibility, active involvement, and communication with the larger community is a priority
- relationships with community leaders are identified and nurtured
- information about family and community concerns, expectations, and needs is used regularly
- there is outreach to different business, religious, political, and service agencies and organizations
- credence is given to individuals and groups whose values and opinions may conflict
- the school and community serve one another as resources
- available community resources are secured to help the school solve problems and achieve goals
- partnerships are established with area businesses, institutions of higher education, and community groups
- to strengthen programs and support school goals
- community youth family services are integrated with school programs
- community stakeholders are treated equitably
- diversity is recognized and valued
- effective media relations are developed and maintained
- a comprehensive program of community relations is established

- public resources and funds are used appropriately and wisely
- community collaboration is modeled for staff
- opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills are provided

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- the purpose of education and the role of leadership in modern society
- various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics
- the values of the diverse school community
- professional codes of ethics
- the philosophy and history of education

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the ideal of the common good
- the principles in the Bill of Rights
- the right of every student to a free, quality education
- bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community
- accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions
- using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
- development of a caring school community

Performances

The administrator:

- examines personal and professional values
- demonstrates a personal and professional code of ethics
- demonstrates values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance
- serves as a role model
- accepts responsibility for school operations
- considers the impact of one's administrative practices on others
- uses the influence of the office to enhance the educational program rather than for personal gain
- treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect
- protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff
- demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community
- recognizes and respects the legitimate authority of others
- examines and considers the prevailing values of the diverse school community
- expects that others in the school community will demonstrate integrity and exercise ethical behavior
- opens the school to public scrutiny

- fulfills legal and contractual obligations
- applies laws and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- principles of representative governance that undergird the system of American schools
- the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation
- the law as related to education and schooling
- the political, social, cultural and economic systems and processes that impact schools
- models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural and economic contexts of schooling
- global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning
- the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system
- the importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- education as a key to opportunity and social mobility
- recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures
- importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education
- actively participating in the political and policy-making context in the service of education
- using legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the environment in which schools operate is influenced on behalf of students and their families
- communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate
- there is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups
- the school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted by local, state, and federal authorities
- public policy is shaped to provide quality education for students
- lines of communication are developed with decision makers outside the school community

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Appendix D

Informed Consent

Title of Study: “A Phoenix School”, Accountability, Change, and Achievement (eIRB # 12996)

Principal Investigator: Kim Pavlic, ksnichol@ncsu.edu, 919-332-8393.

Funding Source: None

Faculty Point of Contact: Dr. Lance Fusarelli, ldfusare@edu, 919-513-0507

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are invited to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate, and to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the development of policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the Federal guidelines awarded. We will do this through asking you a set of questions through a personal, recorded interview.

You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in this study. Research studies also may pose risks to those who participate. You may want to participate in this research because you were a part of a school policy reform at one point in your career. You may not want to participate in this research because of time constraints.

Specific details about the research in which you are invited to participate are contained below. If you do not understand something in this form, please ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If, at any time, you have questions about your participation in this research, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above or the NC State IRB office. The IRB office’s contact information is listed in the *What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?* section of this form.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to examine the development of policy circumstances to embark on reforming low performing schools in the district based on the federal guidelines awarded.

Am I eligible to be a participant in this study?

There will be approximately 4-6 participants in this study.

In order to be a participant in this study, you must agree to be in the study, be a current or former employee who is familiar with the Bee Elementary School and the Phoenix Model process in the role of a teacher, principal, or district administrator for Bumble County Public Schools, and you agree to have your interview recorded. You cannot participate in this study if you do not meet all of the inclusion criteria.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do all of the following:

1. Complete this consent form online
2. Complete a broad consent form online, which will allow me to keep your research data for future use. You do not need to say yes on the broad consent form to participate in this research.
3. Indicate your interview availability and preference for either a recorded phone or Zoom interview.
4. Complete an up to hour-long recorded interview either over the phone or on Zoom. You will be asked questions about yourself, your teaching career, and the implementation and impact of the Phoenix School Model has had on how you work.
5. Review your interview transcript via a private Google Drive folder to provide any clarifications and or redactions that you wish.

The total amount of time that you will be participating in this study is approximately one hour and a half.

Recording

If you want to participate in this research, you must agree to be audio recorded. If you do not agree to be audio recorded, you cannot participate in this research.

Risks and benefits

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this research. The main risk to you as a result of this research could be a loss of privacy due to being re-identified from the research data. I will take care in how I report the data to minimize the possibility of this risk occurring; however, it is a possibility.

There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. The indirect benefits are more information about the circumstances of school reform outcomes will be provided to the public as a resource and reference for future research and decision-making.

Right to withdraw your participation

You can stop participating in this study at any time for any reason. In order to stop your participation, please contact the researcher, Kim Pavlic, at ksnichol@ncsu.edu or 919-332-8393 or my faculty advisor for this research, Dr. Lance Fusarelli at ldfusare@ncse.edu or 919-513-0507. If you choose to withdraw your consent and to stop participating in this research, you can expect that the researcher(s) will redact your data from their data set, securely destroy your data, and prevent future uses of your data for research purposes wherever possible. This is possible in some, but not all, cases.

Confidentiality, personal privacy, and data management

Trust is the foundation of the participant/researcher relationship. Much of that principle of trust is tied to keeping your information private and in the manner that we have described to you in this form. The information that you share with me will be held in confidence to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Protecting your privacy as related to this research is of utmost importance to me. There are very rare circumstances related to confidentiality where I may have to share information about you. Your information collected in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies (for example, Bumble County Public Schools) for purposes such as quality control or safety. In other cases, I must report instances in which imminent harm could come to you or others.

How I manage, protect, and share your data are the principal ways that I will protect your personal privacy. Data shared about you in this study will be re-identifiable.

Re-identifiable. Re-identifiable data is information that can identify you indirectly because of access to information, role, skills, combination of information, and/or use of technology. This may also mean that in published reports others could identify you from what is reported, for example, if a story you tell us is very specific. If your data is re-identifiable, I will report it in such a way that you are not directly identified in reports. Based on how I need to share the data, I cannot remove details from the report that would protect your identity from ever being figured out. This means that others may be able to re-identify from the information reported from this research.

Compensation

You will not receive anything for your participation in this study.

What if you are an employee?

Your participation in this study is not a requirement of your employment and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect your job.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researcher, Kim Pavlic, at ksnichol@ncsu.edu and 919-332-8393 or the faculty point of contact for this protocol, Dr. Lance Fusarelli at lfusarelli@ncsu.edu, or at 919-513-0507.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the NC State IRB (Institutional Review Board) Office. An IRB office helps participants if they have any issues regarding research activities. You can contact the NC State IRB Office via email at irb-director@ncsu.edu or via phone at (919) 515-8754.

Consent To Participate

By electronically signing this consent form, I am affirming that I have read and understand the above information. All of the questions that I had about this research have been answered. I have chosen to participate in this study with the understanding that I may stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I am aware that I may revoke my consent at any time.

No, I do not want to participate in this research.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yes, I want to participate in the research.

Name _____

Today's Date _____

Broad consent form that only participants who have consented to research will see:

BROAD CONSENT ADDENDUM

Title of Study: "A Phoenix School", Accountability, Change, and Achievement (eIRB # 12996)

Principal Investigator: Kim Pavlic, knichol@ncsu.edu, 919-332-8393.

Funding Source: None

Faculty Point of Contact: Dr. Lance Fusarelli, ldfusare@edu, 919-513-0507

This form asks you to make an important choice about the use of your re-identifiable information. It asks you to decide if you are willing to give your consent to the use of your re-identifiable information for future research.

If you agree, researchers in the future may use your re-identifiable information in many different research studies over an indefinite period of time without asking your permission again for any specific research study. This could possibly help other people or contribute to science. If you do not agree to allow your re-identifiable information to be used for future research, your information will not be kept for future use by anyone.

This form explains in more detail what saying "yes" or "no" to this use of your information will mean to you.

If you say "Yes" on this form

The researcher will store, use and share your re-identifiable information, and may do so for the purpose of medical, scientific, and other research, now and into the future, for as long as they are

needed. This may include sharing your re-identifiable information with other research, academic, and medical institutions, as well as other researchers, drug and device companies, biotechnology companies, and others.

If you say “yes”, there are no plans to tell you about any of the specific research that will be done with your re-identifiable information.

By saying “yes,” your re-identifiable information may be used to create products or to deliver services, including some that may be sold and/or make money for others. If this happens, there are no plans to tell you, pay you, or give any compensation to you or your family.

The main risk in saying “yes” is that your confidentiality could be breached. Through managing who has access to your re-identifiable information and through regularly updated data security plans, we will do our best to protect your re-identifiable information from going to people who should not have it.

Another risk is that if you say “yes,” your re-identifiable information could be used in a research project to which you might not agree to if you were asked specifically about it.

You will not personally benefit from saying “yes” in this form. Saying “yes” on this form is not a condition of participating in the study, nor of your employment.

If you say “no” or do not complete this form

The researcher(s) and institution(s) identified above will not store, use, or share your re-identifiable information beyond the purposes stated in the previous consent form that you agreed to and signed for the study “A Phoenix School”, Accountability, Change, and Achievement (eIRB # 12996).

If you want to withdraw your consent

You can stop participating at any time for any reason. Please contact the student researcher, Kim Pavlic, at ksnichol@ncsu.edu or 919-332-8393 or the faculty advisor for this research, Dr. Lance Fusarelli at ldfusare@ncse.edu or 919-513-0507. You can expect that the researcher will redact your re-identifiable information from their data set, securely destroy your data, and prevent future uses of re-identifiable information for research purposes wherever possible. This is possible in some, but not all, cases.

If you have questions

Please ask the research team to explain anything in this form that you do not clearly understand. Please think about this broad consent and/or discuss it with family or friends before making the decision to say “Yes” or “No.”

If you have any questions about this broad consent, please contact Kim Pavlic, at ksnichol@ncsu.edu or 919-332-8393 or the faculty advisor for this research, Dr. Lance Fusarelli at ldfusare@ncse.edu or 919-513-0507. If you want to discuss your rights as a person who has agreed to, refused, or declined to respond to an offer of broad consent or believe that your rights

were violated as a result of your agreeing to this broad consent, please contact the NC State IRB Director, at irb-director@ncsu.edu or via phone at (919) 515-8754.

Please select one checkbox and enter your name and today's date

Statement of agreement

I say yes. The future use of my data and consent has been explained to me, and I agree to give my consent to the future research uses of my re-identifiable information. My participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw my consent at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

Statement of agreement: Name

Statement of agreement: Today's Date

Statement of refusal

I say no. The consent has been explained to me and I do not agree to this consent. You can still participate in this research if you say no on this form.

Statement of refusal: Name

Statement of refusal: Today's Date

**Interview scheduling message that all qualified participants will see
whether or not they gave broad consent**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a semi-structured, recorded interview with me over the phone or Zoom for research purposes.

What type of interview do you prefer? Please select one:

1. Phone interview
2. Zoom interview

Please select at least 5 dates and times below that work for you to do an interview with me and rank them in order of preference.

<insert option 1: Day and Time>

<insert option 2: Day and Time>

<insert option 3: Day and Time>

<insert option 4: Day and Time>

<insert option 5: Day and Time>

<insert option 6: Day and Time>

<insert option 7: None of these days and times work for me. Here are some days and times that do work for me. <insert section for participant response narrative>

I will respond with an email confirming your interview date and time as well as providing information about the web-conferencing platform or phone call details that we'll use for your interview.