AN EXAMINATION OF HOW PRINCIPALS LEAD INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE IN
RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

AN EXAMINATION OF HOW PRINCIPALS LEAD INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE IN

RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

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opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

First, I owe a great deal of gratitude and thanks to my wife, Katie Ritter, and my children, Madelynn and Ethan, for all their support, encouragement, and understanding throughout this process. My wife has been so supportive, patient, and my rock throughout the entire process. Madelynn and Ethan have brought so much joy to what could have been a frustrating process, and they make me smile a hundred times a day. I love you all very much!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover how principals of rural high schools lead instructional changes in their school. Reeves's (2009) concepts for leading change in schools is the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions are based around Reeves's conceptual framework of a four-stage process for bringing about change in schools. Interview questions were used to determine how the principals led the change process in their schools by setting the stage for change, planning the change process, implementing the changes, and sustained the changes. Participants for the study included the principals of three rural high schools, an assistant superintendent from one school, and a focus group of 3-6 teachers from each school.

The findings of this study revealed how principals led their school's faculty to change the way instruction was conducted in the classrooms. The process for each school varied, but there were common themes from the schools at each stage of the process that provided implications for practice by future leaders wishing to lead a change process in their own schools. The findings and discussion of the findings led to recommendations for school leaders to utilize data, collaborate with teachers, reduce and address resistance, be aware of available resources for the change process, and use time effectively.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (2011) declared

its "Top 10 by 20" goal for every school in Missouri public education to contribute to

Missouri being ranked among the top ten states on national measures of performance by

the year 2020. Some of these measures included improving students' scores on the

National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), improving student achievement on

the ACT (originally known as the American College Test), and having 75% of Missouri

students scoring a minimum of proficient on the internal state assessment. DESE also

outlined the goals of increasing the graduation rate by one percent. Currently, Missouri

ranks 27th nationally in composite ACT, a range of rankings from 14th to 30th on sections

of the NAEP, and 23rd for students completing a bachelor's degree in six years or less

(DESE, 2011c). It is estimated the number of Missouri high school dropouts during the

2010-2011 school year to be approximately 10,000 students (DESE, 2011c). In addition

to local state standards, the federal demands of No Child Left Behind also force all

Missouri schools to focus their resources on improving student performance (Masumoto

& Brown-Welty, 2009). Schools that do not meet the standards of No Child Left Behind

face losing federal funding and/or losing their accreditation by DESE. The No Child Left

Behind requirements become increasingly difficult to achieve each year as it progresses

to the 2014 goal of 100% of students proficient in Language Arts and Mathematics. The

result is that schools need to improve student achievement to have more students meeting

the goals of No Child Left Behind and DESE standards. Rural schools face additional challenges when compared to many urban or suburban schools.

Beck and Shoffstall (2005), Brown-Ferrigno and Allen (2006), Hannum Irvin, Banks, & Farmer, (2009), Hardre and Hennessey (2010), and Hardre, Sullivan, and Crowson (2009) indicated rural schools face unique challenges that differ from urban and suburban schools. Rural schools face challenges of limited financial and personnel resources, servicing a high percentage of families in low socioeconomic standing with little education, and struggling against low student motivation for school success. The key for rural school leaders, as one participant in Brown-Ferrigno and Allen's study noted, is leaders of rural schools do not have adequate resources available, but "the use of what is available is more important than the amount available" (p. 11). The outcomes of these challenges is instructional leaders of rural schools are in the difficult position of needing to make vast improvements to the academic achievement of their students while having fewer resources to accomplish internal and external goals. A possible method to improve academic achievement with the resources already at their disposal is for school leaders to focus on making instructional changes in the classrooms.

For the purpose of this study, instructional change refers to changing the methods and practices used by teachers in the classroom to instruct and assess students. Instructional methods include the methods for delivering of the course content and conducting instructional activities. Assessment methods include any means (written, oral, or otherwise) the teacher uses to assess a student's knowledge or skill. It is noted that instructional change does not refer to curriculum change, but instead refers to the actions

taking place in the classroom to educate students. This study focused on school leaders reshaping how instruction and assessment takes place in the classroom.

Principals of rural schools face the challenge of making instructional changes in their schools to meet the demands of the new goals from DESE and the accountability standards of No Child Left Behind. Principals of rural schools must make these changes with fewer resources at their disposal. It is the goal of this study to ascertain how principals of rural schools have led the instructional change process to improve student achievement while facing the limitations of being in a rural setting.

Statement of the Problem

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2011) declared in its education reform plan "Top 10 by 20", that Missouri students in every district and in every school would contribute to Missouri's education program being ranked in the top ten states in the nation. The goal is for 75% of all students in grades K-12 to be scoring at the proficient level or higher on state assessments and for the state high school graduation rate to approach 100% by the year 2020. These goals will place high demands on principals to improve the quality of education in their schools. For many schools, especially rural schools, a series of instructional changes will be necessary with fewer resources than previously available. These changes will be difficult for rural schools where funding, facilities, faculty numbers, the number of administrators, and other resources are severely limited.

Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) stated that the primary challenge to change that rural schools face is the limited resources available. As there are fewer businesses in rural areas, income for schools is more reliant on funding by local community members.

Furthermore, attracting and retaining quality teachers could prove difficult due to the lack of available recreation, housing options, and goods and services (Masumoto & Brown-Welty). Instructional leaders of rural schools face the challenges to improve academic achievement of their students while being required to do so with fewer resources at their disposal. Statewide school funding has seen many cuts in recent years for specific areas including almost $73 million (42%) to education transportation funding over the past two school years (Hancock, 2011) and a 40% or more cut to funding for Parents As Teachers (DESE, 2011b). A total of 87.5% of Missouri's school districts have reported overall budget cuts of 6-10% and 83% of school districts reported reducing staff by the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year (DESE, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover how principals of rural high schools lead instructional changes in their school. Reeves's (2009) concepts for leading change in schools is the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions are formulated upon Reeves's conceptual framework with a focus on the process for bringing about instructional change in schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions directed this study:

1. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri create conditions for instructional changes in their schools?

2. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri plan for making instructional changes in their schools?

3. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri implement instructional changes in their schools?

4. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri sustain instructional changes in their schools?

Conceptual Framework

Fullan (2000) addressed how change occurs in education. He reviewed literature for educational reform and divided the literature into three categories: school district reform, whole-school reform models, and national reform initiatives. For the purpose of this study, Fullan's concepts for whole-school reform were utilized.

A review of the research identified successful programs for implementing whole-school reform (Fullan, 2000). After a meta-analysis of the literature, Fullan highlighted one study in particular conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). AIR (1999) reported the program "Success for All" was one of the top three programs successfully implementing change in school. This change program put forth six components for successful program implementation in schools: organizational change, staffing, and administrative reports; a focus on curriculum and instruction; supplies and materials; scheduling and groups; monitoring of student progress and performance; and family and community support (AIR, 1999). Reeves (2009) offered a modern detailed breakdown of practically implementing similar (if not the same) concepts into the school setting.

Reeves (2009) suggested breaking the implementation of change into four parts. First, create appropriate conditions for change. Leaders must identify what practices in a school are no longer needed before challenging the faculty with new ideas and practices.

Second, a school leader must accurately assess the faculty and school to determine if they are ready for changes to be implemented. Next, to prepare for change the leader must communicate what will not change. It is important to recognize what is valued and working in a culture and reaffirm its significance and importance. Reeves noted "change leaders know that they do not change organizations without changing individual behavior, and they will not change individual behavior without affirming the people behind the behavior" (p 10). Finally, the leader must be aware of the myths surrounding the implementation of change and be prepared to address the concerns surrounding them. Opening the lines of communication with members of the community as recommended by AIR (1999) would allow the leader to gain an understanding of what is important while sharing to the community what is going to change.

The second concept Reeves (2009) noted was planning for change. The planning process includes focusing on changes with the potential for yielding the greatest results while being very strategic in the planning process. School leaders must also select who will be involved in leading the changes and coaching those who need support. Similar to AIR's (1999) recommendation, Reeves (2009) believed data and information about what is happening in the educational setting of the classroom must be reliable and accurate to paint an appropriate and true picture of what is happening. As more information about the curriculum, instruction, and student performance is known to the leader, decisions can be made about personnel and practices and determine what change may need to take place. One challenge is involving the right people in the discussion of what needs to change. Reeves (2009) stated the leader must carefully select those to be involved in implementing change in the school. School leaders should seek to involve those with

strengths in the area of change. Criteria or rationale for inclusion into the leadership team could be a result of expertise in the area for change, charisma and rapport with the staff, or other traits deemed useful to the change process. Many authors support the use of collaborative practices (Bruffee, 1999; Brown-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Chance & Segura, 2009; Scribner, 2003; Little & Houston, 2003); however, a planning committee or leadership team must be prepared to model the adaptation of change. Those recruited to the leadership team should be the first to model the changes in their practices. Reeves (2006) identified these team members as "hubs" where new information could be shared out throughout the staff and the hubs can be models for others to assist in implementing the new practices.

The third piece to Reeve's (2009) model for change is implementation. Engaging a minimum of 90% of the staff in the change process is critical. Having such a large percentage actively involved in the change process shows far greater results than having only 10% of a staff involved in the change process (Reeves, 2009, p. 86). Furthermore, having a wider variety of staff members in various roles (such as teachers, para-professionals, custodians, etc.) in the school involved in the change can lead to greater school-wide change. Greater staff involvement as a method for change was echoed by Brooks, Scribner, and Eferakorho (2004). The principal in their study emphasized the need for continual involvement of the faculty in the change process. The principal also stated promoting the teachers into leadership positions, especially for carrying out change efforts, would help move the school forward toward the long-term vision. In this case, the principal engaged all teachers by making them part of the planning team. Similarly, Brooks et. al found the teachers appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the change

process. One teacher in the study commented how exciting things were at the school. The teacher appreciated the opportunity to make a difference through committee work in addition to making a difference in the classroom. Reeves also noted the importance of documenting results of the change and showing how they are in the best interest of all involved. He provided many examples of ways to increase faculty engagement in the change process. One example is associating the need for change to common morals, beliefs, or values shared by the faculty. Another example would be emphasizing the effectiveness of a change and not focusing discussion based on the popularity of the change. Instructional changes included examining practices of grading and assessment as well as attendance policies and teacher feedback from the school leader.

Reeve's (2009) fourth concept is sustaining change. Leaders must "refocus their energies beyond the attainment of short-term effectiveness and look toward the greater good" (Reeves, p 123). A regular review of student progress and performance is one method which allows school leaders to examine the effectiveness of the change process (AIR, 1999). However, the larger the change process, the longer it may take to have observable results (Reeves). Gill (2010) and Reeves agree that new knowledge and changes must become part of the culture of an organization in order to have the sustained change. An example of a sustained change would be if the leader leaves the organization, his/her practices and ideals remain a part of the organization for a period of time, which can be seen as evidence that the change is meaningful and lasting (Reeves).

Research Design and Methods

This study was a multiple case study, as more than one school was involved in the collection of data to produce the findings. Creswell (2007) defined a case study as "the

study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). The method to conduct the case study would be qualitative in nature and require two phases. The first phase of the study was to identify rural high schools in Missouri that improved their scores on the state assessments and/or the ACT in the past five years. Once the schools were identified, the researcher initiated contact with the superintendent of each school via email to request participation in the study. Once permission was granted by the superintendents, the building principals were contacted to establish appointments for on-site data collection. The three participating schools were rural high schools with less than 300 students in grades 7-12 or 9-12.

Qualitative data collection methods at each school included interviews, a focus group, and observations with field notes. Prompts for all methods of data collection were in relation to creating the conditions for change, planning for change, implementing change, and sustaining change in regards to instruction in the classroom. Other questions emerged as the process was completed. As recommended by Creswell (2007), this study involved data collection from multiple sources of information.

Participants included the principal, teachers who had been in the district during the time of changes occurring, and the assistant superintendent of one school district. Feedback from participants was used to help determine if the change was successful from each of their viewpoints. Furthermore, the participants were asked how they knew the changes were successful. From the researcher's perspective, successful change was defined as improved academic achievement of students in the school. A wider range of informational sources allowed the researcher to develop a holistic account of the cases

(Creswell, 2009), thus allowing the variety of perspectives, viewpoints, and opinions of those involved in the school's change to be shared.

The data analysis consisted of a review of the interviews, focus groups, and field notes to identify emerging themes. The goal for this analysis was to make "a detailed description of the case and its setting" (Creswell, 2007, p. 163). The data were reviewed for common themes emerging from within each case as well as across the cases. From the data, generalizations were made as to how each instructional leader implemented instructional changes in the schools.

Mertens (2005) defined dependability as "the qualitative parallel to reliability" (p. 257). To increase dependability, any and all changes occurring during the study were documented to provide future researchers the opportunity to replicate this study and obtain similar results. To increase trustworthiness, the researcher strived to conduct observations from a variety of sources over the period of time for which the opportunity for saturation of similar data emerged. Mertens recommended not ending the study prematurely before new or unique information may be presented. The researcher allotted as much time as available at each school to obtain as much information as possible from the participants while balancing the need for the administrators and faculty to continue with their regular jobs during the school day.

The recommendation by Mertens (2005) to perform member checks was completed. As each interview or focus group came to a conclusion, the responses by the participants were summarized and restated verbally for the participant to confirm the accuracy of the responses as interpreted by the researcher in addition to the use of audio recordings. Finally, the researcher conducted a triangulation of the data. Mertens defined

triangulation as "checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data" (p. 255). By using data collected from the interviews, focus groups, and field notes, the researcher highlighted reoccurrences of themes across the cases.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

This study had several limitations. First, the schools participating in this study are only a small sample of rural schools demonstrating academic improvement in the state of Missouri. The practices of other rural schools were not included in this study. The schools in this study represent a small percentage of rural schools in Missouri. Second, this is a study of schools at one particular point in time in specific locations. Next, not all faculty and staff members were included for input in the findings of the study, nor were students or other community members, thus the perspectives of the change process from other stakeholders were not included. This study was limited to high schools including grades 9-12 or 7-12. It should be noted that urban and suburban schools may also be attempting different, similar, or the same practices to improve academic achievement as they are facing the same challenges from DESE and NCLB. Another limitation was the instructional change may not have been the only reason for an improvement in student achievement or the graduation rate. Other factors could have an influence on improvements in End Of Course (EOC) scores used for state assessments and accountability under NCLB, ACT scores, or the graduation rate. School-wide programs not directly related to classroom instruction and assessment methods such as attendance incentives or behavior incentives may have an effect on improving student achievement and/or the graduation rate.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Academic Achievement. Also referred to in this study as student achievement, this refers to the scores by students on state testing and the ACT.

ACT. It is used to assess students across the nation as a tool for admittance into four-year colleges and universities. This test is formerly known as the American College Test. (ACT, 2012).

Annual Progress Report. This is a summary report for schools and school districts noting the level of accreditation in the state of Missouri. This report combines graduation rates, post-secondary placement rates, ACT scores, state testing in Language Arts and Mathematics, and other data to label the school with a level of accreditation (DESE, 2011f).

Adequate Yearly Progress. The progress monitoring of schools and school districts under No Child Left Behind. Schools must show progress in Math and Language Arts towards fulfilling 100% of the student population being proficient or advance proficient in these subject areas (DESE, 2011f).

Course-Level Expectations (CLE). Objectives created by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for courses in grades 9-12. Teachers are to prepare students for state testing over these objectives on the End of Course exams.

End of Course (EOC). The test given to all high school students as required by the state of Missouri at the end of specific courses to test the student's knowledge of course content. These data are used to calculate the Annual Performance Report (APR) for school accreditation and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for federal requirements of No

Child Left Behind. EOC exams are required for graduation after completing courses in Algebra I, English II, Biology I, and Government (DESE, 2011g).

Grade-Level Expectations (GLE). Objectives created by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for courses in grades 3-8. Teachers are to prepare students for state testing over these objectives on the Missouri Assessment Program.

Instructional Change. The introduction of new methods and activities used by teachers to provide instruction to students, present new content or skills, or assess student knowledge or skills.

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). Tests given by the State of Missouri to assess students in grades 3-8 in English, Math, and Science to calculate the Annual Progress Report and Adequate Yearly Progress (DESE, 2011f).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This is the federal law holding each school district accountable for the learning of their students. Schools deemed unsuccessful or failing could lose federal funding. MAP and EOC test scores contribute to Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), the progress monitoring aspect of NCLB (DESE, 2011f).

Rural Schools. For this study, rural schools are defined as high schools of less than 300 students located outside the counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Clay, Platte, Jackson, and Greene in the state of Missouri. This geographic limitation excluded schools in or near the cities of St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield. Rural schools in this study were grades 6-12, 7-12, or 9-12. Grade levels for the high school were based upon the designation as the secondary level of education within each school district.

Successful Change. This refers to an instructional change in a school having a positive effect on the achievement of the students of a school. Success was based on achievement in one or a combination of assessments including the ACT, state testing (EOC or MAP scores), graduation rate, overall APR, and/or being recognized by DESE as a school or school district earning Accreditation with Distinction. The improvement must have been made over the course of the previous 3-5 years.

Rationale for the Study

This study addresses the need for information on how principals of rural high schools can be leaders to implement instructional change. Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, and Dean (2005) found only eight journal articles about school reform for rural schools in ERIC databases from 1991 to 2003. This study of instructional change in rural high schools would provide school leaders with practical methods and actions to successfully implement instructional school-wide changes. Many other studies have been conducted and literature written on school change or school reform. There is a lack of evidence of information on how principals provide leadership during the instructional change process in a rural high school setting. Not only is there a lack of information about leadership for instructional changes in rural settings, there is a lack of information regarding the approaches used by these leaders when resources are limited.

Traditionally, transitional periods requiring professional development for schools have a high financial cost. Acquiring new technology, employing the services of educational consultants or other professionals, or attending out of district workshops and conferences cost a substantial amount of money. Many schools cannot afford these external and expensive resources to help improve conditions within a school, especially

rural schools. In recent years, Missouri schools have been faced with financial difficulties as poor economic conditions have resulted in a decrease in state and local funding resulting in budget cuts, eliminating curricular and/or extra-curricular activities, and reductions in force. As a result, instructional leaders are faced with the challenge of finding alternative methods to bring about desired changes in the school setting that will produce improved academic achievement while yielding a lower financial burden. Recent research on resources for rural school leaders is very limited.

This study would provide practical ideas for other leaders to use in their schools to address these challenges. The State of Missouri had 260 (or 46.3%) of its 561 school districts (including all forms of school districts) receive funding through the Small Rural School Achievement Grant for the 2011-2012 school year (DESE, 2011d). This grant is designed to assist school districts serving less than 600 students and in population densities of fewer than 10 people per square mile. Funding is to be used to improve the academic achievement of the disadvantaged, train and recruit high quality teachers and principals, enhance education through technology, assist with English Language Learner programs, promote safe and drug free schools, implement 21st century community learning centers, or fund innovative programs within the school (DESE, 2011e). This grant could be interpreted as a sign that DESE recognizes the financial struggles of rural schools. Administrators must find creative methods to use these funds as well as any other resources at their disposal to incorporate the greatest amount of change towards the greatest amount of success. Grants such as the Small Rural School Achievement Grant may help school districts temporarily, but it may not be a solution to all of a school district's long-term problems.

The findings of this study could yield implications for practice to make instructional changes more successful. Actions of the school leaders, identification of challenges, how principals overcome the challenges, and samples of resources used by leaders could provide practical examples for rural school leaders to consider when meeting the challenges in their schools.

Summary

The policies and regulations in the modern educational era have put a greater emphasis on accountability. NCLB and DESE outlined goals and expectations for schools to show improvement in the academic achievement of students. The intense level of accountability added to reduced funding and limited resources results in rural schools facing more difficulties to meet expectations. However, this study sought to discover how principals of rural high schools implemented instructional changes while facing the challenge of limited resources. This introduction is followed by chapters including a literature review to discover previous literature and research conducted about the process of change, rural schools, instructional change, and leadership. Chapter Three will detail the methodology of the study, followed by chapters sharing the findings of the study and a discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study examined the change process used by principals in rural high schools in Missouri to bring about instructional change. This chapter addresses literature and research related to this study. The first literature to be reviewed was based around Reeves's (2009) four-part change process: setting the stage for change, planning change, implementing change, and sustaining change. Other key relevant literature included studies and information related to how organizations learn (including schools) and literature related to instructional changes made in schools. Finally, this chapter includes literature related to rural schools. Specifically, the literature outlined the various challenges faced by rural schools including limited resources and how that affects the classroom.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2004) outlined the roles of a 21st Century Principal. A 21st Century Principal should provide educational leadership by setting the instructional direction with a clear vision and goals, foster teamwork within the faculty, be sensitive to the needs of others, and work to develop the abilities of those within the school. Similarly, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLCC) (2008) Standards for Education Administrators have as the first standard for the school leader to promote success for all students by "facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders" (p. 1). The 21st Century Principal should also be able to resolve complex problems by analyzing and interpreting information, focusing

on results, and maintaining strong organization of activities and programs. Finally, the 21st Century Principal should have strong oral and verbal communication skills. All these skills are necessary to foster the change process based on Reeves's (2009) conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework for this study was Reeves's (2009) model for the organizational change process. His process included four steps in the change process. First, the school leader must set the conditions for change. This model begins by identifying the practices that will remain and the practices that will no longer be continued. This also involves initiating the communication with the faculty and staff of the beginning of a change process. Second, the leader must create a plan for change. Reeves (2009) recommended involving the faculty in the change process. Involving the faculty in the planning process provides an opportunity for those carrying out the change process to have a voice and be partners in how the process will proceed. Furthermore, having a voice in the planning stages provides the faculty the opportunity to take ownership in the change process. Teacher involvement at this stage also is an opportunity for the school leader to have a group within the faculty with knowledge of the situation and act as a "hub" (Reeves, 2006) or resource for the other teachers throughout the change process. The third step in the change process is the implementation of the change. Reeves (2011) found that engaging more teachers to take an active part in the change process resulted in more effective change and greater chances of the new practices to remain. Finally, the fourth step is sustaining the change, or having the change become part of the school culture.

Rural Schools

According to Beeson and Strange (2003) one in six students attend one-third of the schools in the United States in communities with populations under 2,500 people. Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, and Dean (2005) stated the rural setting differs greatly from those of urban and suburban areas due to geography, culture, resources, staffing, and finances. Arnold et al. stated these differences could create tension between school reform initiatives and local school improvement efforts and could hinder rural school improvement regardless of how much high-quality rural education research exists. Rural schools face many challenges (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009; Eppley, 2009; Hardre & Hennessey, 2010); however, rural schools can also overcome many of these challenges. School leaders must focus to improve student achievement and utilize the resources available. Furthermore, there are advantages for rural schools, just as there are advantages to being in urban or suburban school settings.

Challenges of Rural Schools

Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) stated many rural schools "are impacted by the disadvantages of poverty, non-English speaking students, limited resources, changing demographics and challenges of the rural context" (p. 1). This evaluation was echoed by others such as Eppley (2009), Hardre and Hennessey (2010), Hannum Irvin, Banks, and Farmer (2009), and Beck and Shoffstall (2005). In many rural areas teachers receive less pay, and schools have less income and offer fewer resources (Hannum, Irvin, Banks, & Farmer, 2009, Hardre and Hennessey, 2010; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). In August of 2010, DESE reported the feedback from 315 of the 535 school districts in the state of Missouri on the financial situation. DESE found 83% of school districts had cut

staffing positions and over 87% of school districts in Missouri experienced a 6-10% cut to all funding. Schools were also asked to report what would be most likely to be cut next. Rural school districts reported they would cut summer school (72% of school districts), professional development (61%), support staff (60%), classroom teachers (56%), extra-curricular activities (53%), and after school programs (50%) (DESE). The rural school district administrators stated they would also consider removing or temporarily suspending curriculum-based programs, administration positions, library resources, and student health services (DESE).

Funding is an additional challenge often associated with rural schools. Kannapel and DeYoung (1999) and Khattri, Riley, and Kane (1997) stated historical funding for rural schools was less than urban schools due to the smaller population size within the community and the enrollment of the actual school. A funding discrepancy resulted in schools with larger enrollments having better physical environments and the ability to recruit teachers with greater ease (Freeman & Anderson, 2005).

In Beeson and Strange's (2003) national survey, their findings indicated rural schools felt an urgent need to address the average teacher salary, computer use in the classroom, school administrative costs, and the sharing of expenditures spent on transportation (Beeson & Strange, 2003). Teacher salaries are one way to attract teachers to schools in communities that otherwise do not offer a variety of lifestyle options. While understanding how to use technology was not listed as a concern in any of the literature for rural students (Beeson & Strange, 2003; Hannum, Irvin, Banks, & Farmer, 2009) the ability to have computers in the classroom was a concern on a national level.

Eppley (2009) wrote of the challenges for rural schools to ensure faculty members were compliant with the requirements to be highly qualified teachers (HQT). No Child Left Behind requires HQT to have a bachelor's degree in a teaching field, full state certification, and proof of content knowledge for teaching subjects (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Rural school communities may have their own standards and circumstances to lead to different expectations from its teachers (Eppley, 2009). Due to the HQT policy, rural schools lose the ability to dictate what they need, especially when they face difficulties in attracting and retaining teachers. In some rural areas, HQT may not carry the same meaning for community members, and some teachers formally recognized as HQT may not be adequately prepared for the challenges of teaching rural students. Teacher preparation was not the only challenge facing rural schools. The number of faculty members was also a concern.

Scribner (2003) highlighted how small faculty size could result in challenges for rural schools. A large number of teacher retirements could result in a large change of school culture. Another challenge discovered by Scriber (2003) was teachers with several course preparations each day were reluctant to gain additional depth of the content in one course for fear of sacrificing a minimal level of quality in the other course content. These teachers believed professional development and taking the time to change in one aspect of teaching (such as methods of instruction and assessment) would sacrifice too much time and energy for other aspects of teaching (such as content preparation).

Howly, Larson, Andrianaivo, Rhodes, and Howley (2007) also found rural schools faced many of the same challenges imposed by state and national testing demands, thus requiring a reform of curriculum, especially in mathematics. Reforms

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included focusing on state testing standards, increasing collaboration, and some changes in pedagogy. Howly et al. noted while some changes in pedagogy were required; there were no reports from the twenty schools surveyed of radical changes to teaching methods. Walker-Dalhouse, Risko, Esworthy, Grasley, Kaisler, McIlvain, and Stephan (2009) cited a current trend in instruction reform is the use of Response to Interventions and Professional Learning Communities. Many schools are implementing these school-wide programs or ideas to try to address concerns with a varying degree of effect, mainly due to a varying degree of level of implementation. School leadership must focus on these change efforts to keep them in the forefront of what is trying to be accomplished.

Rural Leadership

Beck and Shoffstall (2005), Brown-Ferrigno and Allen (2006), Hannum Irvin, Banks, and Farmer (2009), Hardre and Hennessey (2010), and Hardre, Sullivan, and Crowson (2009), found that rural schools face unique challenges that differ from urban and suburban schools. Rural schools face challenges of limited financial and personnel resources, service a high percentage of families in low socioeconomic standing with little education, and risk low motivation for school success. Another challenge is to develop high-quality leadership (Hardre, Sullivan, & Crowson, 2009). Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) found the stronger school leaders had strong distributive leadership, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership traits. All three schools in the study had strong links to community members associated directly and indirectly with the school. Finally, all three schools found clear vision and direction for instructional goals, strong teachers, and a variety of support for students.

Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) also found rural school leaders were effective in improving instructional practices through a variety of methods. Formal teacher observations and communication, coupled with hiring, retaining, and removing teachers, appropriately provided the positive results for the leaders of the three schools in Masumoto and Brown-Welty's (2009) study. Instructional practices were also improved indirectly due to instructional leadership styles that fostered collaboration for sharing of best practices and improving school curriculum features.

Brown-Ferrigno and Allen (2006) highlighted the Principal Excellence Program (PEP) as a rural-based initiative to improve leadership in rural schools. This program encouraged the development of school leaders and educating them in practices of collaboration and methods to improve education and the educational climate of schools. Brown-Ferrigno and Allen (2006) found the challenges for leaders of rural schools to include isolation through geography and limited discretionary resources. The key issue is for rural school leaders, as one consultant in Brown-Ferrigno and Allen's (2006) study noted, is that rural school leaders do not have adequate resources available, and that "the use of what is available is more important than the amount available" (p. 11). Eppley (2009) found rural education is different from education in other settings. Her research found many rural students are so bonded to the local area they lack connections to the greater world-wide community. This creates a challenge for teachers to show connections between the curriculum and its relevance to the greater society.

Successes in Rural Schools

While there are many challenges facing rural schools, there are many successes and advantages as well. Hardre and Hennessey (2010) suggested rural communities have

the advantage of being able to more easily incorporate local values, beliefs, and attitudes. Local control of education provides rural schools with the opportunity to direct learning towards the needs of their students. However, Howley, Larson, Andrianaivo, Rhodes, and Howley (2007) stated rural communities and schools tend to "value traditional approaches to curriculum and instruction" (p. 1). Furthermore, some research found traditional approaches in rural schools may have a stronger educational effect than more modern practices (Howly, Larson, Andrianaivo, Rhodes, & Howley, 2007). However, some areas of education are being required to change, such as technology and new standards that schools are required to teach. Two approaches to school reform have been used in rural schools in recent years. The first is using the same reform strategies used by urban and suburban schools including large-scale professional development workshops, keynote presenters, and conference attendance outside the school district. The second approach is more localized response to determine solutions through collaboration, book studies, and internally sourced professional development.

Chance and Segura (2009) found collaboration in rural schools was instrumental to helping lead the school in their case study to improve student achievement, attendance, and graduation rate. The keys for this collaboration were to have focused and scheduled teacher collaboration and holding all accountable for student learning. Chance and Segura found it was actually to the advantage of rural schools to have smaller faculties as it becomes easier to develop trust and collaborate among all stakeholders. In addition, the advantage of rural schools having the same students and community members participate in nearly all (if not all) aspects of the community creates a natural sense of togetherness. Chance and Segura also found that due to the smaller communities, rural school leaders

have a greater knowledge of what resources (although limited) are available from within the community.

Barley and Beesley (2007) studied twenty-one high needs but high-performing rural schools. Principals were interviewed for this study and shared their perceptions of what made their respective schools successful. Site visits were then conducted to four selected schools. These schools were successful due to having high expectations for students, structured supports for learning, use of student data, curriculum alignment, individualized instruction, teacher retention, and professional development. Barley and Beesley also found that administrators as instructional leaders were a significant theme for successful schools. Principals were instructional leaders and held teachers accountable, provided support for curriculum changes, provided relevant professional development, brought together stakeholders, and fostered a mentoring environment. One of the keys to accomplishing this was for the leader to have a close relationship with the faculty members (Barley & Beesley).

Freeman and Anderman (2005) discovered rural middle school students reported an increase in personal mastery goals as compared to urban middle school students. They found a significant factor was having a more stable and orderly environment in the school and in the classroom. Also reflected was a sense of lesser threat of school violence, as well as a slightly greater rate of parent involvement and/or support.

Beck and Shoffstall (2005) analyzed data from Illinois public school testing to determine the extent to which being a rural school matters in state testing results. They discovered rural schools performed better than those in suburbs and urban areas. However, in Beck and Shoffstall's review of the literature, they found conflicting

research regarding the student achievement of rural schools versus suburban and urban schools. They did concede to Roscigno and Crowley's (2001) assessment of rural schools lagging behind in ACT and SAT scores. However, as a result of the positive outcomes of rural schools when compared to other schools, Beck and Shoffstall recommend examining what rural schools offer that other schools do not as possible future research and possibly these positive qualities could be the focus of future school reform efforts.

Hardre, Sullivan, and Crowson (2009) found the more rural students found education useful and contributing towards life goals, the more likely rural students took an interest in school. As a result, student effort, academic achievement, and postsecondary schooling interest increased. It was also discovered that the more teacher support individual students received, then the more likely the rural students were to be engaged and successful in the learning process. Hannum, Irvin, Banks, and Farmer's (2009) nationwide study found many rural schools utilize distance education. Their study showed rural schools did not use distance education classes to replace courses already offered, but instead used distance learning opportunities to expand course offerings through online learning and video-conferencing. Most common course offerings were in foreign languages, math, and English, as well as Advanced Placement courses in a variety of subjects.

While many schools benefited from the use of distance learning, some schools indicated they no longer were using distance education courses. Schools indicated their reasons for discontinuation included lack of interest from students, scheduling issues, and lack of support personnel, money, or equipment (Hannum Irvin, Banks, & Farmer, 2009). In other instances, schools were able to hire a qualified teacher to teach the course.

Hannum Irvin et al. also noted the challenges facing the use of distance education in rural schools. These were categorized into district barriers, logistical barriers, personnel barriers, and technology barriers. Schools attempted to reduce these barriers through a variety of methods. A total of 42.4% of schools surveyed reported the students pay for the courses, reducing costs to the district. The method of communication was another way to reduce the barriers. Students and schools can have flexibility in scheduling (for both the student and the school) by allowing asynchronous courses or synchronous courses to be taken. Students may take the course at the same time as others or on their own time as their schedule allows. Technology barriers and student comfort in using technology were scored very low as an impediment for using distance learning (Hannum Irvin, Banks, & Farmer, 2009)

Rural schools face the challenge of having smaller faculties, thus providing fewer opportunities for formal collaboration (Scriber, 2003). Schools with one teacher in a department may not provide opportunities for the teacher to gain professional development or communicate with peers in the same discipline on a regular basis. Departments with two or three teachers may be so overwhelmed with the instructional and extracurricular duties that collaboration may not be available to them without requiring extra contract time. Instead of formal collaboration, teachers in rural schools (ones with smaller faculties) collaborated more informally at convenient times (Scribner, 2003). It could be suggested this informal collaboration occurs during passing periods, lunch breaks, or in the copy room. Some teachers in Scribner's study highlighted the challenge of having a veteran teacher coupled with a novice teacher in a department. Instead of collaboration for professional growth and development between both teachers,

the result is a one-way sharing of knowledge in more of a mentoring role from the veteran teacher to the novice teacher.

Scribner (2003) found small rural schools to have the benefit of increased principal interaction with each faculty member. Specifically this provided more opportunities to foster growth with each faculty member. Scriber found one principal made the most of the smaller size of the school and engaged the students and the teachers more frequently in the classroom. The teachers cited examples of team-teaching with the principal, having more interactions about pedagogy and instructional activities, and increased communication with the teachers. Some of the activities the participants said were beneficial included classroom drop-ins, the principal extolling the need for greater student responsibilities, and hosting an off-campus retreat to build relationships.

With all the challenges presented by researchers, Bryant (2010) presented possible solutions to help rural schools in regard to resources and funding. He suggested the government must recognize that all schools have differences and the same programs do not work for all. Second, Bryant believed the U.S. Department of Education should strive to devote funds, resources, and staffing to assist rural schools in addressing challenges. Bryant even suggested restructuring of the Department of Education to include an undersecretary for rural schools. Finally, state and federal governments should reexamine the funding formula away from property taxes as a large percentage of revenue for districts across the nation. Poorer, rural school districts do not have the same financial resources as suburban and urban schools. Bryant argued that greater financial and staffing resources could help schools overcome many of the challenges they face.

Preparing for Change

Schools, like any organization, must gain new knowledge in order to change and adapt to meet new goals. Joyce and Showers (2002) suggested that schools must continually seek to improve and make instructional changes. Gill (2010) found that "to create a culture where learning is the rule, there must be a removal of the barriers to learning and reward for behaviors that facilitate learning: risk taking, action learning, feedback, and reflection" (p 27). Furthermore, when organizations value change, quality, differences, and teamwork, learning and change to occur more effectively. For faculties, new learning often comes through formalized professional development opportunities. School leaders must strive to make this new knowledge be sustained over time and become a part of the organization's culture

Yukl (2002) identified five ways for leaders to influence the culture of an organization. First, the leader can focus attention on the few specific aspects of the culture that are important and seek to change those few concepts. Second, the way a leader reacts in a crisis can influence a culture by finding means to deflate volatile situations, alleviate fears, and show commitment to the entire organization. Third, organizational leaders should role model new policies to demonstrate the importance of the policy's message. Fourth, leaders can allocate rewards based on what is valued in the culture. Lastly, leaders can influence an organization's culture through selection and retention of personnel. For the change process to occur and new learning to sustain, the school leader must demonstrate many of these skills at various stages of the process. Yukl (2002) and Bolman and Deal (2008) did note there were other methods for influencing culture as addressing the design of systems and procedures, changing the

organizational structure, utilization of the facilities, using stories, myths and legends, and issuing formal statements.

Evaluation must also be a focus point for organizations wishing to change (Smith, 2006). Organizations must take the time to evaluate if goals are being met (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Then, based on the evaluation process, organizations must then begin a change process and find a course of action that will yield the desired results. The organization must then learn from what has not worked and begin the process of finding a new method to achieve goals (Smith). The leader of the organization should take a central role in guiding the organization through the evaluation and change process. Change was more likely when there was follow-through and action taken by the administration (Chance & Segura, 2009; Smith).

Mulford, Kendall, Ewington, Edumnds, Kendall, and Silins (2007) noted that new school leaders, especially those in low performing schools, often seek to make changes rapidly. These changes primarily happen to facilities, symbolic systems, and management practices. These changes happen rapidly because the resources are available and changes are made to fit the practices of the new leader. The more difficult complex changes, according to Mulford et al. are aligning school faculty and staff toward a common vision, staff development, distributive leadership, and bringing together the community. Preparing the staff and setting conditions for change is the first step in Reeves (2009) conceptual framework for bringing about change in schools.

Determining what needs to change and what does not need to change is a vital first step for any organizational leader (Fullan, 2007; Reeves, 2009). Leaders should have a grasp on the organization and if it is meeting its goals. Organizational leaders must have

a clear vision and purpose for beginning a change process (Reeves; Fullan; Smith, 2006).

The organization not meeting its goals would be the most likely reason to initiate a change process. Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) emphasized the importance of determining if organizational goals are being met as a key piece to an evaluation process. From this evaluation, organizational leaders can determine what changes are to be made (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman). Once the evaluation process has identified what must change, the leader must be able to communicate effectively the rationale for beginning a change, as well as how the process will happen to the other members of the organization. In schools, an ideal reason would be to meet the goals of state or federal standards (Trybus, 2011). Smith recommended starting the communication process by sharing the goals, timelines, rationale for change and desired actions. Furthermore, Smith believed the leader must become an example through words and actions of the type of culture the leader wishes to have after the change process occurs. The leader must also be an example of working for higher student achievement and establishing a culture where learning is valued within the organization (Mulford et al.).This role-modeling is a first step in motivating faculty and staff towards the change process.

In his Missouri Powerful Learning Conference presentation, Reeves (2011) recommended change as a moral reason to assist in the preparation for the change process. He recommended focusing on the impact of the change and not focusing on the popularity of the change. Change is often initially unpopular. For this reason, Reeves urged school leaders to focus on why the change is necessary and the benefits that will come about from the change. Focusing on the faculty's morals and values as a reason for change can ease the faculty into the beginnings of the change process. Bernard (1938)

offered a foundational recommendation when he urged organizational leaders to appeal to the intrinsic desires for workers to be successful which motivates the workers from within and provides them with a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work. In this case, Reeves recommended appealing to the teachers' beliefs of doing what is best for the students as a motivator for making changes within the school.

Reeves (2011) recommended school leaders prioritize what they wish to change. He urged schools to limit change to no more than six practices. Too many proposed changes can overwhelm a faculty and cause individuals or the group to loss focus on what the school is trying to accomplish. Furthermore, Reeves emphasized changing practices of a school rather than programs. He urged school leaders not to continue adding and removing entire programs as part of the change process; rather, focus on particular aspects within programs or aspects of the school unrelated to school programs. Reeves stated school leaders often introduce, implement, and then remove too many programs. He advised not associating the changes with new programs to avoid the possible stigma or labeling of the change as merely an educational trend that may be used only for a short period of time.

Smith (2006) listed points of advice in his review of the literature for those leading a change process in an organization, some similar to Reeves's (2009) concepts. Smith's first step in a change process was to ensure readiness for change. He recommended communicating with staff early to recreate an environment that is receptive to change. This included addressing the change process with individuals and the organization as a whole. Also, similarly to Reeves's concepts, Smith emphasized sharing the needs or urgency for a change to happen. Smith referred to these as the anchoring

points and basis for the change process. Trybus (2011) suggested an ideal example for a basis for change (as well as a change requiring a sense of urgency) is meeting state and federal goals and mandates. Trybus shared similar recommendations to Reeves (2011) by stating testing should not be the driving point for meeting accountability goals. Instead the faculty should take a sense of pride in the accomplishment of meeting those goals and having student success as a focal point to measure the level of achievement.

Smith (2006) recommended organizational leaders be aware of the "people" factor during the change process. Because it takes the people within the organization for the changes to occur, leaders should make sure individuals are motivated, encouraged, supported, and have an easily accessible means of communication (Change & Segura, 2009; Smith). The organizational leader should strive to create a sense of trust, utilizing teachers' collaborative efforts, and encourage organizational members to hold each other accountable for carrying out the change process (Chance & Segura). A common challenge to any change process by an organization is the resistance to change from those carrying out the new practices, the workers.

Planning for Change

When planning the upcoming change process, there should be a list of priorities for the change process (Reeves, 2009, 2011; Smith, 2006). Reeves (2011) recommended initiating no more than three action steps and establishing a date where all in the organization will implement the change. Limiting the number of action steps creates a foundation for the changes to be completed sooner rather than later. Furthermore, it reduces confusion within the faculty as to where in the change process everyone is. No one faculty member is a great distance ahead of the other faculty members or a great

distance behind the other faculty members in the change process. Establishing a timeline with a concrete deadline for implementation reinforces the common focus among the faculty to complete the change (Reeves, 2011).

Reeves (2008) recommended three essential components for strategic planning for change in schools. First, a monitoring system must be established that will track student achievement, instructional strategies used by the teachers, and other data related to student learning and performance. School leaders must plan to collect and analyze this data on a regular basis to determine if the desired level of progress is being made. Data from existing school initiatives, programs, student achievement levels, and any other relevant source should be used in preparation for the change process (Chenoweth, 2010; Reeves, 2007). School achievement data should be the primary focus to narrow what should be changed and what should remain, as well as to monitor progress during the process (Chenoweth; Reeves, 2007, 2009, 2011). This data should continue to be reviewed during the planning process as a guide for the plan of action by the school (Reeves, 2009). A challenge for school principals, according to Chenoweth, is motivating, preparing, and guiding teachers to review the data, draw conclusions, and utilize the data for making changes to instructional practices in the classroom. As a result, school leaders must account for these challenges in the planning process.

Reeves's (2008) second recommendation for strategic planning was to plan for evaluations of current programs and actions. The recommendation was to remove any programs or actions of the teachers or school that were not contributing to improving student success. Reeves stated "schools with superior evaluation systems…can identify

practices that they have stopped doing because their evaluations found insufficient evidence of effectiveness" (p. 88).

The third component Reeves (2008) outlined was that if school leaders and teachers have a high set of expectations for students, then schools were more likely to have stronger achievement levels. Reeves found results were greatest when teachers had high expectations that their teaching and school programs and practices would have a significant influence on improving student achievement. Sergiovanni (1992) stated that "teachers become more committed and self-managing when schools become true communities" (p. 41). Sergiovanni claimed when teachers become more professional, collaborative, and committed, then the school and the students were more successful. Holding students to the norms, values, and moral responsibilities of the community not only led to students having better results in school, but this also led to teachers being more professional. Sergiovanni stated "the more professionalism is emphasized, the less leadership is needed" (p. 42). In this case, if the teachers are holding to high standards and expectations, the role of the principal (the leader) is needed less to set standards for improving student achievement.

As part of the planning process, Reeves (2008) recommended creating simple, one-page goal papers with two to five goals and measures to replace the large binders containing all the goals and action steps for a school or school district. Each goal contained a few simply-stated action steps to reach goals. Furthermore, the focus for these goal papers was to focus on the end results, which Reeves stated should be improved student achievement.

Tytler (2007), Reeves (2009, 2011), Schneider and Pickett (2006), Brooks, Scribner, and Eferakorho (2004), and Smith (2006) recommended involving staff members in planning the change process. Tytler found it beneficial to include faculty members during the planning process to reform the science curriculum of one education program. Included in the curriculum revision for the education program was a review of the goals and outcomes, methods for assessment of the students, and introducing new methods for providing instruction to the students (Tytler). Faculty members were brought together as a revision team to make changes to the curriculum. The revision team collected historical student achievement data, reviewed the data, collected input from students on their learning styles, and finally put together a plan for teaching science where the best assessments and teaching techniques would be used to meet the learning needs of the science students. The school leaders in Tytler's example involved a high percentage of the faculty in the change process to collect a wider variety of perspectives from within the faculty. Tytler found the meetings for curriculum revision included small groups, large groups, and entire faculty meetings.

Greater staff involvement as a method for change was echoed by Brooks, Scribner, and Eferakorho (2004). The principal in their study emphasized the need for continual involvement of the faculty in the change process. The principal also stated promoting the teachers into leadership positions, especially for carrying out change efforts, would help move the school forward toward the long-term vision. In this case, the principal engaged all teachers by involving them in a committee or a planning team. Furthermore, Brooks, Scribner, and Eferakorho found the teachers appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the change process. One teacher in the study commented

how exciting things were at the school. The teacher appreciated the opportunity to make a difference through committee work in addition to making a difference in the classroom.

Schneider and Pickett (2006) found support for the use of collaborative efforts in planning a change process at the college level. In their study, they found college science departments benefited from collaborating to improve instructional strategies in the classroom. As a result of the sharing of stronger instructional practices, modern and student-engaging practices were used such as more hands-on activities, power points during lectures, and delivering instruction in more appropriate environments. These new environments yielded more opportunities for student activities including labs and group work.

Smith (2006) expanded on the rationale for involving those in charge of carrying out the changes in the organization. He recognized the importance of each individual contributing to the organizational changes. Consulting with individuals on how the process should be carried out can be a vital step to incorporate staff members into the process. Furthermore, this can reduce the amount of resistance to change, as the concerns and fears of the staff can be addressed before the implementation process begins (Smith).

One study found planning for instructional change could come from a source within the school, but not from among the professional staff. Sagan (2010) conducted a study to determine if middle school students, once educated about their unique learning styles, could recommend changes to their instruction and the school. Sagan wanted to ascertain if the students recommendations would differ from the traditional settings and instructional methods typically used in middle schools. The resulting data from the students found the students recommended the use of more tactual, visual, and kinesthetic

resources, as well as more cooperative learning opportunities. Sagan concluded school administrators and school boards should get input from students when decisions are made to impact their learning. Students have the greatest sense of what works for them and what their strengths are. It should be the goal of the school to tailor the educational process towards those strengths.

<div align="center">Implementing Change</div>

Yukl (2002) outlined two sets of guidelines for implementing change in organizations. The first set of guidelines is for political or organizational actions. Similar to Bolman and Deal's (2008) structural and political frames, these practices involve implementing change through creating a structure in the organization through repositioning employees or even re-staffing, identifying and building coalitions for support or opposition to change efforts, and monitoring the progress of change. The second set of guidelines was people-oriented actions. This included addressing the concerns of those in the organization about the change, creating a sense of need for change, empowering others, and maintaining strong communication about changes. Yukl (2002) advocated for a blending of these two guidelines. Instead, Yukl suggested leaders should encourage others and support the change effort rather than dictate its course.

Faculty involvement is a key concept to implementing change in schools (Reeves, 2006, 2009, 2011; Smith, 2006). Reeves (2011) found including ninety percent or more of the faculty in implementing the change process produced three-to-five times higher achievement gains than in instances when only ten percent of the faculty was used to implement the change process. Simply, the more faculty members that are involved in the implementation of the change in practices in a school, then the more the faculty will

accept the new changes and implement the new practices into their classrooms. Smith

also encouraged involving as many people as possible in an organization when

implementing the change. Smith stated,

> The best chance for change to persist and to be truly effective is where the
> changes are achieved through a partnership between those who lead the
> organization at a senior level and those who are close to the everyday
> practical work of the organization. It is therefore necessary to actively
> seek out and give to people in all areas and levels of the organization
> responsibility for carrying through the change. (p. 302)

Smith (2006) also recommended managing the implementation of change

appropriately. He advised leaders to keep the change process in the forefront of the

organization. The change process should have regular progress reports, meetings,

opportunities for feedback, and other practices to avoid the change process stalling.

Furthermore, there should be a process in place to troubleshoot when there are problems

in the change process. When problems do occur, the various stakeholders in the

organization should be able to come together to address the problem and find a solution.

When possible, brainstorming should occur to foresee any reasons for the change process

to stall or problems that may arise as a part of the process.

To assist in the implementing process, Reeves (2006) recommended using "hubs"

or "superhubs" to bring about change in schools. Interaction with teachers is vital for this

to be successful. These staff members were meant to be resources for other teachers in

the building. Typically, these teachers would disseminate information for the leader and

provide opportunities to be examples of new practices to be used as part of the change

process (Reeves). If a school seeks to incorporate more technology into classroom

instruction, then the hubs would be teachers who have knowledge of how to do this.

Furthermore, the hubs could show other teachers how to implement strategies into their

classrooms by providing concrete examples. Some of Reeves's recommendations for the use of hubs included conducting observations of teachers, creating "best practices" books with teacher contributions, surveying students about teachers, allowing anonymous sharing, discussions of practice, arrangements for seating at meetings, voluntary staff development, and creating a rubric of "jerk or toxic" behaviors.

There were many recommendations from researchers for teachers working together to bring about change. However, Atkins and Rossi (2007) noted the value behind implementing new practices together. They commented that having teachers make attempts at implementing new practices concurrently provided opportunities for discussions about what went best and how to improve. The staff also used a "demonstration day" and had peers observe their practices. This gave the faculty the opportunity to provide each other feedback during collaboration to get the best results from their students. Furthermore, the encouragement received from each other led Atkins and Rossi and their staff to increase the level of trust among the faculty.

Fullan (2007) found that fully implementing a change process typically took two to three years in schools. During that time, Fullan recommended regularly evaluating if the changes implemented have an effect on the desired outcomes. School leaders should constantly evaluate the change process in terms of progress towards desired outcomes (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). If after an internally determined period of time there is little or no change to what is being measured, then the leader and members of the organization may seek alternative methods to reach their goals. This would require revisiting the planning process and determining a new plan of action.

Yukl (2002) stated leaders are more likely to be successful in implementing change if they are aware of the reasons for others' resistance. Resistance can come in many forms, ranging from mild reservations to attempts to delay, undermine, or stop the change process from happening (Reeves, 2009, 2011; Smith, 2006; Yukl, 2002). Yukl outlined nine reasons for individuals and organizations to be resistant to change: lack of trust, belief that change is unnecessary, beliefs that the change is not feasible, economic threats, relatively high costs, fear of personal failure, loss of status and power, threat to values and ideals, and resentment of interference. Yukl believed resistance to change is rooted in the beliefs and values of individuals. It is up to the leader to build upon these ideals rather than tear them down. Lewin (1951) provided two types of actions for achieving change. The first approach is to force change through directives or incentives. The second method is to reduce "restraining forces that create resistance to change" (p. 275). If the reasons for resistance to change listed by the various authors here are addressed prior to their occurrence, then restraining forces can be weakened and successful change implemented. Smith (2006) urged leaders in organizations to gain a firm understanding of the reasons for the resistance for change. Continuing to collaborate and obtain feedback from those at various levels within the organization can yield a wider perspective for why there is a resistance to change. More importantly, continued collaboration with various organizational members can identify strategies for overcoming the resistance to change (Reeves, 2007; Smith, 2006).

Little and Houston (2003) examined how the state of Florida implemented instructional change to ensure quality, research-based instructional practices were being implemented in schools. They noted a use of collaboration among a variety of

stakeholders to accomplish this goal. The idea to use collaborative practices was spearheaded at the state level and used a trickle-down effect to individual schools where local committees would develop and implement an action plan to meet required standards. Regional representatives provided ongoing support for the local schools to assist in putting the plans into action. Those at the regional and state level were responsible for quickly communicating any changes or updates to any requirements. These parties were also required to share information on resources, professional development and the latest research in instructional practices. State and regional officials would assist in researching the practices to ensure they were effective and provide support for implementation. Teachers implemented these practices in the classroom and then evaluated the students to see if there were improvements in their academic achievement after the new practices were implemented.

Reeves (2006, 2007), Knight (2011), and Fullan and Knight (2011) recommended the use of coaches to make instructional changes in schools. Fullan and Knight stated "next to the principal, coaches are the most crucial change agent in a school" (p. 50). In education, these are people who are not the supervisor of the employee being coached. Instead, an instructional coach is an experienced colleague or fellow teacher, retired teachers or administrators, or external sources such as from a professional organization or consultant. Reeves (2007) suggested two roles for coaches – emotional support and practical support. Instructional coaches provide a mindset for the mentee to be successful in the classroom while giving the mentee the tools needed to execute his/her job successfully. Knight (2011) believed instructional coaching must be welcomed by all

parties to be successful. The communication between coach and mentee must constantly connect new learning to performance (Knight, 2011; Reeves, 2006).

Reeves (2006) suggested the use of experienced colleagues to help implement change in schools. In this case, coaches can be the "hubs" Reeves (2006) recommended when implementing a change to practices in schools. New initiatives can be carried out by workers in the organization through the coaching mentality. It is recommended to establish an environment where the coaching process is welcomed by both the mentor and the mentee. At the discretion of the school leader, the mentee can request assistance when attempting to practically implement changes. Reeves (2009b) and Anderson (2008) found colleagues in leadership positions (other teachers in the same building) have a greater impact on teachers' instructional growth and development than external factors such as conferences, workshops, formal school leadership, etc. According to Anderson, teacher leaders were more accessible to the entire faculty. Furthermore, Anderson found teacher leaders were more likely to be able to relate to the other teachers than those in administrative positions, thus a greater sense of trust and lessened state of apprehension existed in the relationship between mentor and mentee. Reeves (2007, 2009b) recommended focusing on sharing best practices, conducting observations, and avoidance of mandates. Having clear-cut goals and vision for the coaching experience is essential for success of the program (Reeves, 2007; Anderson; Fullan & Knight, 2011).

Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran (2011) and Knight (2011) also recommended the coaching process. The recommended coaches needed to focus on helping the mentee get to the point where they can accurately self-evaluate progress while creating a strong connection between coach and mentee. Tschannen-Moran and

Tschannen-Moran also recommended coaching be teacher-centered, be no-fault based, and be strength-based. Coaching must focus on what the mentee is doing, play to the mentee's strengths, and be in a risk-free environment. To be risk free, the experience must be one where the mentee can try new ideas and practices without the fear of consequences from the coach. Knight recommended coaches be prepared to ask questions, listen, provide feedback, and explain the hows and whys of effective teaching practices while still focusing on the goals of the mentee teacher.

Mangin (2007) also recommended using teachers as instructional leaders within schools. Mangin's study found all five school districts that were researched expressed a desire for the use of teachers to improve the instructional practices of other teachers. Topics for improvement ranged from lesson planning and creating rubrics to student assessments and utilizing the data from those assessments. School administrators valued the fact this professional development was provided directly to the teacher, was practical, and could be shaped to fit the needs of each faculty member. Communication was found to be vital, and the most successful school created a series of hubs for which to disseminate information. Other districts relied on common meetings to share information. However, the most successful school still provided time for collaboration to occur among the teachers and share ideas. The most successful teacher leaders took on tasks including one-on-one assistance outside of class instructional time to modeling for other teachers during the mentor or the mentee's instructional time. The most successful schools at implementing teacher leadership for instructional improvement had the administrator and the teacher leader(s) meeting on a regular basis (at least weekly). These discussions included high-quality conversations about curriculum and student learning. Less

successful schools held fewer or no meetings or had little or no formalized staff interaction or collaboration. Successful administrators communicated to the teachers the high level of expectations for instructional improvement, while encouraging the teacher leaders as a resource. Administrators also emphasized the need for teachers to communicate with the teacher leaders. However, concerns were raised that teacher leaders wanted more time with their principals and more directives for teachers to work with the teacher leaders (Mangin).

Popham (2009) found teachers can be self-reflective and make their own instructional changes based on honest reflection on their teaching practices. Teachers should reflect on instructional design, instructional monitoring, and instructional evaluation. Reflecting on the instructional design should have the teachers examining whether or not their instructional activities helped the students achieve the curricular goals. Reflecting on instructional monitoring should result in teachers reviewing what adjustments in the ongoing instruction should be made based on the feedback from the students (if they do well or poorly on formative assessments). Finally, teachers should evaluate if the activities were effective, and if not, how they can be adjusted for future use with the current and future students. Popham emphasized the use of assessment data to help formulate an evaluation of the instructional strategies for what did and did not work.

Sentocnik and Rupar (2009) reported on the more successful instructional changes they observed. They found distributed leadership to be very successful. While it was important to have leaders in formal roles when instructional changes were happening, it was also important to share power with the teachers and have them direct a large portion

of the change process. The researchers highlighted the need for the principal to be a member of the leadership team to implement change, but not to be the figurehead. The principal also needed to support the efforts of the teachers and provide reinforcement when the change had been successfully implemented. The principal's support needed to be support conveyed verbally and through action.

Parise and Spillane's 2010 study found formal professional development and on-the-job teacher training and their relation with teacher change were meaningful. The researchers pointed out the over-reliance on formal professional development through "sit and get" activities. Parise and Spillane found teachers preferred professional development that could be used for on-the-job opportunities. They also found teachers valued professional development opportunities where collaborative discussion takes place. Spillane and Parise found collaborative professional development to be most effective in math departments and when the faculty members of any discipline focused on effective, research-based teaching practices. Another implication of on-the-job professional growth for change could be financial savings on such things as guest speakers, renting out space, and food costs.

Calvo and Miles (2012) provided recommendations for schools struggling to make changes when financial resources are limited. First, school leaders should invest in quality teachers. To boost teacher quality, Calvo and Miles recommended dismissing ineffective teachers, reorganizing staff to utilize the strengths of each teacher, and encouraging leadership roles within the staff to promote change. Second, school leaders should organize the school to promote individual attention to each student. Reducing class sizes, looping, more classroom interaction by support staff, use of data, and use of

technology were some of the suggestions to increase individual attention. Lastly, school leaders should promote maximizing the use of time. This included promoting teaching from bell-to-bell, building in time for re-teaching to struggling learners, utilizing after-school programs and outside resources for additional teaching, and organizing classes into longer periods for more in-depth student learning (Calvo & Miles).

<center>Sustaining Change</center>

Lewin (1951) proposed three stages for an organizational change process to avoid the "shot in the arm" where "change toward a higher level of group performance is frequently short lived" (p 228). Lewin proposed the stages of unfreezing, moving to the new level, and freezing. Yukl (2002) interpreted these as "people realizing the old way of doing things are no longer adequate…people look for new ways of doing things and select a promising approach…(and) the new approach is implemented and it becomes established" (p. 275). Reeves' (2009) approach to change was very similar in terms of creating the opportunity for change, planning for the change, implementing the change, and sustaining the change.

It is vital for school leaders and faculty members to continue to maintain a focus on what has changed in the school and continue monitoring data related to the change. Reeves (2011) stated "schools with the highest levels of focus and monitoring achieved twice the gains in reading over three years compared to schools with the lowest levels of focus and monitoring" (p. 4).

Reeves (2007b) stated that sustainability required "school wide dedication and consistency" (p. 86). Over time, the faculty and school leaders of one of Reeves's example schools engaged in and sustained instructional changes to improve student

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achievement for all its students. First, the teachers created common curriculums and assessments. All students received similar instruction and the same assessments so that progress was measured on an even level. The school also set aside sacred times for improving student literacy and teacher collaboration. Reeves (2007, 2011) recommended for schools to maintain a strict focus on its goals and student achievement by allotting time for interventions and teacher collaboration to take place. Tytler (2007) also noted one school that revised its science curriculum also should continue with a strong focus on improving student achievement. Faculty members continued to collaborate and create new units with more lessons tailored toward the learning styles of the students (Tytler). Reeves (2007) and Tytler both found teachers who met regularly as a group and continued to plan classroom instruction and assessment based on desired goals had better chances for change to be sustained in the school.

Reeves (2007) reported schools were more likely to have sustained change when the school recognized student success and employed teachers with greater intrinsic motivation. Reeves's example school regularly celebrated and recognized the successes of the students. This gave a sense of accomplishment to those who had achieved, but it also conveyed the high expectations for student success to the entire student population, the faculty, and the community. Reeves (2007) found that the teachers who embraced the changes were more likely to remain on the staff. Teachers who embraced the changes implemented new instructional methods, utilized interventions, and made the most of collaboration time to collect and analyze student data and improve teaching practices. This school was a prime example of sustained successful instructional change. The school met its goal by having its students improve in their academic achievement levels

over the span of half a decade (Reeves, 2007). Furthermore, the school continued this improvement after the transition of a new school leader.

Reeves (2007) stated one sign of sustaining change is if a "key leader departs, effective school culture and instructional strategies can endure" (p. 87). Fullan (2007) suggested school leaders must reach a point where the change will continue as a cultural aspect of the school or the change should be discarded and a new focus be established. School leaders should use data to justify the decision to continue or discontinue an initiative of the change process (Fullan, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Trybus, 2011). Reeves's (2007) example school showed how the changes became embedded into their culture and became their focus and "way of doing things."

Reeves (2006) stated "changed initiatives fail not because of a principal or inadequate training, but because they are built on an inaccurate model of how organizations function and on (the faculty's) assumptions" (p. 32). Reeves found (2006, 2009) if only a few of the organization's workers become energized by the prospect of change, then only those few complete the majority of the work. The remaining workers are expected to follow suit with the few original initiates of the change. A major challenge Reeves (2006) discovered in his research was most workers do not feel attached to superiors, supervisors, and the hierarchy in the organization. Instead, the workers take directives and are more likely to accept change when it comes from colleagues. Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009) stated in rural schools leaders come in the forms of a variety of stakeholders within the school community including teachers, parents, community members, and others. Rural leaders can utilize all these resources to make decisions and implement change.

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Summary

Rural schools face a number of challenges including finances, resources, and staffing (Beck & Shoffstall, 2005; Eppley, 2009; Hannum Irvin, Banks, & Farmer, 2009; Hardre and Hennessey, 2010). There is also a high level of accountability on all schools to perform and meet state and federal standards (Eppley). Schools, including rural schools, will need to make changes in order to keep up with these demands. Reeves (2009) presented a change process model to guide schools towards meeting goals. The next stage is to investigate how principals of rural schools lead the change process to improve instruction in the classroom. The following chapters will provide a methodology for this study, the findings of the study, and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

High school principals face the challenges of meeting the goals and expectations of government programs, such as Top 10 in 20 and No Child Left Behind, in order to maintain accreditation and keep school funding (DESE, 2011; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). Schools are required to improve test scores on state assessments and improve graduation rates. This means changes must be made in schools. Change often requires an investment of time and money by school leaders, faculty, and staff. However, rural schools often lack adequate resources to bring about large-scale change (Brown-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006).

This study examined how rural high school principals in Missouri implemented instructional changes in their buildings. The researcher specifically focused on rural schools. For this study, rural schools were defined as high schools of less than 300 students located outside the counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Clay, Platte, Jackson, and Greene in the state of Missouri (excluding schools in or near the cities of St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield). Rural schools in this study included grades 7-12 or 9-12, as designated as the secondary level of education within each school district. To discover how change took place, the researcher collected and analyzed qualitative data including transcripts from one-on-one interviews and focus groups, and field notes from each school. Steps were taken by the researcher to improve the level of trustworthiness and dependability of the data and the study. The research process of the study will be detailed in Chapter Three.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover how principals of rural high schools implement instructional changes in their school. Schools in the state of Missouri are required to participate in state testing. The results of the state tests are factored into the scores calculated by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) towards each school district's status of accreditation. Principals are forced to evaluate the current instructional practices within the school, and when necessary, bring about instructional changes. Rural principals face the challenge of having fewer resources and teachers to implement these changes.

Research Questions

The following research questions directed this study:

1. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri create conditions for instructional changes in their schools?

2. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri plan for making instructional changes in their schools?

3. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri implement instructional changes in their schools?

4. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri sustain instructional changes in their schools?

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of employees of selected public rural high schools that had demonstrated improvements in key areas noted in the school's Annual

Performance Report compiled by the State of Missouri. Rural schools were identified as public schools with a student population equal to or less than 300 students in grades 7-12 or 9-12. Excluded from the survey were schools from the counties of St. Louis, St. Charles, Clay, Platte, Jackson, and Green as these counties contain major urban communities (St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield). Private, technical, vocational, charter, special education, and other specialty schools were excluded from the sample population.

<div align="center">Sampling Procedure</div>

The first phase of the sampling procedure was to identify rural high schools in Missouri that showed improvement on the ACT, state assessments, graduation rates, overall APR, and/or earned recognition for being Accredited with Distinction. To obtain an appropriate sample for this study, the DESE (2012) website was used to obtain a list of all schools from the 2011-2012 school year in the State of Missouri. From this list, the researcher selected all high schools in rural counties. Counties that were excluded from the final list included St. Louis, St. Charles, Clay, Platte, Jackson, and Greene. These were excluded due to the large cities (St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield) within or near these counties. Also excluded from the list were private, alternative, technical, vocational, charter, special education, and other specialty schools.

Student enrollment was the second consideration for this study. The schools eligible for this study contained a student population of no more than 300 students in grades 6-12, 7-12, or 9-12 depending on the definition of high school within the individual school districts. The researcher's school was also omitted from the study. The

limitations of geographical location, demographics of the student population, and omission of the researcher's school produced 243 potential schools for this study.

Of the 243 potential schools for this study, three schools were selected to be contacted by the researcher. The three schools invited to participate were based on a review of achievement data and the recommendations by area supervisors employed by DESE and other professional colleagues of the researcher who had experience with successful schools. Area supervisors were emailed (Appendix A) and asked to recommend schools that underwent school-wide instructional change in the past two to five years and provide a short rationale supporting their recommendation. The researcher received correspondence from four area supervisors. The area supervisors recommended seven schools for the study. The researcher selected and contacted schools in order of area supervisor preference until three schools agreed to participate in the study. Recommendations from colleagues were received and taken into consideration. The superintendent of each selected school was contacted via email (Appendix B) and invited to participate in the study. The superintendents and their building principals were provided with documentation containing the purpose and research questions for this study. An informed consent (Appendix C) was also given to the superintendent and the principal. The researcher communicated the desired methods for data collection and allowed time for the principal to coordinate times for the interviews and focus groups to be scheduled. This grace period before the on-site data collection period allowed time for the participants to be fully aware of the informed consent documentation and communicate any concerns or questions prior to the on-site data collection period.

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

This study was a qualitative study with an ontological philosophical assumption. Creswell (2007) defined an ontological study as one where the researcher "uses quotes and themes in the words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives" (p. 17). The key question to be addressed by the researcher of an ontological study is: What is the nature of reality? For this study, the researcher sought to discover the realities of the change process. To accomplish this, principals, superintendents, and teachers were interviewed to obtain their perspectives of the change process. This study also took what Creswell (2007) defined as a post-positivist viewpoint in that the researcher believed "in multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality" (p. 21). Creswell (2009) stated "problems studied by post-positivists reflect the need to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes" (p. 7). For this study, the causes were the increased accountability by state and federal guidelines. The outcome for this study was the resulting instructional change. This study intended to find the steps between the cause and outcome. Mertens (2005) stated post-positivism and ontological philosophies rarely combine to produce qualitative data; however, the researcher took a logical viewpoint of this reality moving from the cause, to the change process, and finally to the outcome and produced qualitative data to outline that process.

This study was a multiple case study, as more than one school was involved in the collection of data to produce the findings. Creswell (2007) defined a case study as "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). Yin (1981) stated a case study attempts to examine a "phenomenon in its real-life context" (p. 59). For this study, the research sought to determine the real-world practices of school leaders leading instructional change in their schools. This study required two

phases. The first phase of the study was to identify rural high schools in Missouri which

improved their scores on the state assessments and/or the ACT in the past five years

using the assistance of area supervisors in the ten regions of the state and

recommendations from professional colleagues of the researcher. Once the schools were

identified, the researcher initiated contact with the superintendent of three schools via

email to request participation in the study. Once permission was granted by the

superintendent and communication was begun with the building principal, a full day of

on-site data collection was initiated. Participating schools were rural high schools with

less than 300 students in grades 7-12 or 9-12.

<p style="text-align:center">Data Collection and Instrumentation</p>

Data for this study were collected through a variety of qualitative methods. Yin

(1981) stated that evidence in case studies can come from "fieldwork, archival records,

verbal reports, observations, or any combination" (p. 58). For this study, the first method

of collecting evidence was interviews of the building principal to address the research

questions of setting conditions for instructional change, planning for instructional change,

implementing the instructional change, and sustaining instructional change. Principal

interview questions are available in Appendix D. Individual interviews were also

conducted with the available assistant superintendent on her perspectives of the

instructional change process in the high school (see Appendix E). Seidman (2006) stated

the use of interviews in research provides an opportunity for "understanding the lived

experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). The

researcher wanted principals to provide examples of their experiences during the change

process. It was desired for the principals to reconstruct the processes they used to bring

<p style="text-align:center">56</p>

about change in their schools. Similarly, it was hoped the superintendent would be able to provide her perspectives of the change process from a supervisory viewpoint. All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. All interview participants received and signed an informed consent for their involvement in the study and approving the use of the digital audio recording device.

Seidman (2006) recommended a three-part process for conducting interviews which was used by the researcher. First, the interviewer sought information about the participant up to the current point in time. This provides a context for the previous experiences and foundations in his/her life such as school, family, and work that allows the researcher to reconstruct the interviewee's path to the point of the interview. For this study, the participants shared information regarding their backgrounds in education as a student, a teacher, and an administrator, as well as any other background information. The second part of the interview, as recommended by Seidman, was to concentrate on the experiences of the participant in relation to the study. This stage requires the interviewer to have the participant reconstruct the events and details surrounding the event related to the study. For this interview, the participants reconstructed the events of the change process in the school. The events included their involvement, as well as what they witnessed others doing during the change process. The final stage of the interview process was to reflect on the meaning of the events. Questions addressed the connections between the change process and the effect on the students, teachers, and any other stakeholders. Emergent questions also sought clarification for additional meanings of participants' responses.

Focus groups were the second qualitative method for collecting data during this study. Krueger and Casey (2009) stated focus groups involve "people who possess certain characteristics provide qualitative data in a focused discussion to help understand the topic of interest" (p. 6). Mertens (2005) justified the use of focus groups to collect data by observing the conversation and interaction within the group and gaining a variety of perspectives. For this study, the researcher utilized a focus group consisting of teachers involved in the change process in each school. Focus group questions are available in Appendix F. Conducting focus groups with the teachers allowed the researcher to gain perspectives from those involved in the change process. The same process for individual interviews was followed with each focus group with all participants signing an informed consent and agreeing to have their responses and interactions recorded with a digital audio recording device. All interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed by the researcher to prepare for the data analysis process.

Krueger and Casey (2009) stated recommendations for conducting focus groups. First, questions for the focus group should be clear, short, and open-ended. By following this recommendation, the participants in this study were able to easily understand what was being asked of them. Furthermore, and most importantly, the majority of the talking was done by the participants instead of the interviewer. Mertens (2005) recommended focus group questions be semi-structured to cover important issues but allow for flexibility to respond for group concerns or to investigate responses more in-depth. Focus group questions are often limited to less than ten questions (Krueger & Casey, Mertens) which allows for the interviewer to primarily listen and be an audience for the participants (Kruger & Casey; Seidman). To initiate more conversations, Kruger and

Casey recommended using a variety of questions building towards the "meat" of the conversation. Using opening questions and introductory questions begins the dialogue amongst the group to establish a comfort level. Transition questions begin directing the participants toward the most important part of the conversation revolving around the subject of the study. At this point, Krueger and Casey recommended initiating the key questions of the focus group. It was hoped by this stage participants would have established a comfortable dialogue, and their responses towards the study would come more naturally and effectively for the researcher.

Another method of data collection included the compilation of field notes during the on-site visits to the schools. Field notes were written down by the researcher during all interviews and focus groups. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) stated that when taking field notes the researcher should avoid drawing conclusions during the observation. Instead, the researcher should focus upon the events occurring, make detailed notes about the events, and then examine the larger scope of data from the observation to draw conclusions by incorporating the field notes into the findings. Details of the setting, personality traits, body language, and other descriptive data not in the audio recordings were documented on paper.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data analysis included a review of the transcripts of interviews and focus groups and the field notes with the intention of discovering emerging themes (if any) exist from within each case and through the multiple cases. In order to complete this process, Creswell (2009) offered a series of steps for data analysis that will be followed for this study.

First, all data were collected and organized. All interviews were transcribed and all other documentation was organized by sources. Second, the documentation was reviewed for what Creswell (2009) described as a "general sense of the information" (p. 185). Next, all documentation was reviewed and coded. After coding, Creswell (2007, 2009) and Mertens (2005) recommended looking for themes, or reoccurring patterns, between sources and/or cases. From these themes the researcher is able to form generalizations "that people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 163). For this study, the researcher reviewed the data for themes related to the conceptual framework introduced by Reeves (2009) on the implementation of changes in schools. Data were compiled together based on creating conditions for change, planning change, implementing the change, and sustaining the change. The fifth step recommended by Creswell (2009) is determining how the themes will be conveyed in the findings. For the purpose of this study, a narrative will be used to discuss the themes and providing illustrations and various perspectives of the study's participants. Finally, Creswell (2009) recommended providing interpretations. For this study, the data were interpreted to show the perspectives of the various participants as to how instructional changes were implemented and reactions from the participants to those changes.

<div align="center">Strategies for Ensuring Quality</div>

Mertens (2005) defined dependability as "the qualitative parallel to reliability" (p. 257). To increase dependability, any and all changes occurring during the study were documented to provide future researchers the opportunity to replicate this study and obtain similar results. The most change in this study was questions emerging during

interviews, focus groups, or review of historical data. To increase trustworthiness, the researcher gathered data through a variety of methods to allow for the opportunity for saturation of similar data to emerge. Mertens recommended not ending the study prematurely to where new information may be presented. As a result, the researcher attempted to gain as many perspectives as possible while at each school during the study. The variety of viewpoints of the change process allowed the research to gain a broader picture within each school and throughout all the schools in the study. The research followed the recommendation by Mertens to perform member checks. Finally, the researcher conducted a triangulation of the data. Mertens defined this as "checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data" (p. 255). Using a variety of sources provided what Creswell (2007) referred to as validation. This refers to using "multiple types of data to support or contradict the interpretation" of what is shared by the participants (Creswell, p. 204). The findings of reoccurring themes and repeating information over multiple sources can provide greater credibility to the findings of the study. The use of multiple methods for data collection and the interviewing of a wide variety of participants within each school assisted in providing more data for themes to emerge.

Creswell (2007) provided his own validation strategies for future researchers to increase the validity or credibility of findings in a qualitative study. Most notable was the use of a peer reviewer. For the purpose of this study, the dissertation advisor should act as what Creswell terms the "devil's advocate" to challenge the researcher's methods and interpretations (p. 208). Another strategy used as recommended by Creswell is member checking.

Summary

This study attempted to investigate how principals of rural high schools implement instructional changes in their school. These changes are being indirectly encouraged due to DESE's (2011) goal for the Missouri education system to be ranked in the top ten states in the nation and the requirements and accountability due to the No Child Left Behind federal policy. This qualitative study utilized surveys, interviews, focus groups, and field notes to examine how principals implement these changes. Furthermore, this study revealed the challenges faced by these principals, how the principals overcame these challenges, and specifically how they initiated the change process. The study was guided by the conceptual framework for implementing changes in schools as recommended by Reeves (2009). Key concepts outlined by Reeves included creating conditions for change, planning change, implementing the change, and sustaining the change. Methods for obtaining data included interviews, focus groups, and field notes. All data was reviewed and coded for each of the concepts put forth by Reeves. Other emergent themes were also noted to assist in answering the research questions. The following chapters contain the findings and the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This study examined the change process used by principals in rural high schools in Missouri to bring about instructional change. Reported in this chapter are the interviews with three principals, an assistant superintendent, and focus groups with teachers of the identified schools. The research questions for this study were based on Reeves's (2009) conceptual framework which outlined the actions schools should take as they go through a change process. The data received from the participants was grouped in relation to the research question. Groupings of findings emerging from the responses are included. Some findings emerged within the responses to each research question and some findings emerged across the various research questions and in the different stages of the change process. The data gathered from these interviews and focus groups will later provide the basis for discussions and recommendations in Chapter Five of this study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to understand how principals of rural high schools lead instructional changes in their school. Reeves's (2009) concepts for leading change in schools is the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions are based around Reeves's conceptual framework with a focus on the process for bringing about instructional changes in schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions directed this study:

1. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri create conditions for instructional changes in their schools?

2. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri plan for making instructional changes in their schools?

3. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri implement instructional changes in their schools?

4. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri sustain instructional changes in their schools?

Participants

Study participants were employed in three rural schools demonstrating improvement in academic performance. Rural schools were limited to populations of no more than 300 students enrolled in what the district classified as its secondary school. The participants included three principals, one central office administrator, and three focus groups containing 3-6 teachers. All principals and the central office administrator had been in their districts for at least 5 years. Two of the principals had been teachers in the district prior to becoming principal.

For the purpose of this study, and to preserve confidentiality, the names of the three principals, the teachers, and the assistant superintendent were changed. Because of the sensitivity of some responses of the teachers, and to provide further confidentiality, the names of all teachers participating in each school's focus group are represented by a single name.

School One

The school population includes 97.2% white students, and 32% of all students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The school's ACT composite scores have increased from 19.8 in 2006 to a composite of 21.2 in 2011 and over 21 for the past three years. From 2003-2005 the school district was scoring an Annual Performance Report (APR) score of 9 points. Since 2006 the district has scored 13 or 14 points every year. In 2011 the school produced a status of Met for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Communication Arts, Mathematics, and the Additional Indicator. Data are available in chart format in Appendix G. The major instructional change at School One was to introduce research-based and proven practices consistently across all classrooms. Of the three schools, School One was the only school to implement new instructional delivery methods across all classrooms.

David is a white male principal leading a high school in a small town with a student population of 287 students. He is a former agriculture teacher. David has been in the school district for 15 years. He was motivated by the opportunity to assist in coaching teachers and helping young people to have similar experiences that he had while in school. Isabelle is the assistant superintendent of the district. She previously was a math teacher in two other districts before moving to School One. She taught at School One for three years before becoming the curriculum coordinator and assistant superintendent. The focus group for School One contained four teachers, three females and one male. All four teachers were veteran teachers with years of experience ranging from seven years to twenty-five years. They taught foreign language, math, physical education, and science. The name Chris represents the teachers from School One.

School Two

School Two is located in a small town in a rural area approximately one hour from a major Missouri city. The secondary school has an enrollment of 64 students. The student population is 92% white, and 58.6% of all students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunches. The school district's APR scores in 2011 and 2012 were 14 each year. From 2008 to 2010 the district's scores were 11 or 12, but from 2003-2007 the district's APR score was 10 or less. The high school met all categories for AYP in 2008, 2010, and 2011. School ACT scores have fluctuated from 2007 to 2012 with average composite scores ranging from 16 to 24. In 2008 and 2010 the average composite scores of School Two were above the national average. Data are available in chart format in Appendix H. The major instructional changes at School Two were based around a collective vision to hold higher expectations for students and to find new practices to increase academic achievement. The faculty size at School Two was so small there was one teacher for each subject area. As a result, the teachers individually researched and began using new practices they believed to be the best fit for their own classroom. The teachers did work collaboratively to provide intervention practices, provide additional instruction or re-teaching opportunities, and hold students accountable to the new expectations.

Claude is a white male who has been the principal in the district for 5 years. He had been a principal in another district for 34 years before retiring and moving to Missouri. He enjoys being the principal of a small school where "you don't get lost in the shuffle like you will in some of the bigger communities." Much like many of his teachers, he appreciates the sense of family in the building. The focus group from School

Two contained three teachers. The experiences of these teachers varied greatly. One teacher in the focus group had been in several districts as a teacher, a principal, and for a time, in a career outside education. Another teacher in the focus group had spent fifteen years a substitute in the district before becoming certified and teaching for the past five years. The third teacher in the focus group was in the seventh year of teaching, all at School Two. The teachers in this group are represented with the name Jamie.

School Three

The high school has a student population of 114. The school is located in a small town approximately 15 miles from a large town with a community college. The student population is 96.5% white, and 53.5% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. From 2007 to 2012 the school scored 13 or 14 points on APR except for 2010. The school's APR scores were 10 or below from 2003 through 2006. The average ACT composite scores for School Three have gone from 18.9 in 2006 to 20.9 in 2011, with only one year where the score was below that of 2006. Data are available in chart format in Appendix I. The major initiative for School Three was to create curriculum binders where teachers increased focus on state level learning goals, improved assessments, and aligned instructional practices with the learning goals. The more intensive curriculum planning through the preparation and use of the binders changed the focus for what teachers were teaching, methods of student assessment, and instructional strategies and methods for content delivery.

Mia is a white, female school leader who has been in education for eight years, all of which have been at the same school. After four years teaching, she spent two years as the school's assistant principal and then two years as the principal. Mia had prior

experience in administration before entering education and found it to be "a natural fit for me to move into administration." The focus group at School Three contained five teachers and the counselor who had also previously been a teacher in the school. The years of experience for the group ranged from three years to thirty-five years in education. One teacher was a former student of the school. The group was made up of a counselor, a math teacher, an art teacher, a sixth grade teacher who had been teaching seventh and eighth grade English, a special education teacher, and a science teacher. For this study the group is collectively known as Taylor.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data analysis included a review of the transcripts of interviews and focus groups and the field notes with the intention of discovering emerging themes that exist from within each case and through the multiple cases. To complete this process, Creswell (2009) offered a series of steps for data analysis that were followed for this study.

First, all data were collected and organized. All interviews were transcribed and all data were organized by sources. Second, the documentation was reviewed for what Creswell (2009) described as a "general sense of the information" (p. 185). Third, all documentation was reviewed and coded. Fourth, after coding, Creswell (2007, 2009) and Mertens (2005) recommended looking for themes, or reoccurring patterns, between sources and/or cases. From these themes the researcher was able to form generalizations "that people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 163). For this study, the researcher reviewed the data for themes related to the conceptual framework introduced by Reeves (2009) on the implementation of changes in schools. Data were compiled together based on creating

conditions for change, planning change, implementing the change, and sustaining the

change. The fifth step recommended by Creswell (2009) is determining how the themes

will be conveyed in the findings. For the purpose of this study, a narrative discussed the

themes and provided illustrations and various perspectives of the study's participants.

Finally, Creswell (2009) recommended providing interpretations. For this study, the

researcher interpreted the data to show the perspectives of the various participants of how

instructional changes were implemented and reactions of the participants to those

changes.

<div align="center">Building a Vision and Establishing Goals</div>

Reeves (2009) stated that principals must first set the stage for beginning a change

process. Responses from participants in this study shared common responses about how

they prepared for a change process. The findings which emerged from the responses

related to establishing a vision and goals for the school and the motivations for change.

Establishing a Vision and Goals

Each principal began the process of establishing a vision for the district by finding

what aspects of the school they wished to improve and then began seeking ideas for how

to carry out the improvements. David stated:

> It's like you're shopping and checking things out and you haven't made
> the decision, and you get to make the decision. That can be lots of fun. I
> think schools do that often, research and select new things. The part that's
> not glamorous that's just hard work that just takes perseverance and focus
> is implementation of whatever it is that you're going to do. And I think
> that's the place where sometimes really good practices just don't produce
> results because the implementation isn't carried through the vigor that it
> should be and so in the change process that's to me where, especially,
> principals play a major role because in, you know, a positive way they
> have to maintain the focus, be the cheerleader, and I always say, be the
> bulldog and just persevere and stick with it and get through the rough parts
> that you can see the results, so that's what I would say.

<div align="center">69</div>

Isabelle discussed the challenge David faced when removing a program or initiative that had been in place. Removal of a process or initiative often coincides with the addition of something new. Administrators have to be prepared for some resistance or dissatisfaction when this happens. She commented:

> We also have looked at weeding the garden, how many initiatives do you have going on, and which ones are really producing and which ones are not. So we've done some of that and tried to work on that. [The weeded initiatives} have had some great successes, and we've got some really good things with them. And sometimes [weeding] is not as fun and people are not real happy, or they feel like maybe more weeding should be done. You know their favorite flower got picked.

This response reflected the need to be aware that resistance may come not only from adding new practices, but resistance may also come from the removal of programs or practices. This could be especially true for faculty members who were largely involved in the introduction of the practice or program now being "weeded-out."

The principal must determine the challenges or problems hindering the opportunities for success. Mia stated:

> The biggest change has been in curriculum development. Our curriculum in the past (and this is even me as a classroom teacher prior to some professional development I did) was basically, "this is what the textbook says and this is how I teach." As we know, the book is not made for the state of Missouri, even though they put the little sticker on the front of it. We have been writing our curriculum to match the Course-Level Expectations (CLEs) or the Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs), or moving towards the common core. We are making it more teacher-friendly so you're actually using it. You could turn to day one and start going. It was aligned to the GLEs, and of course we make sure we're not missing a GLE. We turned away from tracking on the computer because it was "ok now it's on the computer but now we don't look at it, to be honest, until MSIP comes around again." This way it isn't just on the shelf, the teachers are actually using it.

She continued:

> I knew from my experience in the classroom, from being here, from watching my colleagues struggle with their scores on MAP tests and end of course tests that something needed to change. We weren't covering something. We were missing stuff. I was constantly hearing from teachers that "oh yeah it's in the book, but I didn't get to the next chapter". When I was going through professional development as a teacher it showed me that some things as a state we weren't really ready for some of the stuff that was there, we weren't getting there. So just try to figure out how can we get there? How can we get our rigor up? Depth of knowledge was not there, so we need to be teaching depth of knowledge to our teachers and use it with our students.

Claude faced the challenge of changing the priorities of community members and the students. There was a strong sense of the success of athletic programs taking priority over academics. He discussed that it has been a difficult transition to have the community members and the students change the way they viewed the school and what should be the most important aspect of the school, "It's been an uphill battle with some of the stakeholders, but I think some of them are getting the message that academics are more important than the sports." Claude had strong concerns about the academic achievement levels of the students in the school upon his arrival. The focus immediately became changing the priority for the students and putting academic achievement to the forefront. He stated:

> So, when I came here, I told these kids, when I went around to every class, "Guys, I don't want to be the principal that shuts down another school. And this one is not going to get shut down because of small numbers, because I don't think we're going to get much smaller than we are right now. If we get shut down, it's going to be for poor academics." That was the message the very first day I talked to all the kids. I don't want to be the one that gets us shut down because of academics and we've done a little better every year, but we have a long ways to go, but, we've shown improvement.

A teacher on Claude's faculty expressed similar concerns about the expectations from students about grades and academic achievement. Jamie commented that his own expectations had changed over time:

> Some of us sitting in here, we have a higher level of expectation for the kids than even what I had my first year of teaching. I have grown so much as an educator that my level of what I'm expecting each time that they hand in an assignment, no matter what it is, has gone up so much and if it's not, doesn't meet my expectation, go back and redo it until it meets that expectation level.

Isabelle commented about David, "He's somewhat competitive and he just wants the kids to achieve the very best they possibly can. He wants teachers who get the most out of their teaching time, planning time, etc." David reinforced this statement:

> We pride ourselves on being competitive. We, [the superintendent], the middle school principal, and I, we want our kids out, we want them outside the boundaries of [our community], and we want them to experience the cultural learning and the idea that, that in life your career and college readiness has you competing with those folks. We spent a lot of time with league schools and looking at student achievement data. For many years we were the number one school in the league in terms of where our students were achieving at. And all of a sudden it changed…It changed because we got stagnant and got stale and weren't looking at effective learning strategies in the classroom and that needed to change. We began that change by presenting the data. Not only their own data, but the data that our kids are producing once they get out of here. We started looking at the schools around us, how are they achieving at a higher level when they're testing four times as many kids as we are? I think you got to question why you're here. So that's kind of where we start.

Mia stated after attending a professional development opportunity, "I was pretty upfront with the old staff that had been here and said `look, what we have been doing isn't working. Take [the curriculum guides] off the shelf that are dusty and we need to do something that really works and helps our kids'."

Determining the next steps for a school that is making change requires the leaders to look at research based practices for ideas and potential solutions. David commented

about the administrative team, "We have an administrative team that's forward looking, always reading research, trying to stay on top of things and monitor what we're doing and what's working well and what maybe isn't working as well." Commenting specifically on David's willingness to seek and use new ideas, Isabelle shared:

> He's very well read. He encourages his staff to read also. He uses teacher leadership very well. He has also studied the dynamics of group change and what you can expect and what not to expect and those types of things. So just preparing himself for what to expect was really good. He has definitely supported his staff with resources, professional development opportunities, just collegial conversation, having the time to sit down to talk together, collaboration…We had been using the state model PBTE with some, a few, fine tuning touches to it. We found it didn't provide the coaching piece, the instructional coaching piece that they wanted to put into play…The administrative team spent some time doing some study of Kent Marshall's book on teacher supervision and evaluation, and in conjunction with Focus by Schmoeker and the Art and Science of Teaching by Marzano. And with all of that in mind we met together and developed a new teacher evaluation rubric which demands that the principals are doing short observations in the classroom with teachers maybe a couple of times a week. They don't stay for the entire class time, but they give immediate feedback verbally and in writing within 24 hours to the teachers, and this continues all year long. So this provides more of the coaching attitude, you know, more than just the go see them once and then don't go see them again until next semester.

Professional development and having a strong understanding of research-based best practices and plans of action was common among these school leaders. Each of the leaders took time to gain knowledge about various school improvement initiatives and strategies. This helped the faculty buy into the vision of the principal. David discussed his professional development experiences to improve his school:

> We started out at a national differentiated instruction conference and I was compelled by several of the presenters out there and I liked the whole idea and it challenged the status quo and challenged my thinking and it was something that I felt other people needed as well. We had kind of gotten into a rut and our achievement had kind of flat lined and we needed to be addressing student needs at more than just the middle of the road type thing. So we started working with differentiated instruction. We went out

and bought Betty Hollis's book. It's kind of a short quick study on how to differentiate at the secondary level. We started doing a lot of things...I did read Transforming School Culture which is a wonderful book by Anthony Muhammad. I have read Rick Dufor's Fair is Not Always Equal which talks about bringing about change. I'm a huge Doug Reeves fan and the idea that you will never achieve 100% buy-in, perfection is not the goal, we try to get 90% of the folks in, engaged in the practices. We don't necessarily ask them to believe in them, but we ask them to do it. It may seem hard-lined, but once you go with the theory and philosophy and its well supported…We started looking at data, and we looked at the Northwest Evaluation Measures of Academic Progress data and came to the stark realization that … it doesn't take superman to run a school it takes average people. You've got to work within the context of pointing out to those folks there's a range of abilities in the classroom and teaching to the middle isn't going to work. Differentiating instruction is not just a method, it is a wide variety of activities in the classroom. We took some people to the national DI conference, but moreover, we just kind of looked at data and decided we're going to have to do something else. We compared ourselves with some other schools around here and asked how are they doing and what are they doing to achieve that? So in terms of professional training, some of the stuff I've done on my own and I've tried and it didn't work very well, but that is ok. Our mantra is you learn more from failure than you do from a series of successes.

David expanded on his experiences in discussing how his professional development contributed to the formation of a vision and goals for his school and its students:

You know I'm not sure that we have a clearly defined vision, but our vision is clearly defined to student achievement. All the principals read a book on RTI by Mike Matteus, and it basically said if your core curriculum isn't presenting 75% efficient and advanced then your core curriculum is not where it needs to be. We sat down and said 75% or bust, and we're not there yet, but we went out and said what do we do? We looked Ainsworth's power standards and we're going to identify that which matters most, that safety net curriculum. We're going to identify those things and we're going to go at those power standards as hard as we can. It's what's on the state test at that next level. Once we had our power standards in line we worked on instructional strategies. But the main goal, the means to an ends, we have a lot of success across the board, but the most important thing to keep in mind is student achievement. That's the focus. You talk about Mike Schmoeker and Focus and that's what we're doing, focusing on student achievement.

David also described how professional development gave new meaning to celebrating academic success and organizing classroom assessments. David stated:

> We made philosophical changes at the local level with our grading assessment. We went away from the valedictorian and salutatorian at our commencement. We've gone with the Latin system with magna cum lade to honor all of our graduates and make our graduation a celebration of everyone instead of just two at our graduation. In terms of changes at the classroom assessment level our philosophy is moving away from grading formative assessments and grading only summative assessments using pre-assessments to plan for instruction and work towards the means to the end that way.

Motivations for Change

Motivation for change for the principals came from external and internal sources. External sources of motivation for the need to change were often shared with the faculty to convey the seriousness of the need for change. External sources were the demands of state testing and federal accountability. Internal motivations reinforced the need for change. Principals appealed to the internal desire of the teachers to see the students be successful. However, it was the external sources that drove the principals to seek the most change. Mia commented about the external sources that motivated her and her staff towards making changes:

> We looked at our scores and said what can we do to make this better? One of the big things was talking to teachers about the MAP scores being down. These aren't the only things telling us if the kids are doing good or bad, but this is what we're judged on by the state. So we look at those and if they're low, what do we do so we can get to the next level that we want to be at? What we found was it was changing one or two students. In bigger schools, you have to change 10-20 students to make a bigger step. We had to change one or two and to help them bridge that gap. So, then talking and getting them to see what I saw: "Ok here's our problem, here's a potential solution." I'm not saying this is the perfect solution, but talking through, having some good teaming,… and as a teammate what could we do to make kids better?

Isabelle also shared that external motivations prompted change:

> I would say the biggest outside event that's changed our instructional attitude would be Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). And reaching that threshold where we didn't make AYP and so we entered district Level One Improvement. One of the mandates is you develop a district plan and put that forward. And that's probably been the greatest outside force of change. Our teachers, our students, our administration want to improve. I would say that intrinsic motivation is pretty good.

Claude talked about how testing requirements helped him motivate the staff towards making changes to instructional planning and strategies:

> They're telling us what we're going to teach. And the first year or so, I was thinking this is wrong. Then I thought, why the hell are we fighting this? This is easy. They're telling us everything we have to teach and what we have to test on. Let's embrace it, let's get on board, let's start not, maybe not teaching the test, but, teach what they need…Our theme was, know what's on the test, know what the benchmarks are, know what the state standards are and make dang sure you cover all those first, and everything else is a bonus.

Principals also appealed to internal motivations of those around them. Mia stated how she wanted to encourage her staff to simply work as a team to determine "what can we do to make kids better?" Claude expressed to both his students and teachers that he did not "want to be the principal that shuts down another school" because of academics. He wanted his teachers and students to want to be successful not just because of state test scoring, but he wanted them to take a sense of pride that they can accomplish goals to be academically successful. Isabelle commented how David was competitive and wanted his school and students to be the best.

Motivation not only came from internal and external sources, but the leader can be inspirational as well. Chris discussed how he was motivated to "buy-in" because his principal "went out and did the research. He found the best practices to make things work

better." Another Chris stated he appreciated that "he is passionate and it was a no risk environment. Failure was ok. He was like 'Go try something. I don't care if it works, just try it.'"

<div align="center">Planning for Change</div>

Reeves (2009) discussed the importance of having a plan of action for bringing about changes in schools. In each school the principal established a method for how the change process was going to take place. The principals used data and collaborative efforts for the planning process. During this phase of the change process there was also some resistance to the change movement from some staff members. Taylor commented, "Change is hard. I mean we're creatures of habit." The principals discussed how they addressed resistance and how they moved forward when resistance did occur. The teachers also provided insights into why resistance occurred at this point in the change process. Furthermore, the teachers shared insights into how, if the planning process had been handled differently, there may have been less resistance.

Reviewing of Data

The use of data was an important step in the change process. In the early stages of setting the stage for change, principals were examining data to form a vision and determine new goals for improvement. David, Claude, and Mia all discussed sharing data with teachers at some point, so this review of data was carried into the planning stage. Some similar forms of data and some different forms of data were used by each of the principals to determine what changes needed to take place. In some cases, the teachers were involved in the reviewing of the data and the planning process for the changes. Jamie stated:

> We took the state's data, [DESE's] reports and kind of went through step
> by step to see what types of questions it was that we were missing
> consistently. And, after we had looked through that and said, okay,
> multiple choice, for some reason here, was an area we're missing a lot of.
> So, then as a staff we sat down and said, we're consistently missing these
> questions, we need to go back to teach them how to take a multiple choice
> test. And, then if it was the letter writing, going back and making sure that
> they know how to properly write that letter.

This was an example of reviewing data and beginning to put a plan of action into place to try to make improvements to the achievement levels of the school. Principals in this study used a variety of ways to collaborate with faculty and staff during their change processes, not just in data review.

Collaborative Planning

Principals in all three schools involved faculty members during the change process. Some used a small group to help lead or model the change process while others simply obtained feedback from the staff. Claude took a cautious approach to bringing about change, urging for a sense of trust to be established. He warned of not bringing about changes too quickly for fear of strong resistance from the faculty:

> And, I have been mentors to other principals and tell them… earn some
> trust before you make some changes. Because if you don't have their trust,
> they're going to go "that guy doesn't know what he's talking about". You
> know, you've got to have buy-in to what you're going to do. You know,
> you just gotta have a buy-in. You may not have everybody on the train,
> but…

Claude mentioned not having everyone buy in to the change process, but the principals all agreed that faculty involvement was beneficial. David discussed the benefit of including the faculty in the planning of the change process. In fact, faculty members involved in the planning process became the models for other teachers in the change

process, and David later recommended for this group to assist in sharing how to implement changes into the classroom. David commented:

> What went well was there was a small group of people who weren't craving for change but they would welcome it. And they knew for us to make a change from what we were achieving at we would have to make some changes. Those folks jumped right on board. And those folks are leading the standards based movement.

David identified people who were most interested in being involved in the change process and got them involved in the process as soon as possible. Isabelle recognized the principal kept a group of teachers involved in planning the change process. She stated:

> Well, among those teachers who are the first to be ready to go, I would say he holds them close. They will be the first people he will share information with. He gives them documents to read that he's read because those are going to be your front-runners. So if you got people that are going to jump ahead and be ready to go, you want to be ready to go, you want to be on the same page. So he definitely works with those people closely so they are all on the same page.

He would plant ideas and give the teachers the tools to proceed and put practices into their classrooms. David uses this group to begin getting the new ideas out, and the new ideas can be gradually shared within the faculty.

Claude also involved teachers in a collaborative planning process. In talking about how to address a particular problem, Claude discussed how an idea came from another teacher who "had seen it done in another school. We took that idea and tried to find a way we could make it work." He involved the teachers in the conversation and concluded "it was a collaborative effort of talking about how to do that." Another issue that was attempting to be resolved was discussed by Jamie. This teacher stated, "We decided that we needed to have something that all the teachers could follow, including the specialist

teachers." The group of teachers involved in the process helped to find practices that would help all teachers instead of just the few most interested in change.

Many of the experiences of a planning process involved a collaborative approach. However, the change movement did not always follow that pattern. The smaller rural schools in this study had one teacher for each grade level in the elementary and one teacher for each subject area at the high school level. Jamie talked about the ease of getting involved in the change process due to teaching in a small school. The only teacher in her department, she had more flexibility to plan to do things differently in her classroom. She shared:

> It's not as big a deal, I would say. Now, I've never been in a big school or a bigger school. I would say we don't look at changes as much because if I want to change something, I change it. And, sometimes I tell them what I'm doing, sometimes I don't. If it's just within my math department, my classroom, it doesn't involve anybody else.

In this case, being in a smaller school could be an advantage for this teacher. There is no larger group to consult or obtain permission. There was also a sense of an environment of being willing to take a risk and see if new things work. Claude appreciated teachers taking on new things and stated:

> So, he'll take that bull by the horns and he'll run with it. I have no doubt that he is going to do a hell of a job. In my mind, I've told him the way we kind of have envisioned it, when we talked to the board about it, and I have no doubt, and our school board said the same thing. If [this teacher] is heading it up, we're not a bit worried about it. We think it will be a success. And, I guess I have confidence [in] the people we got.

Not only did Claude feel comfortable with teachers taking the lead in planning and bringing about change in part of the school, but this also leads to having the right people at the right time and in the right spot for things to be accomplished.

Similar to Jamie's comments of being at an advantage for change because of being in a small school. Isabelle commented:

> We have a smaller audience, and probably a less diverse audience than larger schools have when it comes to change. In our district we have a long range planning committee made up of parents, community members, a few business leaders, staff, administrators, school board members. In a district our size, we can have a district group like that that well represents our community, yet isn't so big, isn't such a big group that we can't have discussion, come to decisions, you know, share information. That's a benefit to our rural school because we're small, and that could be a benefit, I suppose, in a city if you could keep your school small and more community based.

About facing the challenge of being a small, rural school Isabelle commented, "I would just say it's just that idea of not always having the community resources that a large community has." The small schools were, however, able to obtain feedback easily from the stakeholders. Community members were willing to collaborate and voice their opinions and share information. However, there were still limitations because of the location of the school to get all resources that may be desired or make the change process easier.

All three schools experienced some level of resistance from the faculty during the changes process. The planning stage seemed to be where much of the resistance became most visible. Planning the change process seemed to be the stage where the most discontentment from the faculty were shown. Each principal handled resistance in different ways. David handled resistance by involving teachers in the planning process. He took a collaborative approach with the teachers, inviting them to provide input into how they would progress from their vision to actually attaining their desired results. David stated:

The best thing if you want to lead instructional change, don't stand up in front of a bunch of teachers and tell them what to do. Ask! Invite a bunch of teachers to collaborate. And that's been the beauty of the data team's process that we can sit down. I would just sit there and assist teachers planning units of instruction in collaboration. That beats standing up and from afar saying "this is what we should be doing". You'll get buy-in and collaboration. We've really changed it with nonfiction writing. Teachers collaborating to write non-fiction activities across the board. And the power of planning, so many great ideas come from there.

David has the teachers take time to share how to use new instructional strategies. Instead of David standing in front of the group and dictating the process, he allowed for conversation among the teachers, guiding how the plan of action is formed and executed.

The change process in School Two had Claude experience support from some teachers and resistance from other teachers. Claude discussed the obvious contrast between the two groups in the school, even when he tries to involve the resistant staff in the planning process. He commented, "I think some of the biggest things is we try to cooperate with each other. I don't know, and maybe some of them do see me, as what one teacher jokingly referred to me as, 'the ogre.' They got a good laugh out of that". Claude continued:

Some may think that [laughs] I am the principal and unapproachable, but I don't think so. I think if somebody has got an idea, I am willing to listen. Jamie assured me not too long ago at a meeting, and they asked if they were going to get feedback from me on the changes and I said, "No." I don't do that very often. And, I guess the reason why is I thought they had already had a chance for feedback about the changes. I had talked to them individually and they had told me they didn't like it, but, everybody else I talked to eventually liked the thing we were going to do.

Claude made attempts to be approachable from the staff and to have open lines of communication. Mia similarly offered the opportunity for staff members to discuss concerns with her. She held one-on-one conversations with teachers, especially those being resistant to the change process. However, even after these conversations, there may

still have been a good deal of resistance. She commented, "We all can't, some of us are square pegs and we don't fit into the round hole." As a result in all three schools, some faculty members elected to leave the district to find a better fit, giving the principal the opportunity to recruit new teachers who may be more supportive of the principal's vision for the school and the new practices being implemented. Some teachers decided to "ride out the change." As Taylor described it:

> I've been teaching for a long time, and there have been many, many changes in education. Something changes and something new is brought in. Eventually, that too will go away and we'll have something else to replace it. It almost seems like continual changes all the time.

This was a comment similar to that of teachers in all three schools. There was concern from at least one teacher in each group that as DESE or the principal brought in a new concept, practice, or program, something else goes away. In fact, Mia made a comment similar to the teachers when she stated, "when you've been in education as long as some of these teachers have [you get from them] 'Yeah, yeah, yeah – we're going to change this and it isn't going to last.'" The thought is that eventually, whatever the new initiative was will eventually go away. Eventually there will be something new teachers and schools will be forced to adapt or adopt.

Faculty members may also take the initiative to bring about a plan of action to the principal. David had staff members who did just that. The staff members wanted to see some changes, and they brought the ideas to the principal. David stated, "There was a breakout group that came to me and listed-out the changes they wanted to make immediately. Mostly structural changes they wanted to start next year. They said we like this and this is where we want to go." This demonstrated how the faculty felt about David. He was approachable, open to new ideas, and willing to let others provide input or

even take the lead. Chris stated that David was "more of a coach than a principal" when it came to leading the faculty.

David also discussed there was some difficulty getting all members of a faculty to commit themselves to the change process. In fact, he specifically stated it is most likely impossible to gain the support of the entire faculty:

> If you got 65 faculty members and you got five that whine and complain and send emails to the board and writing letters to the newspaper, go out and wrap your hands around the 60 people who will support you and that's what I did. I knew that I wasn't going to get 100% buy-in, but by and large we're pretty easy to get along with…We're slowly bringing people along. We're probably around 60-70% buy-in. We don't ever hope to achieve 100%, but they know by and large that student achievement, our interest will be served through PD.

Regardless of the level of buy-in from each faculty member, all members received professional development to receive what the plan of action and how to implement the changes into the school. Even if all faculty members did not buy in to the change, Taylor shared that resistant faculty members should have tried the new practice. Taylor stated, "I mean it's here's what we have to do. Here's how we're going to get there and if you're not convinced now, if you start implementing these things, you'll see they really do work and it's the way to go." All faculty members were educated in the new practices so all should find some amount of use for the new practices. The amount of use of that knowledge by the teachers varied.

Mia discussed how she attempted to increase staff buy-in (even when being direct rather than collaborative) by avoiding the danger of adding additional work to the teachers. Instead, she focused on planning out and allotting time for faculty and staff to work on making improvements to curriculum. She stated:

I think a lot of it with this particular staff, and it's probably this way with a lot of staffs, but with this staff it was "we are going to do this". It used to be "here's what we're going to do, now go do it". Instead, we said "here's what we're going to do and here's the time we are going to use to do it". So using the professional development time for that type of thing instead of just saying I want this done in two weeks, you figure out when you're going to get it done. So not adding to the plate saying, yeah it feels like I'm adding to your plate, but I'm going to have you do whatever it is you are doing during our professional development time.

Comments from several of Mia's teachers included many concerns about new things being added to their workload. However, they appreciated that during the planning process, time had been allotted for them to work on the change process with their regular professional development days.

Employees within each school or school district were not the only people involved in the planning process. While most principals looked within their own staff for the planning process, Mia utilized state-level resources through the Regional Professional Development Center in the area. Mia stated, "I worked with the RPDC and we've been working with the RPDC as some of these changes happened." She continued, "In this case it was like we needed to be directed to where we needed to go and to do it." However, the involvement of the RPDC was not the answer to quell all sense of resistance from the faculty. Mia outlined what she would do differently:

So if I had to do it over again I would try to get more buy-in and develop that with them a little bit more. The buy-in came along; it just seemed to take a little bit. When…we were starting the curriculum change, and there was buy-in there as soon as [some teachers] realized what it was. Like I said, I did have some teachers that copied the textbook, but for the most part if they helped develop it they might have been more understanding of it. Might have happened a little bit faster. It happened eventually, but not as fast. If I could do it again, I may not have developed everything and said this where I would like to go.

Mia's comments were similar to Taylor's comments about teachers wanting to try out the new practices and see the positive results.

David also expressed his desire to do things differently in the change process. After reflection he stated:

> What I would have done differently is I would have done a leadership team, no question about it. They're prevalent in SW Missouri, they're part of a PLC. We've tinkered with parts of a PLC. At the top I'm not sure the PLC ideology would support it, because we didn't want to go out and do what everyone else was doing, but that's beyond my decision-making power. But I would put together a leadership team. We don't have one in the building right now, but given the opportunity and the time to do that I wouldn't wait on anyone to tell me I need one.

David seemed to be the principal who utilized collaborative efforts with faculty the most; however, he still believes he would rather have a formal leadership team to guide the change process. He was already using an informal group of teachers to help bring about the change process and have them be examples to other faculty members, but he still hopes to make improvements and formalize the collaborate effort with a leadership group.

Putting the Changes into Practice

Each of the schools eventually began implementing a change process in their classrooms. During the execution of the change process, there were several similarities that emerged. Findings related to implementation included implementing the new vision and expectations, guiding the faculty, professional development, the amount of resources available, and accountability.

Implementing New Expectations with Stakeholders

Participants from School Two shared experiences about the challenges of having a culture where athletics took precedence over academics. Teachers and Claude had to

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begin implementing practices that showed grades were more important than sports. He

shared about what they were doing differently:

> I guess we've done some little subtle things like we started our sixth
> graders now participate in our junior high sports and we make them
> accountable grade-wise to do the sports. It used to be and uh, yes it did
> come from me that whenever they go from eighth grade to a freshman,
> MSHSAA forgives the grades they made as eighth graders. It's just a total
> slate, clean slate, and we did away with that. They still must meet
> expectations for grades to participate.

Jamie also commented about the movement away from sports as the priority for the

school:

> That was part of the focus from moving the emphasis from sports, which
> is big in a lot of rural schools, to academics. I know when I first started
> here, the math scores had been going down tremendously. And, one of the
> first things I did after I was here a couple of months, we got into the high
> school basketball season and I talked to the coach and AD and said, "If
> I've got students who have not turned in assignments, is it okay with you
> if I come in and yank them out of ball practice at 3:30?" He said,
> "Absolutely." I walked on the gym floor about 3:30 a couple of days and
> said, "You and you are with me until you get these assignments done."
> They looked at the coach and he said, "Go." And, that helped
> tremendously to have that kind of support from the Athletic Department.
> But, I haven't had to do that in three years, I don't think.

School One faced the challenge of changing the views of the community about

education. David discussed needing to change the priorities for the community members

in the district. He faced the challenges of having community members outside the school

expecting the school to continue to do things as they have always been done. He stated:

> I think generally speaking…it's not that we don't have high standards, it's
> that our expectations are watered down by local entities. "School's a place
> where my family went and your family went and it was always this way."
> And not that they don't welcome change, but they often give push back on
> rigor. You want to raise rigor, "do you want to raise rigor in your college
> algebra? That's fine, but my kid still needs to make a B or C regardless".
> And that doesn't prepare students for anything. Our take on rigor right
> now has been that we will increase rigor by requiring students to do
> assignments they didn't do so the punishment for not doing the work is

doing the work. So we don't let kids opt out of assignments, we hold them accountable, we give them an incomplete. That's how we've raised rigor. Do we need higher expectations here? Yes, across the board. Those things are cultural. They've been instilled over time and you've got to be here X amount of time before people will actually not buy-in, but actually follow along. I'm not talking teachers; I'm talking more community and kids. The newness wears off and the new guy has to come in and convince the masses this is the direction we need to go and I think we're past that.

David was facing a challenge with parents about grades and rigor. He had the support of the parents and community, affirming they want their students to be challenged with rigorous coursework. The problem was when students' grades were not as high they no longer wanted such high standards. Mia experienced similar resistance from those in the community, specifically parents. Feedback from the parents also reverted back to how the school operated when the parents were students there. When asked about challenges to implementation, Mia stated:

Within, I'm going to say the community, but it would be more of the parents. We have parents here that when they went to school here they had two study halls and you know, two art classes. I mean the rigor was not there so now you come in and we're in high school where study hall isn't even an option and you're having to take all these increased classes and stuff like that. So getting the buy-in from them, getting those stakeholders especially to understand that, you know, yeah maybe Johnny's just going to work on the farm or in the factory or not work, but realistically, you know but they still need this and getting them to understand that. "Why does my kid need three years of math, he's not going to use it?" Understanding of consumer math or pre-algebra isn't going to help you in college when all of a sudden the kid decides to go to college. So as a rural community – oh it was good enough for me, why isn't it good enough for my child or grandchild or whatever. So I do think that's a big part for us. Changes don't work well sometimes.

Mia had to overcome the older expectations of those who had previously attended the school. Like the other schools in this study, being in a small rural community resulted in many alumni remaining in the area. Their children now attend these schools with new expectations being asked of the students. None of the schools in the study offer a study

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hall, let alone two study halls like some parents had when they attended School Three.

Implementing a new vision for the school and trying to get others onboard is a great

challenge for the principals. In these cases, they are working with the other stakeholders

in the district. The teachers, who are on the front lines of implementing new practices,

take extra focus and attention to be successful.

Guiding the Faculty During Implementation

When changes are being implemented in a school, there are going to be issues

surrounding the faculty. Many of the participants noted difficulties at one point or another

while implementation was occurring. Each principal had to be prepared to interact with

the faculty and give them resources and feedback needed in the process. Isabelle viewed

this process from the outside. She was able to view how David addressed the change

process with staff:

> In the high school building we do have those people who jump right in and
> go and those who carefully think things over and some who move
> forward. Some who want to see it working with someone else first, and
> then we have those who just dig in their heels. David has addressed those
> things, those situations. You know, just in a straight forward fashion. He,
> like I said, he provides a lot of support and encouragement and feedback,
> specific feedback. You know this is what I've seen. [David states] "This is
> what needs to be changed". Sometimes we talk in generalities and people
> don't know what we mean. Also in his building they do have collaboration
> time regularly. So the teachers, the ones who sort of want to watch and see
> what others are doing are having the opportunity to talk with others
> weekly to see how things are working. To be honest with you, we've had a
> few folks that just said, "you know, this isn't what I think teaching is", and
> they've chosen to go elsewhere. And that's just fine, and that's just the
> way it should be. So I would say he supports teachers with materials,
> resources, feedback, but yet sending a clear expectation of this is where
> we are going and what we're doing is the way he's handled it.

Mia found resistance in her school. She commented that she was prepared for resistance,

but she still wanted to encourage others to try the new practices. She stated, "And I don't

expect everyone to embrace every new idea. This wasn't my idea, or a new idea for me

but it was new for our school. I wanted them to at least give it a shot." David discussed

the resistance to implementing the change process from teachers and how he addressed it.

Similar to Isabelle, he recognized that not all faculty members were prepared to go

through the same process as the rest of the faculty. Furthermore, he put it back on the

teachers how he wanted them to conduct themselves and the learning taking place in the

classroom during the process:

> You never overcome resistance to change. We've had some people who
> weren't on board with the change decide to leave. They were, the buy-in
> was there, but then it really became, it really reached a point of resistance
> when we began looking at what teachers were supposed to be doing and
> quit blaming the kids. When we give an assessment we look at who did
> well, who didn't do well, who you taught well, and who you didn't teach
> well. And that's John Hattie, that's straight out of Visible Learning, and
> when you take on that approach to things you guide some people in the
> classroom when we talk about zeros and when we talk about kids who
> assess and don't learn. In my opinion that's an indictment of the style of
> teaching as much as the kids. And that doesn't sit well with some people.
> That puts it right back on them and makes them accountable for all
> students' learning. But you know what? Our job is to get those students to
> learn. We have to keep that on the forefront.

Chris expressed concerns that she was initially one of the more reluctant teachers, but

saw how it worked while in progress and now supports the changes. She stated:

> And there's times I've not been on board. I feel like I'm a good employee
> and I preach this to my own, you know, athletes. You do it because it's the
> right thing to do for the team you know? So I'm on board because at first
> because I'm part of the team, but now I'm on board because I'm starting
> to believe in it.

Teachers at School Three expressed similar comments about how they were reluctant at

first, but they became a supporter of the changes in practice when they saw the positive

results.

When not everyone invests to new practices, principals tried various ways to appeal to the teachers and encourage them to try the new practices. Claude shared about a discussion he had with his faculty during a meeting. The discussion was based around implementing new technology into the classrooms, even when it may make the teachers and the principal uncomfortable with the new practices. In the end, it was about making things work for the kids. Claude discussed how he addressed this with the faculty:

> I just said that in a meeting not long ago, "Hey guys, am I comfortable with technology and all that stuff? No. I don't know a lot of this, but the kids [do]." We were just talking at the high school meeting a while ago, the junior high, and some of them were like, you know, we've got to do something about these cell-phones, these iPods, and this and that. I said, "Yeah, we need to start letting kids use them." Now, am I comfortable with that? No! I'm not, but go to some meetings out there and they're saying the kids have technology more than the schools do, start letting them use it. I said, "We need to start embracing those kinds of things." But, you know, I guess what you gotta do from my standpoint; I think I gotta point some of those things out to people and say, "Guys we gotta get on board. You know? It's no excuse saying that's the way it's been done for years and we want to continue to do it that way. You gotta get with it."

He continued:

> Just like today, when we were having our thing about laptops and this and that and some of them are like, "well, I don't know this and that" and I said, "Guys, you know, I'm not going to be around here for four more years. I'm going to be retired again. But, you need to get on board with this because it's the way." You know, they're not going to have textbooks for very much longer. You better start getting with it.

Claude also found that some of his teachers were willing to explore the change, but had questions that gave the appearance of resistance. He stated:

> And, I had a couple of them come in later and say, "Claude, I wasn't necessarily opposed to that, I was just asking questions." I said, "Well, I wasn't saying that you're necessarily opposed, but, what I'm saying is if we have this opportunity, dang it guys, let's go for it."

Some of the teachers may be hard to read. Like David experienced with his teachers,

Claude found that some teachers may not jump on board immediately, but they may join

later. He talked about the number of teachers implementing new practice right away,

"You may not have many, you know. Some of them are still standing at the station, but

they may catch the second train that comes by." Claude was hopeful that as more teachers

implemented new practices, other teachers would be less resistant and implement the new

practices in their rooms as well.

Professional Development

All three principals used some form of professional development to help

implement the new practices into the classrooms. Mia used the resources from the

professional development center, Claude used collaborative practices to exchange ideas

within the school, and David used a variety of professional development strategies.

Isabelle noted how the variety of professional development opportunities and support

from David led to the implementation of the new practices into the classroom:

> One of the things that he really was the driving force behind for the last
> several years, I'm trying to think, this may be year four, he has requested
> funding to take teachers and go to the differentiated instruction conference
> in the summer for professional development…He has made sure that
> stayed at the forefront because we all know that it's easy for things to get
> lost in the mix, and he's really pushed for that. Starting the first year I
> think he and another principal and two teachers went, and this year all four
> principals and there will be a total of 15 so 11 teachers, so that is how
> much that has grown…and then new books that come out, books to
> support the differentiation process. We also chose nonfiction writing as
> the district focus this year. Purchasing books and prompts for nonfiction
> writing to help the teacher, because again, high school teachers, if you
> teach math you don't feel like you're a writing teacher, but you need to be.
> So just providing that kind of support and then again making sure that
> during teacher collaboration time the teachers who do have those skills for
> teaching writing can share with those teachers who feel lost, and they can
> encourage them and support them and give them strategies and time to
> share.

David used a blending of conferences and book studies to obtain new information and

practices and then utilized collaboration for those practices to be shared within the staff.

David discussed how he implemented this within his school:

> We started out with this book and it's from Tim Westerberg and it just
> brings it all together and it's, and I don't know how widely used it is, but
> everything we've talked about today is contained in that book. And when I
> found that book I wanted them to see the big picture. I wanted them to
> understand. To begin they didn't understand the smaller pieces, but when
> they went through that book they began to understand how everything we
> were doing and everything we had done came together. And I think that
> was a really good, I think that was a huge point in the change process
> because they could see where it was all going. We just took chapter by
> chapter, we talked about it in PD and they came to me and said we want to
> make these changes.

David credits the book study for making such a change to the way the teachers thought

about teaching. He stated, "When we got this book the picture came together, so we read

that together and from that point forward they've bought in. I saw a lot more buy-in."

Teachers from School One conversed about the power the book had on them as well as

sending teachers to the conferences. Chris commented:

> He started sending, I guess it's been four years, he sent a couple to a
> differentiated instruction conference in Las Vegas and he kind of just
> started doing that and he started talking to us, and [he] started getting our
> trust into what was going on. We started reading more and investigating
> more. He started slowly grabbing more people to go to different
> conferences. I know he grabbed [a teacher] to go to the grading conference
> to find out about that and no zeros and redoes and retakes.

An important component for the implementation of new practices was the sharing of

information within the staff. Allotted time for professional development and

collaboration was a key factor. Chris explained how David built in time for this to take

place:

This year has been Wednesday nights from after school for an hour and how they kind of make that whole time up is they let us leave at 3:45 instead of 4:00 after school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Next year will be early out at 1:30ish on Fridays and then we will go the next couple of hours.

While the structure for professional development was appreciated by the teachers at School One, the teachers also appreciated the opportunities to discuss best practices and what they were trying in their classrooms. Chris stated, "it helps that our staff is close and we feel the freedom to share, and the conversation among teachers has helped." Another Chris stated that since the staff was "professional and caring" and they were willing to "encourage" each other to try new practices and take risks because they saw and heard that others were doing the same.

Resources for the Change Process

Resources available to the principals helped determine how the change process was implemented. Although David utilized a variety of resources to bring about change such as conferences, book studies, and other professional development opportunities, he still felt he needed more resources such as time and partnerships:

Like so many other districts, there's never enough time. You can always use more money, more resources to be able to get things done. I think that most all schools, though, really do well with the funding they have to get things accomplished. They do, and I think we do that pretty well here. Being a rural community we're sort of a bedroom community to [a major Missouri city] so we don't have a lot of industry business to partner with in our school district for career development and those types of thing that…would be really nice if we have that available to us.

When asked if he had adequate resources for the change process, he continued:

No, I do not. I think that it has been done, a couple of books at a time and a couple of people at a time. The ideal way would be to bring in someone for the high school to present who's, for lack of a better term, more well-read than I am and more polished than I am. We bring back the message, but we don't, it gets a little diluted, but it's not as powerful from me as it

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would be an outside person. I think it drives home the point, and that costs money. I'd love to bring Rick Wormley or Doug Reeves in here, but that's $12,000-$13,000 a day. Could we make those changes – absolutely. Could we go out and get someone trained? [One teacher]'s been to DI institute and he's been trained, but what I need [him] to do is go from class to class and work with the teachers on not only DI planning, DI implementation, but observe their teaching and give them feedback. I give them feedback, but the feedback is more powerful when it comes from your peers. It becomes less evaluative, and we've tried to establish that coaching thing that some presenters talk about, but the peer interaction is the big piece.

Although David has utilized a great deal of resources for his own professional development and the professional development of the staff, there seems to always be more that principals would like to do. Mia shared similar concerns about lack of time and lack of all the resources she would have liked. In regards to time, Mia commented, "It's hard. There are only so many of us and we can't bite off too many programs at one time, especially if it is the same people. You can only put so much effort into each thing, so you have to be picking and choosing." When also asked if she had adequate resources available, Mia responded:

As a small district that is hard to answer yes. I think that as a district we tried to do the best we could. I think there could have been more resources available to us, but at the same time, you know, the RPDCs, at least in our area, are really great about working with small schools in our districts. The curriculum, the Show-Me organization is great. Having other teachers or other principals or curriculum directors to talk to, you know regardless of the size of district they are in, just to bounce some ideas off of them.

Most of the resources utilized by Mia for the change process at her school were free resources (or were at the time of use). Jamie discussed being able to utilize free resources from DESE's website about MAP and EOC preparations because they met the balance for being the best and cheapest resources available. Another Jamie discussed using free resources available from her peers. She stated, "If she has something that will help me and I know it, I'm going to ask for it. And, she'll be glad to give it. And, if she knows it

will help me, and I don't know she has it, she'll loan it to me." In this case, the resources within her own school, the other teachers, were places she could get help to implement new practices with the students.

The resource of time was a constant with School Three, which had the smallest number of teachers on staff. The faculty expressed concerns about having so many things to do. Constantly adding more things to get accomplished in a limited amount of time is difficult. School Three teachers discussed the challenges of having a 45 minute plan period each day, but in that time, there were many things that needed to be done. Many of the teachers prepare lessons for six classes, as well as grade all student work and complete any other duties as assigned. Taylor commented, "I think that we have too many irons in the fire sometimes. Maybe we are trying to change too much, too fast, I don't know. But I think that might be part of the problem, what you're saying. You just can't spread that thin." Mia shared similar concerns about the issue of time and being able to get everything accomplished that was being targeted:

> I would have liked to have had more opportunity for more professional development for my teachers. I don't know how your district is set-up, but we get two hours a month. That's not a lot of time to, you know, you need a full day to really get going and give them time, you really do. And a lot of times that time came at the end of the year. You don't want to do it so much at the beginning of the year when you have that time because that's time to get set up for the year. I guess there isn't a good time.

Mia utilized professional development time throughout the first year or two of the change process, which allowed staff members to have allotted time to work on planning and implementing the new practices (as shared in comments about planning for change). However, School Three teachers indicated that as more things have been added, there is less time for the faculty to work on them. They have a desire to continue working on

improving things for student achievement because they have seen the results. However, having more things to implement became a challenge. Taylor stated:

> I think I've taught for a long time and there are new things every year and some things come and go so you are less inclined to get invested in something because you don't know if it is going to last. And it's always a new idea down the pipe and it disappears and something else comes along.

The challenge of a revolving door of new ideas and concepts for teachers to implement can put a hindrance on the opportunity for implementation. The teachers sought a good balance of focusing on few initiatives and finding the time to get things done. The lack of time could be a factor for teachers as they are held accountable for their students' level of success.

Accountability

Accountability was another factor that stood out with the participants. When it came to implementing new practices or finding new ways to help the students improve, the teachers had no one else on whom to fall back. Jamie stated:

> It's a smaller environment. You, in a rural environment, be it a school, be it a business, be it a church, whatever, you're reliant upon yourself to get things done. So, we at [School Two] know that we, at [School Two], we are it. For these kids, we are it. We do not have the luxury of passing the buck. I can't blame the kids not understanding fractions on the curriculum director because she didn't teach me well or he didn't teach me well. I have to do it.

Another Jamie stressed the individual accountability of teachers in small schools where it is one teacher per grade level or one teacher per subject area:

> When I came over here, this was the first building I've been in where there wasn't three or four or five teachers of a grade level…there was nobody else to blame, you know, I was it. It makes you, I think more accountable than you expect of yourself. You know you've got a big responsibility.

This additional accountability forces the teachers to do things differently to meet the needs of the particular students in their classes. Small schools cannot shift students to another teacher. Instead the teacher is forced to adapt to help the students. This refers back to what David stated about teachers needing to adjust for the kids in the classroom. Teachers must meet the needs of the students and be held accountable for the successes or failures of the students. Claude talked about one student who was retained in eighth grade simply because "he didn't do any of the work. He failed seven of eight classes because he didn't do anything."

Lastly, accountability for teachers using the new practices could come from the students. Mia discussed how things that students would say could hold teachers accountable while providing her with feedback about what was happening in the classroom. She stated:

> I did notice sometimes some kids would say, or they would notice something that a teacher wouldn't have an objective on the board and you might hear a kid come out in the hallway during passing period and say "[Teacher's name], you don't have an objective up, what are we doing today?"

Accountability came for teachers during the implementation stage not just from their supervisors, but from others in the school, and most importantly, each teacher held himself or herself accountable as well.

<div align="center">Making the Changes Last</div>

The fourth stage in Reeves's (2009) change model was to have the change sustain. Responses to questions related to the change in practices sustaining over time were limited as participants could only predict based on what they had witnessed and their perceptions. The three findings emerging from responses were related to the general

results of the new practices and predictions of the level of sustainability of the new

practices, which included predictions about sustainability if a new principal arrived.

Responses from most participants supported the new practices would continue. The other

participants took a wait and see stance.

The principals all noted the new practices were becoming engrained in the culture

of the school. Each school had new practices as a result of the change process. Teachers

were beginning to embed the changes into their instructional practices. Isabelle discussed

the changes she had seen in David's school:

> Some of the things you would see, the teachers have begun using
> whiteboards to do formative assessment throughout lesson time. And
> they're not just asking a question of that student, but every student is
> putting up their answers from their work so teachers can scan the
> classroom to see how they are doing. We have pre-assessments before we
> ever begin a unit so teachers can see maybe some of these kids already
> know, maybe half of my class already knows the information, so what am
> I going to do for them? The data teaming, you'd see that. Some data would
> be up in the classroom. In some of the classrooms, and this depends
> because our teachers like our students are in different places of this
> process, some of them you will see physically there might be sections on
> the [board or] in the room where there are different assignments that the
> students pull depending on what level they are at.

David also commented on the results of the change process:

> Changes in the classroom have been observable. As I said I have teachers
> with pre-summative and formative stuff going on every day [such as using
> whiteboards, whole-class questioning techniques]. That didn't use to be
> the case. We're using information to guide our decisions. We're not data
> driven we are data informed. If we're informed we can go from there.
> From the classroom you'll see it differently. You had to be here 3 or 4
> years ago, and it's different now. We're dealing with cognitive science, we
> know more about how kids learn, and we're not necessarily learning styles
> but we have a comprehensive knowledge of where we're at.

Isabelle and David discussed the variety of practices that have emerged from the changes

in practice. Isabelle continued discussing the changes she believed were successful at the

high school and at other schools in the district as well. When asked if she believed the

changes in the school would sustain, Isabelle responded:

> Yes I do. As a matter of fact, out of our high school, really out of each of
> our schools, our district has started to move in a particular direction. Our
> administrative team, we're small and there are benefits of being small. We
> meet once a week. Sometimes we meet in addition to that. And we talk
> about these same things. So some of the practices you see when you go to
> the high school, you will see the same practices in our middle school, our
> upper elementary, and our lower elementary. Differentiated instruction
> you would of course see in our elementary school, they are the pros. So
> our district is, we move together (laughter), and that means different
> things for different buildings, cause like I said, elementary may
> differentiate instruction - they've got it down. High school not as much so
> they put a little more in there, but we all have common goals. And the
> differentiated instruction need was truly pushed by [the high school
> principal] because he knew in his building if we're going to find out we
> have students with all kinds of different levels of understanding and we
> start, we have to know how to address that.

When asked about the sustainability of the practices at the high school, David explained

the changes would sustain because the teachers had seen the benefits from the changes.

He stated:

> Absolutely, grading and assessment I believe the teachers are starting to
> see the value of that. Yeah, I do think they will be sustained because I
> think people, not that they believe in it, but they've seen the benefits of it
> and they've used it and it has worked for them. We've had our share of
> folks that didn't, that did it the first time and said "well it didn't work for
> me, that'll never work and I don't know what you're talking about".
> We've had that situation, but we've also had those people who said "well,
> maybe I need to talk to someone to try to do that better". And I think that's
> the thing, if you try something one time and you toss it out then you
> probably aren't giving it a fair chance. And there's been enough
> opportunities across the board out here to use formative assessment and
> just what we, we had to bring teachers on board understanding why they
> are doing it and that came through the professional development.

A comment from Chris could piggy-back to David's discussion about teachers seeing the

value in the changes. Chris stated:

And there's times I've not been on board. I feel like I'm a good employee and I preach this to my own, you know, athletes, you do because it's the right thing to do for the team you know. So I'm on board because at first because I'm part of the team, but now I'm on board because I'm starting to believe in it.

David was asked if he thought the changes would sustain if he were to leave the school. His response was generated around the fact that the teachers were so involved in the change process that they had made it a part of how they teach. He stated:

I do, I think there are certain, yeah it's not just me anymore, it's them and there's teacher leaders out there who hold people accountable without ever involving me. They're not strong personalities but they're on board with me and they want to go to standards based and they understand that. We only have 22 teachers and I'm not saying they all do, but you could get 22 with you pretty quickly.

School Two teachers were supportive of the change in practices sustaining over time. They wanted their practices to continue because they were seeing the results being successful and influencing academic achievement and state testing scores. When asked if the new practices would continue if a new principal were to come to the school, one teacher stated, "We'll just tell the new principal this is how we've always done it. And, you're going to be here two years before you change it." Another Jamie explained why:

Because if it's been successful, we need to maintain it and we're happy to entertain ideas, but, rather than change something because you've done it that way and walked into this, if you were the new principal, I would tell you, I don't feel we should change at this point. We need to get to know you, you need to get to know us.

Jamie went on to encourage that a new principal coming into the school needed "to evaluate what we've done, what's been working". The School Two teachers and Claude both noted that Claude did not make any changes upon his arrival to the school. Claude stated, "the first year I was here, [I did not] suggest very many changes…And, I was a very experienced principal. I had twenty-five years under my belt."

When asked if the new practices at School Three were successful, Mia shared the reasons why there was some success. She stated:

> And it all goes back to retention of teachers and time. Since I've come out of assistant into principal and I don't have someone to take care of the discipline for me or take care of whatever it is that would take away from curriculum obviously, which is too many things on our desk. I don't get as much time to spend on curriculum, so when I try to spend that time with curriculum, I don't always want to go back to step one, but I feel like I need to do that a lot with our new teachers.

Mia also shared why she believed new practices were not successful:

> So then the no side of it probably has a little to do with me trying to find the time to restructure and our professional development is structured around curriculum for the last three years and we do it as much as we can. So I think that, that the turnaround and the teachers that it needs to be refocused again. The yes side of it is I do have those teachers that are using it, are realizing that these instructional strategies, [these] instructional methods, this curriculum, aligning the textbooks, finding the GLEs or whatever standards are out there for you is what is going to help you to be successful. It will help the students be successful. I have that through veteran and new teachers. Those that get those Ah-ha moment of yeah it works, it was great when the kids get those moments, but when the teachers get those, that is great. Just like teaching, when my kids don't get it I need to get back in and teach it another way.

Mia mentioned concerns about time. The issue of time was a constant concern with the teachers at School Three as well. Teachers expressed concerns about not having enough time to implement all the new practices. As a result, they believed some practices were neglected and had "fallen off the radar." Teachers commented not having enough time to get everything done was because their "plates were too full." When asked about the changes sustaining and continuing in the district, Mia took a neutral approach. She stated, "I think we're maintaining. I don't know that we are. I don't think that we are getting the growth that we need. But I go back to the fact that I think that it will continue if we get back on track with what we're doing." The phrase "get back on track" may reflect that

some of the practices were not being implemented or monitored. The relation between this comment from Mia and the comments from the teachers about lack of time would seem to fit together.

Like the other principals, Mia was asked if a new principal were to come to the school would the changes in practice continue. Mia stated, "Just being honest with you. Unless that new principal coming in, you know, has bought into it as well, then no. It goes with any program, like PBS, stuff like that. If the leader isn't behind it, [it would not]." The teachers in School Three again brought forward concerns of time and the opportunities to continue to work on and utilize new practices like their curriculum binders. Taylor shared:

> Like when you talk about the curriculum binders for example, they work and we like them because they help us. But if it is something that is just extra work and you don't know why you're doing it, then it's just busy work. If you work in a small school you wear a million hats anyways and you don't want to wear another hat just for the sake of wearing another hat. You want to cut to the chase and do something that is constructive and useful.

It was clear the teachers found the new practices useful when they had the time to work on them and utilize in their classrooms. One Taylor commented, "And I never thought I would say I enjoy writing curriculum". "Yeah, me neither," responded another Taylor. "But those binders are amazing," chimed in another Taylor. From these comments it was clear there was buy-in from the staff for how useful the binders could be. It was after these positive comments that the challenge of time was again brought to the forefront by one of the teachers. Taylor commented:

> I'm in a situation where I had mine for 7th and 8th grade English and for careers. Now I'm back in the Elementary and it's not even begun. It is, but I have to start from scratch. So I'm not looking forward to that. I was so

> excited it was done. I had it the way I wanted, but again it's a good
> program, the binder is. It's not a big shift, but its finding the time to do it.

The issue of time during the stages of implementation and now within comments about sustainability of the changes in practice was a strong connection. The teachers expected time to be allotted for them to plan and implement new practices. As more new practices and programs were added, there was less time to focus on any particular one. As a result, some practices were no longer on the forefront. For example, although there was value placed upon having the new practices in place at School Three, the teachers and the principal both recognized the need for more time for the best use of these tools.

Summary

The findings from participants in interviews and focus groups were reported in Chapter Four. Responses from the participants were grouped according to each of the research questions. From Research Question One, findings included having a vision and establishing goals for the school and motivations for change were evident. Findings related to Research Question Two included using data, using collaborative approaches, and addressing resistance and obtaining buy-in. Question Three findings included implementing the new vision and expectations, guiding the faculty, professional development, resources, and accountability. The final research question, Question Four, had two groupings from the findings emerge. The groupings included the results of the new practices and predictions of the level of sustainability from the participants. The data from this chapter will guide the discussions and recommendations in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural schools face unique challenges that differ from urban and suburban schools
(Beck & Shoffstall, 2005; Brown-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Hannum, Irvin, Banks, &
Farmer, 2009; Hardre & Hennessey, 2010; Hardre, Sullivan, & Crowson, 2009). Rural
schools face challenges of limited financial and personnel resources, servicing a high
percentage of families in low socioeconomic standing with little education, and low
student motivation for school success (Beck & Shoffstall; Brown-Ferrigno & Allen;
Hannum, Irvin, Banks, & Farmer; Hardre & Hennessey; Hardre, Sullivan, & Crowson).
The key for rural school leaders, as one participant in Brown-Ferrigno and Allen's study
noted, is leaders of rural schools do not have adequate resources available, but "the use of
what is available is more important than the amount available" (p. 11). The outcomes of
these challenges are instructional leaders of rural schools are in the difficult position of
needing to make vast improvements to the academic achievement of their students while
having fewer resources to accomplish internal and external goals.

The goal of this study was to examine how the principals of selected rural high
schools successfully led their faculty to make instructional changes. The research
questions for the study were based on Reeves's (2009) framework for the change process.
The change process included concepts of setting the stage for change, planning the
change process, implementing the changes, and sustaining the changes. While there was a
great deal of research available on urban and suburban schools, there was very little
information specifically related to how rural school leaders accomplished the change

process. It is the hope of the researcher that the discussion and recommendations in this study can provide examples and guidance for principals to also successfully lead instructional changes in their schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover how principals of rural high schools lead instructional changes in their school. Reeves' (2009) concepts for leading change in schools is the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions are based around Reeves' conceptual framework with a focus on the process for bringing about instructional changes in schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions directed this study:

1. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri create conditions for instructional changes in their schools?

2. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri plan for making instructional changes in their schools?

3. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri implement instructional changes in their schools?

4. How do the principals of selected rural high schools in Missouri sustain instructional changes in their schools?

Discussion

This study was intended to answer research questions related to how the principals of rural high schools lead the instructional change process in their schools. For the following discussion the responses from the participants were grouped to answer each

of the four research questions. Following the answering of the research questions, a section about themes from the participants will be presented. While most findings in the study were relevant to only one research question, some findings reappeared in the reporting of multiple research questions and became themes from the findings.

Research Question 1

Reeves's (2009) framework for bringing about change in schools begins with setting the stage for change. Organizations must take the time to evaluate if goals are being met (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004). Based on the evaluation process, organizations must then begin a change process and find a course of action that will yield the desired results. The organization must then learn from what has not worked and begin the process of finding a new method to achieve goals (Smith, 2006). School achievement data should be the primary focus to narrow what should be changed and what should remain, as well as to monitor progress during the process (Chenoweth; Reeves, 2007, 2009, 2011). Data use was common with all three schools in this study. Reviewing existing data factored into the principals each establishing a vision and goals for where they wanted to lead the school and in the formation of the change process. From there, principals began the process of determining if previously used practices would continue and what new practices to begin and introduce to the faculty.

David noted, "It's like you're shopping and checking things out and you haven't made the decision, and you get to make the decision. That can be lots of fun. I think schools do that often, research and select new things." The shopping metaphor opportunity to begin pulling in new ideas and practices to fit the principal's vision for the school was a common thread between the principals. They had what they believed to be

good ideas and practices to implement in their school to reach their desired outcomes. However, it was not always about simply adding programs during a change process. Isabelle from this study commented about "weeding the garden". In this stage of the process, school leaders must identify what practices in a school are no longer needed before challenging the faculty with new ideas and practices (Reeves, 2009). Taylor discussed how she anticipated problems or challenges hindering the opportunities for success. Her goal was to break down those barriers, and her vision was to put tools in place for every teacher to help students get to higher levels of academic achievement. All three principals discussed methods of motivating their staff. Appealing for teachers to take on the challenge of external forces seemed to be the most influential. Once these steps have taken place, the principal is then afforded the opportunity to begin looking at potential changes to make or concepts to implement. Principals begin to envision how the process will take place. Once the principal has a vision to give direction to the process, then the principal can begin planting seeds with the faculty to motivate them during the foundations of the change process.

Principals motivated their staff through internal and external sources. All three principals discussed how they motivated their teachers to embrace the new practices by appealing to the desire to improve state test scores and Annual Progress Report (APR) scores. Isabelle described David as "competitive" because of his desire for his teachers, students, and school to be deemed academically successful by those outside the district. David appealed to his teachers to also want to see success on the same levels he sought. Claude tried to motivate his teachers by encouraging them to join in using the resources they already had. He implored his teachers to "teach to the test" and changed their ways

by focusing on the learning goals. Not only were teachers in these schools motivated externally, but by internal motivations as well. Reeves (2007) reported schools were more likely to have sustained change when the school recognized student success and employed teachers with greater intrinsic motivation. Mia stated how she wanted to encourage her staff to simply work as a team to determine "what can we do to make kids better?" Claude expressed to both his students and teachers that he did not "want to be the principal that shuts down another school" because of academics.

Generally, principals believed the notion of scoring well on the Annual Progress Report (APR), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), End of Course exams (EOC), or the ACT seemed to motivate the staff the most. Some teachers, however, discussed how they were more likely to want to simply see their students be successful overall. At this stage, the teachers still felt some levels of resistance. For some teachers, feelings of resistance would not be relieved until data would be reviewed later in the change process to determine the levels of success.

Principals in this study set the stage for change by establishing a vision and goals for the school, using data to guide the creation of the vision and goals, and working to motivate staff members using external sources for motivation and by appealing to internal motivations of the teachers. Principals were afforded the opportunity to "weed out" practices no longer needed, while at the same time "shopping" for new practices to implement to reach the desired outcomes. The principals were also aware of the potential resistance they would encounter. Motivating the staff and communicating the vision and mission would lead to the planning stage of the change process where principals

continued to battle resistance, utilize data, and made the change process a collaborative process.

<div align="center">Research Question 2</div>

The planning process was Reeves' (2009) second stage for a change process. During this stage, the principals in this study utilized data with teachers and used collaborative practices with the faculty. It was at this stage where resistance was most evident from the teachers; however, this is where the principals made the most efforts to attempt to decrease the resistance levels from the faculty by forming collaborative efforts in the change process. Furthermore, some schools collaborated with other stakeholders to try to promote a smoother change process with others who were involved in the school community.

Use of Data

The use of data was noted as an important part of the change process in both the current research and past studies. Chenoweth (2010) and Reeves (2007) recommended that data from existing school initiatives, programs, student achievement levels, and any other relevant source should be used in preparation for the change. All three principals in the current study communicated with teachers about the current data and how it needed to change. Jamie discussed how the faculty of School Two specifically reviewed data that provided them with feedback about how their students could perform better, specifically on state testing. The teachers reviewed the data and then began planning ways to implement new practices into the classroom with the goal of improving student achievement. Practices such as this led to more collaborative efforts between the principal and faculty.

Collaborative Practices

All three principals in this study utilized collaborative practices in planning the change process. Tytler (2007), Reeves (2009, 2011), Schneider and Pickett (2006), Brooks, et al. (2004), and Smith (2006) recommended involving staff members in planning the change process. Collaborative efforts open the lines of communication to all faculty members to become involved in the change process. Furthermore, collaboration with faculty during the planning process can reduce the amount of resistance to change, as the concerns and fears of the staff can be addressed before the implementation process begins (Smith). Claude stated, "The best thing if you want to lead instructional change, don't stand up in front of a bunch of teachers and tell them what to do. Ask!" He continued about teacher involvement in the planning process, "I would just sit there and assist teachers planning units of instruction in collaboration. That beats standing up and from afar saying this is what we should be doing."

In all three schools in this study, collaborating with the teachers helped reduce some levels of resistance by the principal having regular communication with the teachers and allocating time for teachers to work together. David commented that he did not find people who were excited about change, but that "what went well was there was a small group of people who weren't craving for change but they would welcome it." As the process continued, David allowed for more opportunities for the faculty to have conversations among themselves to guide how the plan of action would be formed and executed. David stated an example. "There was a breakout group that came to me and listed out the changes they wanted to make immediately" and the new practice became implemented as soon as the teachers could begin the practice in their classrooms. Chris

attributed the ease of the change process with how the principal encouraged risk taking and wanted the teachers to try something new. Chris stated, "he wasn't worried about us failing, he just wanted us to try something new." However, not all planning practices resulted in buy-in from the faculty. However, none of the schools had all teachers buy into the change process. The principals of this study all utilized key faculty members who would embrace the change process. For example, David stated, "If you got 65 faculty members and you got 5 that whine and complain and send emails to the board and writing letters to the newspaper, go out and wrap your hands around the 60 people who will support you."

Reeves (2011) recommended initiating no more than three action steps. Not only should schools initiate no more than three action steps in a change process, schools should avoid too many initiatives over several years. The resistance at School Three was not because change was happening. Resistance from the teachers was because too many things were being planned. Taylor commented, "we have too many things on our plates. We keep adding new things." Another comment from a different Taylor was, "We don't have time to do [the original initiative] anymore." Resistance came due to not enough time to plan for all the changes. School Three had recently undergone an intense curriculum revision and refocus. The teachers were to continue to keep up on this project over the years. However, they were discouraged with new initiatives being introduced, as there was less time to plan for executing the original initiative. Principals of rural high schools, especially the smaller schools, should avoid adding too many new practices for teachers, as they may become overburdened with trying to plan for more and more initiatives.

Principals of rural high schools planned for instructional changes by sharing data with the faculty and then utilizing a collaborative approach with the teachers. Although no formal leadership teams were utilized by the principals, teachers in all schools were involved in conversations with the principal and/or each other about the students' learning and new practices that could be used. In an effort to reduce resistance, the principals involved teachers in how the changes should take place, but also involved them (or were even approached by the teachers) as to what changes should take place. The findings from this study and other researchers suggest that principals avoid too many change initiatives. Setting aside time to plan for each initiative can be a challenge, especially in smaller schools with fewer teachers to be involved. Too many initiatives can lead to challenges in the implementation stage of the change process.

<center>Research Question 3</center>

After setting the stage and planning for the change process, schools must begin implementing the new practices. For the schools in this study, implementation looked different in each school as each school established different paths to reach their goals. School One looked at classroom practices to become consistent across all classrooms. School Two had teachers individually using new practices, but the teachers worked together to provide intervention practices, provide additional instruction, and hold students accountable to the new expectations. The major initiative for School Three was to create curriculum binders where teachers increased focus on state level learning goals and improved assessments and instructional practices to be more aligned with the learning goals. The practices for each school were different; however, there were some common themes emerging from the participants for what was happening in the school at

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this point. Themes from this stage of the process included implementing the new vision and goals with the stakeholders, guiding the faculty, professional development, the amount of resources available, and accountability.

Implementing the New Vision and Goals

All three schools implemented practices that kept the focus on the new vision, the goals, and the new practices. Part of the vision for all three schools was to change the way the school was viewed in the past. As such, the principals and teachers began implementing practices that focused on their new vision and goals. School Two wanted to move the focus away from athletics while focusing more on academics. Even within their community, the stakeholders valued success in athletics over success in academics. Their new practices included students being held accountable for their academics, and based on their academics the students earned levels of participation. Schools One and Three faced similar challenges from their communities. Stakeholders were comfortable with things being done the way they always had, especially from the periods when they were in school. Parents and grandparents resisted changes from the practices of the school from when they were high school-aged. These changes ranged from new classroom practices, to acquiring and incorporating technology, to doing away with valedictorians and recognizing all who achieve a certain level of academic success similar to college and university honors systems. Implementation of these new practices became concrete examples of the new vision as part of the change process.

Guiding the Faculty

During the implementation stage of the change process, the principals still had to provide guidance to their teachers. Furthermore, resistance was still a concern for

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principals as they tried to get more and more teachers to become involved and embrace

the new practices. In some cases, it simply took the implementation of the practices to

begin for others to become engaged in the new practices. Isabelle saw this at School One:

> In the high school building we do have those people who jump right in and
> go and those who carefully think things over and some who move
> forward. Some who want to see it working with someone else first, and
> then we have those who just dig in their heels.

Chris expressed concerns that she was initially one of the more reluctant teachers, but

saw how it worked while in progress and now supports the changes. She stated:

> And there's times I've not been on board. I feel like I'm a good employee
> and I preach this to my own, you know, athletes, you do because it's the
> right thing to do for the team you know. So I'm on board because at first
> because I'm part of the team, but now I'm on board because I'm starting
> to believe in it.

Claude discussed how he wanted to urge teachers through the change process,

even if they were hesitant to try the new practices. In this case, Claude wanted

them to consider electronic resources and textbooks instead of hardcopies of

textbooks. He stated:

> Just like today, when we were having our thing about laptops and this and
> that and some of them are like, well, I don't know this and that and I said,
> "Guys, you know, I'm not going to be around here for four more years.
> I'm going to be retired again. But, you need to get onboard with this
> because it's the way." You know, they're not going to have textbooks for
> very much longer. You better start getting with it.

His comments asked the teachers to push through the uncomfortable part of

implementing new practices. Teachers should try to embrace new things and ideas into

their classrooms, especially when it benefits the students. Mia discussed that, she too,

found resistance in her school. She commented that she was prepared for resistance, but

she still wanted to encourage others to try the new practices. In some cases it took seeing

the positive results from other teachers to get some teachers to really embrace the change. However, all the principals had to be direct at some point with some of the teachers and demand for teachers to comply with directives to introduce the changes. All three of the principals stated there were times where they had to converse with some teachers and inform them it was an expectation that the changes would be implemented. All three principals also stated that some teachers had elected to leave the district after the implementation of the change process.

Professional Development

Professional development was a part of all the schools' implementation of new practices. Professional development methods varied with each of the schools. School One, which was the largest school of the three, received a great deal of external professional development, but they did some professional development from within their own staff. Isabelle noted how the professional development led to the implementation of new practices into the classroom:

> One of the things that he really was the driving force behind for the last several years, I'm trying to think, this may be year four, he has requested funding to take teachers and go to the differentiated instruction conference in the summer for professional development.

David and some teachers from School One attended workshops and conferences to gain insights into best practices that could be introduced to their classrooms. They had the opportunity to attend at least one national conference on differentiated instruction to help aid their change efforts. However, the entire faculty also engaged in professional development by conducting book studies and collaborating together about their practices. School Two had teachers individually attend conferences or workshops to gain new practices to use in their classrooms. The staff also had a great deal of communication.

The teachers collaborated to solve problems, share resources and discuss practices. School Three enlisted the help of the Regional Professional Development Center by having representatives help them and consult with the principal and teachers. Representatives from the center were involved in the first change process with the curriculum binders and were still a resource as the school implemented the School-wide Positive Behavior Support system.

Resources

An important part of the change process for all the schools in this study was to obtain resources to conduct the process. All three principals believed they could have used more money and more time to accomplish their goals. David stated, "You can always use more money, more resources to be able to get things done. I think that most all schools, though, really do well with the funding they have to get things accomplished." Mia was also concerned about the resources she had. She stated, "As a small district that is hard to answer yes. I think that as a district we tried to do the best we could." When asked if he had as many resources as he needed for the change process, David stated:

> No, I do not. I think that it has been done a couple of books at a time and a couple of people at a time. The ideal way would be to bring in someone for the high school to present who's, for lack of a better term, more well-read than I am and more polished than I am. We bring back the message, but we don't, it gets a little diluted, but it's not as powerful from me as it would be an outside person. I think it drives home the point, and that costs money. I'd love to bring Rick Wormley or Doug Reeves in here, but that's $12,000-$13,000 a day.

These smaller schools would not be able to afford major presenters, such as the ones David discussed. Instead, principals are forced to find cheaper professional development opportunities. The majority of the resources utilized by Mia for the change process at her

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school was free or low-cost resources (or was at the time of use, as some RPDCs are now charging schools when sending them consultants). Jamie also discussed being able to utilize free resources. She obtained them from DESE's website about MAP and EOC preparations because they met the balance for being the best and cheapest resources available. Another Jamie discussed using free resources available from her peers. She stated, "If she has something that will help me and I know it, I'm going to ask for it. And, she'll be glad to give it. And, if she knows it will help me, and I don't know she has it, she'll loan it to me." With tight budgets for school districts, it has become increasingly difficult for smaller schools to spend money on professional development. However, money was not the only difficult resource to find. The issue of time was also a problem for schools.

David commented, "Like so many other districts, there's never enough time" when it comes to implementing new practices in schools. Mia expressed similar concerns, "It's hard. There are only so many of us and we can't bite off too many programs at one time, especially if it is the same people. You can only put so much effort into each thing so you have to be picking and choosing." This was echoed by many of the teachers in School Three. They expressed concerns about their plates already being full and not enough time to implement all the new practices being introduced. The teachers at School Three stated that as new initiatives were introduced each year at School Three they felt more and more overburdened. Initially, they had received time throughout the school year on professional development days to organize the new curriculum resources. However, they were disheartened by the fact that they wanted to continue to focus on the

curriculum resources, but they no longer had time to do so because of other initiatives

that were being introduced and implemented.

Accountability

Participants in this study noted the accountability factor when implementing the

new practices. Teachers believed that being in a small school resulted in even more

accountability on individual teachers. Jamie stated:

> It's a smaller environment. You, in a rural environment, be it a school, be
> it a business, be it a church, whatever, you're reliant upon yourself to get
> things done. So, we at [School Two] school know that we, at [School
> Two], we are it. For these kids, we are it. We do not have the luxury of
> passing the buck. I can't blame the kids not understanding fractions on the
> curriculum director because she didn't teach me well or he didn't teach me
> well. I have to do it.

Jamie stressed the individual accountability of teachers in small schools where it is one

teacher per grade level or one teacher per subject area:

> When I came over here, this was the first building I've been in where there
> wasn't three or four or five teachers of a grade level…there was nobody
> else to blame. I was it. It makes you, I think, more accountable than you
> expect of yourself. You know you've got a big responsibility.

Small schools cannot shift students to another teacher. Instead the teacher is forced to

adapt to help the students. This refers back to what David stated about teachers needing

to adjust for the kids in the classroom. He thought teachers needed to change the way

they approached the classroom and what instructional strategies were being used.

Otherwise, he predicted those teachers would only continue to get the same results. If the

desire is to see improvements, then teachers will have to change classroom practices.

During implementation the principals also held teachers accountable for

implementing the changes into their classrooms. It was noted by teachers and Isabelle

that the principals of Schools One and Three held them to high levels of accountability in

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terms of following through with expectations for implementing new practices. In all three schools it was implied by the principals that teachers who did not accept the changes or new practices typically left the school of their own accord.

Principals in this study led the implementation of instructional changes by implementing the new vision and goals, guiding the faculty, providing professional development, focusing on resources, and holding teachers accountable. During the first stages of the change process the principals established a vision and goals for the school. Executing and holding to those values was important to the principals. All three principals were facing resistance from stakeholders who were happy with the practices of the past. Principals in this study implemented new practices in the schools to show they were moving forward with their visions. The new practices were also on the forefront with the principals in guiding the faculty. The principals provided opportunities for teachers to engage in the new practices but then, when needed, they intervened and even directed teachers to make changes. The principals provided a variety of professional development opportunities to their teachers. This depended largely on the resources that were available to them, including the factor of time. The teachers were willing to embrace new practices, but they knew there was not enough time for them to do them all. Finally, the principals in this study held their teachers accountable for implementing the new changes. Principals were willing to be direct, when necessary, with teachers who failed to introduce the new practices. Similar to Yukl's (2002) recommendations, all three of the principals first tried to avoid being forceful and instead encouraged teachers to change before issuing directives.

Research Question 4

Sustaining a new practice may be the most difficult task for principals. When asking principals in this study about sustained changes, they pointed to what was happening in the classroom and the fact those practices had been introduced several years prior. Principals and teachers were also asked if the practices would continue should the principal leave. While some of these issues do not point directly to leadership practices of the principal, they do indicate the positive results of the way the change process was conducted.

Fullan (2007) suggested school leaders must reach a point where the change will continue as a cultural aspect of the school or the change should be discarded and a new focus be established. Principals especially acknowledged the successes of the change process by citing evidence in the classroom and discussing the data produced from the changes. Reeves (2007) and Tytler (2007) both found teachers who met regularly as a group and continued to plan classroom instruction and assessment based on desired goals had better chances for change to be sustained in the school. All three schools cited continual discussion within the staff about practices. Teachers in School Three were excited about the opportunities to continue to work on their curriculum binders and wished they had more time to do so. Schools One and Two also had teachers and principals note that they continued to meet and plan and strategize to make the school better.

Researchers recommend that school leaders should use data to justify the decision to continue or discontinue an initiative of the change process (Fullan, 2007; Reeves, 2009; Trybus, 2011). When principals and teachers of the selected schools saw the

positive results and successes of the students, they began to buy in more to the changes.

David stated that principals in a change process should "be the bulldog and just persevere and stick with it and get through the rough parts that you can see the results, so that's what I would say." Taylor talked about seeing the results of the changes, "So I'm on board because at first because I'm part of the team, but now I'm on board because I'm starting to believe in it." From the discussion with the principals, assistant superintendent, and teachers, it was evident the practices were sustainable as they provided a variety of examples of new things they had introduced and were continuing to execute in the classroom. Taylor commented on a personal outcome of rewriting the curriculum and building the curriculum binders at School Three, "And I never thought I would say I enjoy writing curriculum". Another Taylor commented about why the results helped the new practices with curriculum binders to sustain:

> When you talk about the curriculum binders for example, they work and
> we like them because they help us. But if it is something that is just extra
> work and you don't know why you're doing it, then it's just busy work. If
> you work in a small school you wear a million hats anyways and you don't
> want to wear another hat just for the sake of wearing another hat. You
> want to cut to the chase and do something that is constructive and useful.

Reeves (2007) stated one sign of sustaining change is if a "key leader departs, effective school culture and instructional strategies can endure" (p. 87). When asked about a change in leader, David stated he believed the changes would sustain. He cited his foundation for this belief was, "there's teacher leaders out there who hold people accountable without ever involving me." There are so many people behind the change process that he felt so strongly about how well the practices worked that he is not the only person to hold others accountable for implementing. Jamie was adamant that their changes would sustain with new leadership. Jamie stated, "We'll just tell the new

principal this is how we've always done it. And, you're going to be here two years before you change it." Another teacher in the same focus group explained:

> Because if it's been successful, we need to maintain it and we're happy to entertain ideas, but, rather than change something because you've done it that way and walked into this, if you were the new principal, I would tell you, I don't feel we should change at this point. We need to get to know you; you need to get to know us.

Mia was cautious in her response. She believed that "if the (new) leader isn't behind it, [the change would not sustain]." The statements from Jamie and Mia show that principals new to schools should be cautious about cutting practices immediately upon their arrival. Taking away from what has become a cultural piece of the school could produce negative results with the faculty, possibly leading to new initiatives being rejected and opposed.

Factors contributing to new practices sustaining in schools were not limited to one particular stage, but were a result of all the stages being successfully implemented. The principals of this study used similar practices that were also supported by literature in leading the change process. While setting the stage for change, planning changes, and implementing the changes, the principals used methods that helped the new practices continue. The teachers found such value in the practices they would want them to continue if their current principals were to leave the school. A powerful statement from a teacher at School Two testified to the practices. The teachers would tell the new principal this is how we do it. The teachers in all three schools were supportive of the practices because they had seen the positive results in the students' academic successes. To answer the research question about how the principals sustain changes in their schools it could be summarized as: they used the practices described to answer the three other research questions of this study and then continue the instructional practices that worked.

Themes

This study developed themes that emerged from within more than one of the four research questions. Key themes included: 1) importance of data; 2) resistance to change; and 3) availability of resources. In the various stages of the change process, these themes repeatedly emerged from the participants within each school and across all three schools. The importance of data emerged constantly. The use of achievement data was most evident in setting the stage for change and examining if the changes were sustaining, but principals addressed data at all the stages of the change process. Resistance was another theme that emerged. Resistance was taken into consideration and experienced by the principals at various stages of the change process. Teachers also expressed various levels of resistance occurring during the change process. Finally, availability of resources was another theme that emerged from the data. There was considerable emphasis on the resource of time.

Importance of Data

All principals should consider the use of data throughout the change process. All principals in this study referred back to reviewing data from state scores. When coupled with the intentions of wanting students to reach their potential in academic achievement, there was strong motivation for faculty and staff to buy in to the change process. The data should be used to determine what practices should be "weeded out" and what practices should be included as part of the vision for the school. The new practices should also be considered to be the best methods for obtaining the desired outcomes or goals for the principal. Data should be used in communication with the faculty during the planning process as a means for external motivation while intrinsic motivation can also be a means

to appeal to teachers to buy into the change process. Data should also be considered in determining the sustainability of the new practices. If the goals established at the beginning of the change process are not being achieved over a determined amount of time, then the new practices may need to be "weeded out" for newer practices. This leads to another consideration for principals: resistance.

Resistance to Change

Principals should be aware of levels of resistance that will emerge during a change process. The level of resistance will vary from faculty to faculty and on the amount of change taking place. School Three was experiencing several new changes over two to three years of time. While the faculty appreciated the results of the initial changes in practice, there was resistance because of multiple changes taking place at the same time. The original changes were no longer on the forefront, and the teachers believed the new practices did not allow for the original changes to sustain as well. When there are fewer people on the faculty there seems to be fewer resources and opportunities for changes to be implemented.

Availability of Resources

Principals should consider the resources already at their disposal, especially in smaller, rural schools. Rural schools tend to have fewer faculty members, but they must still conduct themselves in the same or a similar manner as larger schools. All three schools utilized many of the tools already available to them. Most of these tools were of little or no cost to the school. The key factor was time. School Two and School Three faculty especially (the two smaller schools in the study) discussed the amount of time available to get things done was limited. These schools have teachers who have 5-6

classes to prepare instruction and grade assignments and assessment daily, plus all the regular duties that come along with schools such as supervision, coaching sports, sponsoring activities, etc. Larger schools with more staff members may have teachers with one to three classes to prepare daily. If this is the case, then it could be concluded that large school teachers could spend more time preparing courses, being involved in committees, professional development, and greater in-depth planning related to the new practices. School Three teachers were exceptionally pleased with having professional development days when school was not in session that focused on only the new practices.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study provided the researcher with insights for how the principals of rural high schools lead instructional changes. Each principal led changes in different ways, but each school experienced improved ACT scores, AYP results, and/or APR scores for their district. The findings of the study produced common themes from all three schools in relation to the change process.

David was concerned with how test scores for his school had flat-lined. There was no significant improvement in academic achievement from his students, so he believed it was time to change. He reviewed the data, conducted his own research, and began sharing with teachers new instructional practices he wanted to see implemented in the classrooms. He sent teachers to professional development workshops and conferences, utilized faculty book studies, and scheduled time for collaboration to help the teachers gain more knowledge and practices to implement in the classroom. Teachers began using new instructional methods in the class to deliver instruction and assess student progress. The changes sustained because the teachers found the new practices to be working.

Teachers discussed how they witnessed improved student achievement in their classrooms, and they were able to review the data and make comparisons to the past to see the amount of progress that was made.

Claude's vision for instructional change was for teachers, students, and the community to place greater value on academics, teachers use best practices in their classrooms, and find methods to intervene when students are not successful. Prior to these changes there had been a greater focus on athletics. This was especially true from the students and the community. However, Claude and the teachers began placing greater emphasis on academics and sought to improve achievement scores. Jamie talked about how she pulled students out of basketball practice until work was completed and satisfactory. Claude and the teachers were no longer going to settle for the expectations from generations of the past who had attended the school. Teachers changed the way they were teaching, and the teachers recognized they were solely accountable for the students' academics. With one teacher per subject area, there was no one else to blame. As a result, individual teachers began trying new instructional practices to get the best performances from their students. Claude and the teachers had regular and open conversation about changes for instruction. Claude highlighted conversations with the faculty about implementing new technology. Jamie discussed collaborating with other teachers for ideas and resources.

Mia began the change process by introducing curriculum binders to the faculty. After reviewing district achievement data, Mia and the teachers focused on aligning learning goals, assessments, and instruction to ensure the necessary content was being taught. Teachers were able to utilize resources and presenters from the Regional

Professional Development Center and resources from within the district. Similar to School One, the teachers at School Three were supportive of the changes because they could see the new data that showed greater student achievement. The teachers were very adamant they wanted the binders to continue to be used, but they highlighted a problem with the change process. School Three was similar to School Two in size of faculty and enrollment. School Three teachers were very concerned with the number of initiatives "on their plate." As a result, they believed the binders were no longer the focus as other initiatives were being added. They focused on the lack of time to plan for six courses, complete coaching and/or sponsoring duties, and keep up with all the other demands of the initiatives from the change process.

The three themes of data, resistance, and availability emerged from the findings from this study. The use of data was constant across all three schools. At some point the principal and/or teachers reviewed existing data and determined a change was needed. Data were continuously reviewed to monitor student progress. It is the improvement to the data that provided the most significant reason for why the changes have sustained at the schools. School Two participants were determined to keep the new practices should a new principal come to the district. Teachers from Schools One and Three were equally determined to keep the practices going because of the positive results on academic achievement. For these teachers, resistance levels had decreased because of the results.

All three principals faced degrees of resistance. Change is difficult. Some teachers were more accepting than others. For some teachers it took time, as David and Claude experienced, for teachers to see what was happening and then get on board. The findings

in this study found resistance was overcome best by involving faculty members in the planning and leading of the change process and by sharing improving student data.

The availability of resources was another theme emerging from the study. Principals utilized various resources from inside and outside the district. Examples of how professional development was provided to teachers included out of district conferences and workshops, faculty book studies, presenters at the school, and collaborative efforts. The most important resource from the schools was the resource of time. For the smaller schools in this study, time was a major factor. Teachers expressed the desire to have time to plan and implement new practices and initiatives. As faculty sizes decrease, there are fewer people to carry out the initiatives. As a result, resistance could become high if a principal were to pile too many things on the teachers "plates." These themes and findings from this study and the themes that emerged provided implications for practice for principals seeking to bring about instructional changes in their schools.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

The results of this study have identified a set of practices that have the potential for increasing the chances of a more successful and comfortable change process. These practices can be embraced by school leaders to guide their school improvement efforts. While these practices will not guarantee improved results for all schools, these practices did work for the principals of these rural schools and should be at least considered as other leaders begin the change process. Implications for practitioners include:

1. Principals should review data at all stages of a change process. This should include historical data when setting a new vision for the school, reviewing data

through the school year to monitor the effectiveness of the new practices, and reviewing data at the end of each school year (or other predetermined time) to determine if the new practices should continue.

2. Principals of rural high schools should attempt to maximize professional development resources. Many resources are available that are free or inexpensive. These resources could include book studies, experts within the staff, regional professional development centers, and DESE resources. Although they may be limited, principals can also look for resources within their school district's community.

3. Professional development related to new initiatives must continue as new faculty and staff members are added to the district to ensure the change stays on the forefront and new employees are current with sustained practices.

4. Principals should limit proposed changes in practice to one or two initiatives. With fewer teachers in the school it is more difficult for the teachers to devote time and resources needed for a large number of changes. Principals should instead focus on one or two practices that will produce the greatest positive changes in student achievement. It would also be easier to keep one or two initiatives on the forefront and easier to monitor the progress.

5. Principals must make efforts to reduce resistance from teachers. As such, principals should involve staff members throughout the change process. Principals could utilize a group of teachers to help lead and model new practices with other teachers. Principals should also take a collaborative approach with teachers by having regular communication. This would include regularly sharing the vision

and goals for the school, why changes are happening, how the change process will occur, and providing opportunities for all staff members to gain professional development at some level.

6. Principals should focus on both internal and external motivations to engage as many teachers as possible in the change process. Appealing to teachers' sense of responsibility, care for students, and desire for success of the school can appeal to a teacher's foundational motivations for teaching. Challenging teachers to meet the demands or expectations from outside sources such as state mandates, U.S. Department of Education, research-based practices, or other external measures can also provide motivation for teachers.

7. Time is a critical factor for the change process in rural schools. This is especially true for the schools with one teacher per subject and/or grade level. Time should be built into the school year for regular, collaborative professional development, thus allowing the teachers to make progress on learning about new practices and planning for their implementation in their classroom while discussing and sharing with other faculty members.

8. Principals need to be aware of balancing the type and amount of professional development with the resources available and how much time is available for the faculty to engage in professional development and the new practices. Principals must find a balance of introducing new initiatives without overburdening the teachers. If time and focus is split between too many projects, it becomes too difficult for the faculty to become strong in one particular area. Trying to

implement too many initiatives could result in some resistance, as it did in School Three.

9. Principals should involve teachers in the change process by creating and using a leadership team. Researchers recommend utilizing leadership teams and involving the teachers in the change process (Bruffee, 1999; Chance & Segura, 2009; Little & Houston, 2003; Reeves, 2007, 2009; Scribner, 2003). Involving faculty members can increase buy-in, produce leaders within the faculty, and teachers can model new practices for others. In this study, David stated he would use a leadership team if he were to go through the process again.

10. Rural administrators should collaborate with other rural school leaders providing opportunities to share best practices. Additionally, teachers should be provided this opportunity as well. In the smallest schools there may only be one teacher per subject or grade level. Schools collaborating together may provide these teachers with additional resources and professional development at little or no cost to the district.

11. Principals can begin an instructional change process even after several years of experience in the district. A new principal to a school is not required for a change process to occur. Two of the principals in this study had been in their schools for a total of 8 and 15 years respectively and were able to lead a successful change process.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study sought to examine how principals of rural high schools led instructional changes in their schools. Using Reeves's (2009) recommendations for the

stages of the change process, this study examined the full change process as it occurred in three selected rural schools. The discussion of implications for practice reported in this study provides recommendations for principals to consider when leading a change process in their schools. Although the recommendations in this study provide some insight for principals to utilize in their practices, additional research is warranted. Recommendations for future studies would include:

1. Studies should be conducted on which methods of professional development provide the most significant impact on teachers and on student achievement.

2. In depth, longitudinal studies should be conducted within successful rural schools to more fully examine the change process over an extended period of time.

3. Studies should be conducted to further examine each individual stage of Reeves' (2009) change process in successful rural schools. These studies could examine the most successful practices of leaders as they lead change.

4. A comparative study should be conducted to examine any differences in how leaders in rural, suburban, and urban schools lead instructional change.

5. A study should be conducted to examine an appropriate number of changes or initiatives a rural school can or should undertake and still be successful. A maximum number or even a minimum number could be determined.

6. A correlational study could be conducted to investigate the possible relationships between demographic variables, such as age, experience, and educational background of principals and the levels of success when implementing instructional change.

7. The use of various motivational methods specifically to lead changes in rural schools could be researched to help find ways for principals to reduce levels of resistance from teachers and staff during a change process.

8. This study should be duplicated with successful rural schools in Missouri and other states to compare or confirm the practices that work best in leading instructional change.

Summary

This study examined how principals of rural schools led instructional change with their faculty. Reeves' (2009) model for bringing about changes in schools was applied to specifically bringing about instructional changes in rural schools. The findings from this study were from three successful rural schools in Missouri. The discussion of these findings has produced implications for practice and recommendations for future study. Principals should be especially focused on utilizing data, anticipating resistance from faculty members, and selecting resources readily available for the change process. Data should be constantly reviewed during a change process. Data should help determine a vision for the school, should be shared with the faculty during the planning process, and finally new data should be collected and analyzed to determine if changes should sustain. Principals must be aware of potential resistance from the faculty, and the principal should be prepared to use methods to reduce resistance. Principals should seek low cost professional development opportunities, especially in rural high schools where budgets may not include large professional development funds. The resource of time should especially be taken into consideration as principals lead the change process. The teachers and principals of this study shared a common concern for the lack of time available when

trying to implement a change process. Principals should attempt to build time into the

school year for teachers to receive professional development, plan, and implement new

changes. This is especially true in smaller schools where faculty members believe their

"plates are full." Future studies could provide greater details and insights from successful

leaders to also be shared with those in the professional community.

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Appendix A: Email Request to Area Supervisors

Hello,

My name is Steve Ritter and I am a graduate student in the Statewide Cooperative EdD program at the University of Missouri. I am conducting a study that examines how principals lead instructional change in rural high schools in Missouri. I am requesting your assistance to identify potential schools for this study. For this study, instructional change refers to changes to instructional and/or assessment methods used in the classroom.

I am seeking rural high school with less than 300 students that have incorporated school-wide instructional changes in the classroom in an effort to increase student achievement on state testing and/or the ACT. My plan is to interview the principal and the superintendent (if available) and conduct at least one focus group with teachers in three high schools about the change process.

My request to you is for you to recommend one or two high schools in your region that have undertaken instructional changes in their school within the past 3-5 years to increase student achievement. There should be evidence of improvement in achievement. This could include ACT scores, EOC and/or MAP scores, overall APR, and/or earning recognition for being Accredited with Distinction. Should you have any recommendations within your region, could you please reply to this email or contact me at the phone number below. If you have any questions regarding the study, you may direct them to me or my advisor, Dr. Paul Watkins at Southeast Missouri State University.

Thank you for any feedback you can provide. Should you wish a copy of the findings of the study, please simply indicate your wishes in your response to this email. Thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Steve Ritter   Dr. Paul Watkins - Advisor
steve.ritter1@yahoo.com   pwatkins@semo.edu
(660) 924-6242   (573) 651-2136

Appendix B: Email Invitation to Superintendents for Study Participation

Dr./Mr./Ms. _____,

My name is Steve Ritter and I am a doctoral student in the Statewide Cooperative EdD program at the University of Missouri. I am conducting a study that examines how principals lead school-wide instructional change in rural high schools in Missouri. For this study, instructional change refers to changes to instructional and/or assessment methods used in the classroom. I would like to invite you and your school to participate in my study.

I am seeking rural high school with less than 300 students that have incorporated school-wide instructional changes in the classroom in an effort to increase student achievement on state testing, the ACT, improving the overall APR score, and/or earning the recognition of being Accredited with Distinction. My plan is to interview the principal and the superintendent (if available) and conduct at least one focus group with teachers in three high schools about the change process. I would also like to conduct at least one classroom observation of a teacher using the new instructional practice.

I have attached a copy of the informed consent to participate in the study, the purpose of the study and the researcher questions that are guiding this study. All data collected during the survey as well as the names of you, your school, and your staff members will be kept in confidence during the study and in the reporting of the findings.

I appreciate your time and your serious consideration for participation in this study. Please reply to this email with your acceptance or declining of this invitation. Should you accept this invitation, I will be contacting you via phone in the next 24-48 hours at your school phone number listed on the DESE website to begin making arrangements for a campus visit. Should you have any questions you may contact me or my advisor, Dr. Paul Watkins. Again, thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Steve Ritter   Dr. Paul Watkins - Advisor
steve.ritter1@yahoo.com   pwatkins@semo.edu
(660) 924-6242   (573) 651-2136

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Name of Study: An Examination of how principals lead instructional change in rural high schools in Missouri.

Identification of Researchers: This research is being done by Steve Ritter, a doctoral student in the Statewide Cooperative EdD program in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri.

Contact Information:
Steve Ritter   Phone: 660-924-6242   e-mail: steve.ritter1@yahoo.com

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study was to discover how principals of rural high schools lead instructional changes in their school.

Request for Participation: I am inviting you to participate in a study as part of my dissertation for the Doctorate of Education from the University of Missouri. Participants are being asked to participate in one-on-one interviews, as a part of a focus group, and/or be observed using a new instructional practice in your school. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to remove yourself from the interview process at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply decline to answer them.

Description of Research Method: This survey will gather information about your school, instructional changes in your school, the change process that took place in your school, and your opinion of the success of the change. You will also be given an opportunity to supply information and opinions through open-ended questions.

Privacy: All of the information we collect will be kept in confidence. Name of individual participants will not be used in the reporting of the study. Names of schools will not be identified in the reporting of the study. All interviews and focus groups will be recorded on a digital audio recorder.

Explanation of Risks: The risks associated with participating in this study are similar to the risks of everyday life. Your participation is voluntary. You can exit from the survey at any time.

Explanation of Benefits: Your participation may benefit others by providing guidelines, procedures, advise, or action steps for future school leaders to assist them in successfully implementing instructional changes in their schools.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Paul Watkins. He can be reached at pwatkins@semo.edu or at (573) 651-2136. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Campus Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri at (573) 882-9585

By signing, I agree to participate in this study of my own free will. I understand the risks and benefits listed on this form. I give the researcher, Steve Ritter, permission to use a digital audio recording device to record my responses. I am aware I may withdraw from the study at any time, and I am aware I may decline to respond to any of the questions if I so choose.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Appendix D: Principal Interview Questions

Interview Questions: Principal
- What is your background in education?
- Why did you decide to become a principal?
- What instructional changes did the school within the past five years?
- Why did you decide it was time to change instructional methods in the school?
- Did you experience any professional development or learn about a change theory that guided you in this process?
- What steps did you take to begin preparing the staff for change?
- Was there anything you used to motivate the staff?
- How did you manage resistance to the change process?
- How did you overcome resistance to change?
- Can you describe how you planned for the implementation changing instruction practices?
- Were members of the faculty involved in the planning process? If so, how were they involved?
- So how was the change implemented? What steps did you and the faculty take?
- What resources did the staff have during the change process?
- What was the response of the faculty during the change process? What went well? What did not go as well as you had hoped?
- Were there any reactions from stakeholders besides the teachers such as students, parents, community members?
- Do you feel the changes in instruction have been successful? What do think is evidence that the change was successful?
- Do you feel you had enough resources at your disposal to implement the instructional changes the way you would have liked?
- Is there anything in the change process you would have done differently?
- Would you say the change has sustained? What would you site as evidence the changes have it sustained?
- Why do you think the change has sustained over time? (or) Why do you think the change has not sustained in the school?
- Should leadership change in the school, do you think the teachers will continue these practices?
- Do you believe the instructional changes have made a difference in the levels of student achievement? Why or why not?
- Do you think that being in a rural school created any challenges to implementing the changes in the school?
- Are there any other comments about the change process you wish to share?

Appendix E: Superintendent Interview Questions

Superintendent Interview Questions:
- Could you please tell me about your background in education?
- What do you see as some of the strengths and challenges of the school district?
- How did the decision come about to make instructional changes at the secondary level?
- What do you believe the principal did well to prepare the staff for the upcoming changes?
- Did you witness any resistance from the staff to the idea of change? How did the principal address those concerns?
- What strategies did you witness the principal using that were most effective in planning for the changes?
- Did the principal approach you about obtaining special resources? If so, what were they, and was he/she able to gain access? If not, why were the resources inaccessible?
- During implementation of the instructional changes in the classroom, what did you see as going well and were there any challenges that developed?
- Did all the changes the principal initiated sustain? If so, why do you think they did? If not, why did they not continue?
- Do you think if the principal were to leave the district the faculty would continue using these strategies?
- Do you believe these changes were successful? What evidence would you site?
- Do you think that being in a rural school created any challenges to implementing the changes in the school?
- Are there any other comments about the change process you wish to share?

Appendix F: Teacher Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions - Teachers:
- Could you each share about your experiences in education leading up to this point?
- Why did each of you decide to become teachers?
- What attracted you to teaching at this school?
- Tell me a little about the instructional changes that have been implemented in your school?
- Why did these changes come about? What motivated the staff to implement these changes?
- How did your principal prepare the faculty and staff for these changes, how was it introduced to you?
- Were there any steps taken by the principal to calm any concerns or resistance to the upcoming changes?
- What steps were taken to begin planning the implementation of these changes?
- Where any faculty members involved the planning stage? How so?
- How was the change actually implemented in the classroom? What did the teachers begin to do differently?
- What resources did you have at your disposal to assist with this process?
- Did any of you have any roles (formally or informally) in helping the rest of the faculty with the change process?
- Do you believe the changes that have been made will sustain? Why or why not?
- What would you consider as evidence of the change having sustained?
- Do you believe the instructional changes have made a difference in the levels of student achievement? Why or why not?
- Did being a rural school make the change process any more difficult for the faculty? If so, how was it more difficult and what challenges did you face?
- Overall, what do you think went well and what could the principal or the school done differently during the process?
- Was there any reaction from the students, parents, or community members at any stage after of the change process?
- Are there any other comments on the change process you wish to share?

Appendix G: School One Academic Achievement Data

Principal Background: David is a white male principal leading a high school in a small town with a student population of 287 students. He is a former agriculture teacher. David has been in the school district for 15 years. He has been in the district since 1998.

Annual Performance Report (APR) by District Total
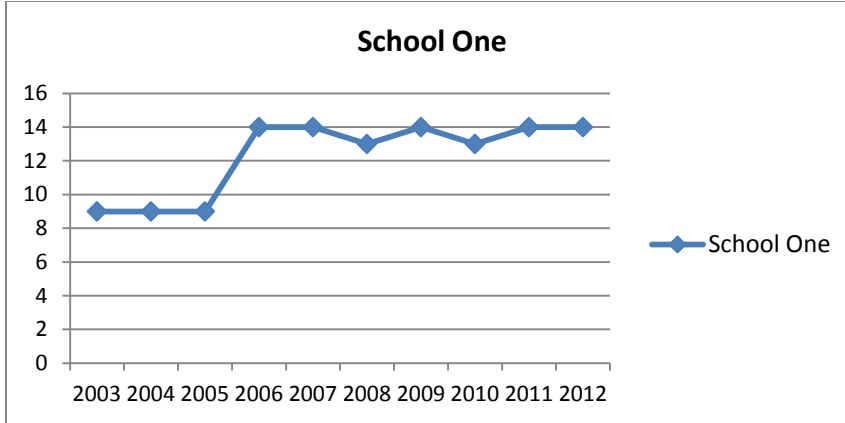
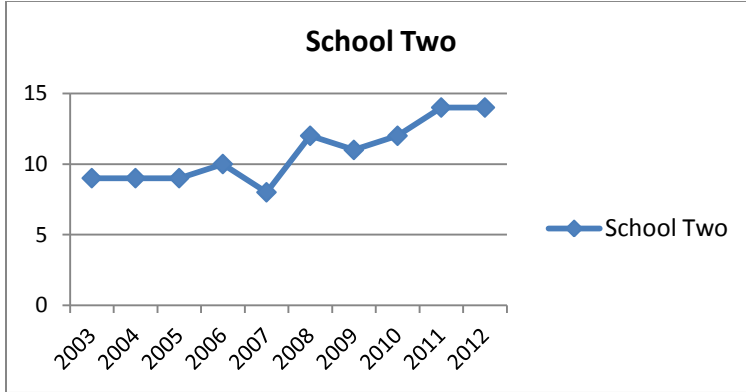ACT Average Composite Score for High School
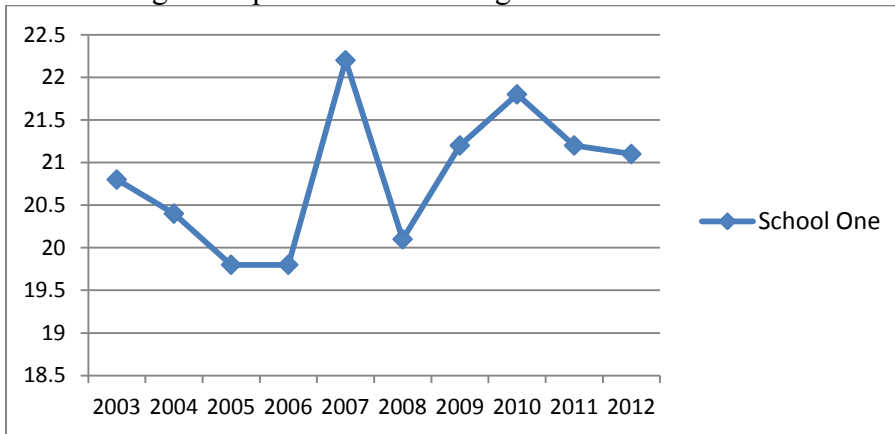
Adequate Yearly Progress Overall Status for High School (AYP)

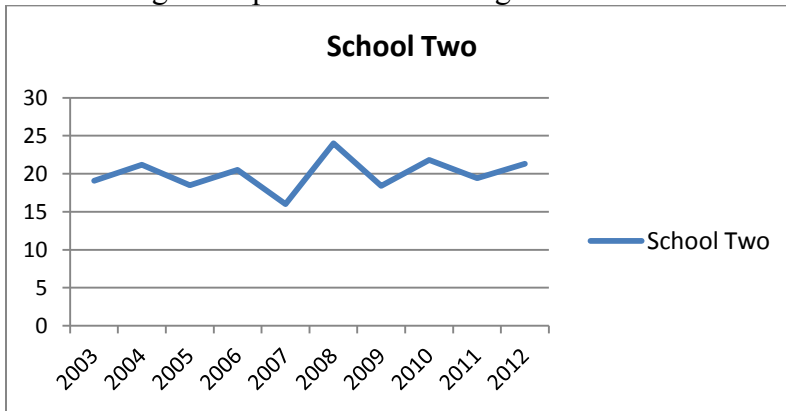| Overall Status	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Comm Arts	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Met
Math	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met
Additional Indicator				Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met

Appendix H: School Two Academic Achievement Data

Principal Background: Claude is a white male who has been the principal in the district for 5 years. He had been a principal in another district for 34 years before retiring and moving to Missouri. He has been in the district since 2008.

Annual Performance Report (APR) by District Total

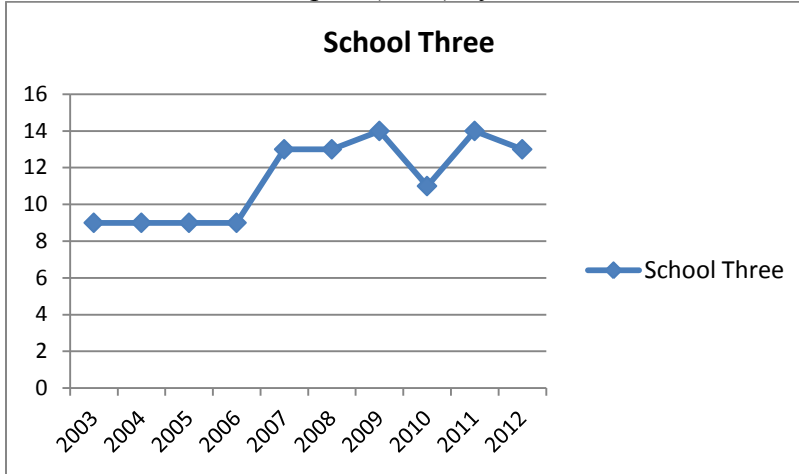**School Two**

ACT Average Composite Score for High School

School Two

Adequate Yearly Progress Overall Status for High School (AYP)

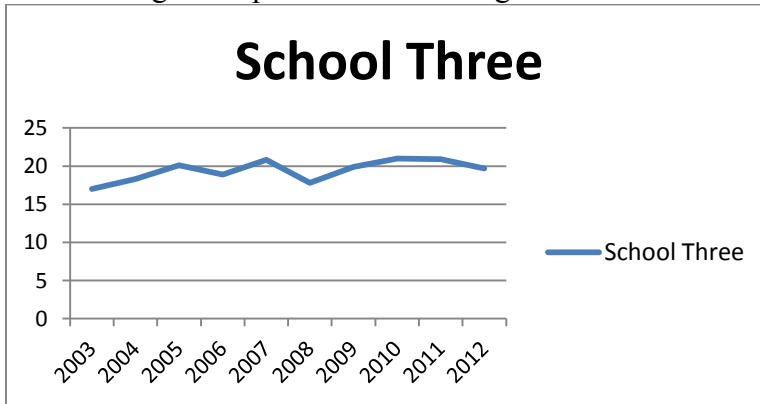| Overall Status	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Comm Arts	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Math	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met
Additional Indicator				Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met

Appendix I: School Three Academic Achievement Data

Principal Background: Mia is a white, female school leader who has been in education for eight years, all of which have been at the same school. After four years teaching, she spent two years as the school's assistant principal and then two years as the principal. She has been in the school since 2005.

Annual Performance Report (APR) by District Total

ACT Average Composite Score for High School

Adequate Yearly Progress Overall Status for High School (AYP)

Overall Status	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Comm Arts	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Met	Met	Met	Met
Math	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Not Met	Met	Not Met	Met
Additional Indicator				Met	Met	Met	Met	Met	Met

VITA

Steven J. Ritter was born on October 18, 1979 in St. Louis, Missouri. He is the son of Douglas and Harriet Ritter, and the brother of James and Lauren. He graduated from De Smet Jesuit High School in 1998 and moved to Warrensburg, Missouri to begin college. Steven attended Central Missouri State University (now the University of Central Missouri) and earned the Bachelor's of Science in Education degree in Secondary Education / Social Studies in 2002. He then earned a Master's of Science in Education from the University of Central Missouri in Curriculum & Instruction in 2007 and an Education Specialist degree in Secondary School Administration in 2009. Steven was part of Cohort 7 in the state-wide cooperative program through the University of Missouri-Columbia, and he completed his coursework in the spring of 2011. Steven has served the Johnson County R-VII School District and Clinton School District #124 as high school social studies teacher for a total of 6 years. He then served as the assistant principal of Clinton High School for two years, and he is in his second year as principal of the high school in the Lakeland R-III School District in Deepwater, Missouri. Steven, his wife Katie, and his children, Madelynn and Ethan, reside in Shawnee Mound, Missouri.