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The University of Oklahoma

Graduate College

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS IN SCHOOL-WIDE DECISION MAKING: REALITY OR RHETORIC

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

MARTHA CARROLL DAUWAY

Norman, Oklahoma

1999

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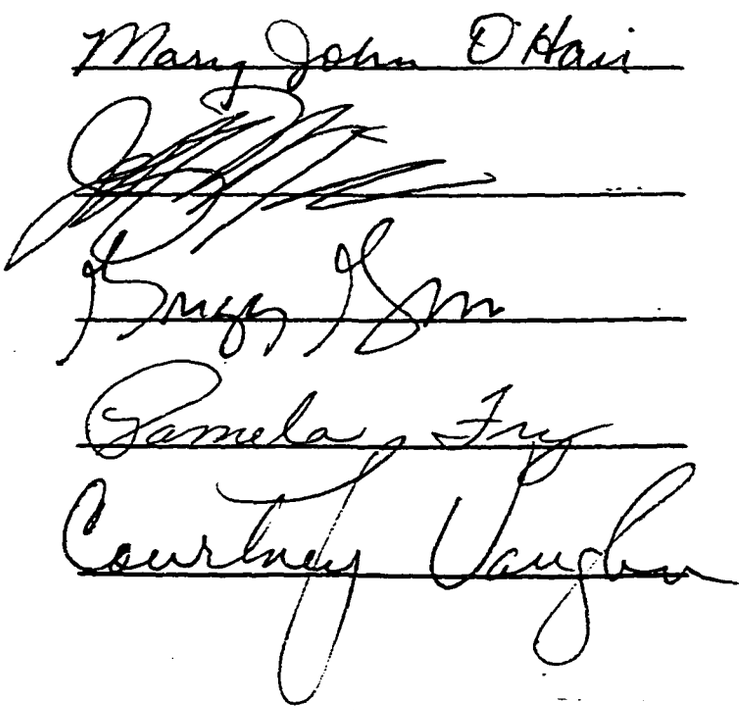
A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND POLICY STUDIES

BY



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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my three wonderful daughters: Terri, Toni and Emilia. You have been and continue to be an unending source of inspiration, knowledge and support. I proudly share the completion of this dream with each of you.

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Abstract

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS IN SCHOOL-WIDE DECISION MAKING: RHETORIC OR REALITY

This study examines one school culture in terms of information gathered from individual students and focus group interviews. The study attempts to answer a critical question: What is the scope of involvement for high school students in school-wide decision making?

It is indicated in the literature that high school students are excluded from decision making (Bullough 1988). Students appear to have been left out of discussions on strategies to solve problems in this school. A democratic change process with the major objective on school renewal was begun.

The research method which guided this case study was qualitative naturalistic. Data sources included individual and focus interviews, observations, and documents. The population consisted of 140 high school students (85 females and 55 males) in grades 9 through 12 from both advisory and leadership classes. Nine students were interviewed. Twenty-one students formed three focus groups and were interviewed. The remaining 110 students formed committees and were observed by the researcher.

Results indicated that students have definite ideas about their high school and the changes taking place. Students openly shared their concerns. Specific patterns included growing hostility, security fears, the need for strong discipline, the shortage of school supplies and books, and the need for more electives. The students indicated there was, in general, some effort to include them in decision making.

The baseline data may be used to inform school personnel of ways to employ democratic and inclusive practices involving students in school-wide decision making. Findings can add to the body of knowledge related to school reform efforts that prompt educators to reach out and expand school boundaries to include students in the decision making process.

CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

Student voices are the missing link... The most important reasons kids should have authority in the classroom is so they acquire the habit of reasoning out for themselves the intellectual problems we all face—Ted Sizer (cited in Cushman, 1994, p. 4)

There are a number of recurring challenges associated with serious renewal in education. One major challenge is how to meet the needs of a nation entering a new millennium. A major challenge in the field of education is to redefine the comprehensive high school. This conventional structure has been in place since 1918. Under the old definition, two elements were considered: (a) learning took place through the transmission of information from teacher to student, (b) teaching was a solitary activity conducted without interaction among adults. These are the central elements of the conventional high school in the United States, a set of structures based partly on nineteenth century categories of knowledge and models of learning, and partly on early twentieth century ideas of industrial efficiency. This model is the dominant feature of high school today (Marshak, 1997). Another challenge might be how students perceive and interpret the world of school in terms of their involvement in school renewal.

While the subject of much research and national debate, high school renewal has been, for the most part, fragmented and piecemeal. Advocates for school renewal have presented a variety of isolated, well-financed, and closely monitored programs as models for high school reform. The models, while helpful for comparison and developmental purposes, are difficult to replicate. We may be able to replicate the models but the context and results may be inconsistent and varied. However, changing the structure of schools is no simple task. "Social structures are embedded in systems of meaning, value, beliefs, and knowledge; such systems comprise the culture of an organization... too often those who would change the structure of schools fail to appreciate the link between structure and culture" (Schlechty, 1990, p. xvi).

School systems are facing a multitude of critical challenges, including increased rates of poverty, illiteracy, community and school violence, family instability, demoralized teachers and administrative staffs, distressed school facilities, ineffective instructional practices, massive and unresponsive central administrations, and cumbersome management systems. Other concerns include the shifting ethnic demographics, mainstreaming the physically challenged, a shrinking world and changing values. There are continuous efforts to develop more rigorous academic standards, higher expectations for teachers, increased requirements for

graduation from high school, improved offerings, especially in math and science, and suggestions for requirements for lengthening the school day.

Despite the large number of reform efforts over the last decade and century, schools seem to look and operate just like they always have. In order for school reform to make a difference in the everyday practices of the school, educators should make deeper changes in their attitudes, meanings, and beliefs of schooling (Cuban, 1988). Schools must stop to reassess the values and attitudes about what it is they do, because they continue to respond to parts rather than to the whole of problems faced by educators.

Since 1983 and the publication, A Nation at Risk (a product of the National Commission of Excellence in Education), the emphasis in education has centered on restructuring schools. Although restructuring has no precise definition, the term, when applied to education, suggests that schooling needs to be comprehensively redesigned. Improving parts of the system is no longer acceptable because of increased fragmentation (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Part of the failure of those who attempt to redesign schools is system specific. There are no comprehensive and progressive plans or patterns. The thought of developing progressive plans cannot be applied to high schools now or in the future. Schools are as much alike as they

are different, because each community has different needs. There would be as many plans as there are school communities. This is a rationale for shared leadership and community building. Community building is the tie that binds the leadership, teachers, students and families together (Sergiovanni, 1994).

The need for a connection is pointed out by Darling-Hammond (1997), that "schools need to build connections to families and communities as a means of deepening the relationships..." (p. 144). School is one of the few experiences the vast majority of Americans have in common. School is the place where we learn ways to preserve the culture (Wood, 1992). Every school is an extension of its community; therefore, everyone should contribute to its growth and development. Sergiovanni (1994) suggests the following regarding building community:

> Successful community building depends in a large measure on each individual school defining for itself its own life and creating for itself its own practice of schooling. This inside-out strategy requires a considerable amount of searching and reflection as teachers struggle with such issues as who they are, what they hope to become for the students they serve, and how they will decide, organize, teach, learn, and live together. (p. xv).

It appears that school is the common thread that molds the theoretical framework for parents, administrators, teachers, and students to build community.

The Research Problem

This study will recount the efforts of one high school community to become more democratic by endorsing students as major participants in school-wide decision making. The critical question is: Are students attending this school involved in democratic school renewal and school-wide decision making. This is an important questions considering Bullough (1988) indicated that about 80% of high school students are excluded from decision making. Students make few, if any, decisions about their learning even though sometimes they feel that they do. Glickman (1996) maintains that "democratic decision making is currently not prevalent in schools" (p. 46). The researcher seeks to discover how students in this high school are involved in school-wide decisions and in the struggle to create a democratic, inclusive school organization.

Students have traditionally had little or no input into the operation of the one institution that has the greatest effect on their lives—school. Most discussions about developing strategies to solve educational problems lack the perspectives of students. Yet, research conducted by Fullan and Miles (1992) suggests that a significant number of people and participants are

necessary to bring about serious change in education. Students are among such people and are a captive audience. Educators have easy access to include students and expose them to the principles of democratic, shared decision making.

Student involvement is consistent with Glickman's (1993) three basic goals for education; first, to prepare students to engage productively in a democratic society; second, to organize and operate school around the principles of a democracy; and third, to demonstrate the relationship between education and democracy.

Failure to bring about school reform has given rise to renewed interest in democratic schooling. This renewed interest creates an imperative to extend participation to all constituents in the total school community, including students. Critics of our educational system support the idea that schools should exist to ensure the preservation of our democratic values, beliefs, and practices. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) state that the effectiveness of each education restructuring tool, either independently or in combination with others, depends on how well it organizes or develops the values, beliefs, and technical skills of educators to improve student learning. They also agree that the base of support for school change requires expanding the base of participation for renewal success. If students are to be meaningfully involved in reinventing high

school, a plan and process must be in place or developed to involve them in the process of decision making (Apple & Beane, 1995; Glickman, 1993, 1997).

High school must change to champion causes of and for students as members of the schools' decision making body. Any initiative essential to improving the quality of high school must recognize the need to invest in, support, and develop people (DuFour & Eaker, 1992; Schlechty, 1997). Participation, if meaningful, requires training and practice in developing decision making skills.

Students who participate in school decision making and activities develop leadership skills. In addition to skill development in high school, students should be included in educational decision making affecting their lives in school. They should have the opportunity for peer representation on advisory councils, school committees, Boards of Education, and be involved in work related to curriculum planning and instructional methods (Glickman, 1993).

A major goal of secondary education is to help students attain the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to participate in a democratic pluralistic society. Most educators agree that citizenship or the development of effective citizens should be a major goal of teaching (Goodlad, 1984). Yet, there are conflicting conceptions, paradigms, and

ideologies about what constitutes an effective citizen and what kind of curriculum can best develop citizens for a democratic society. This is an important problem to study because young people are the conveyers of our cultural mores and folkways, and the lifeline to building, maintaining, and nurturing past, present, and future traditions for the nation. It is imperative to study and learn about democracy through education if traditions are to be strengthened and preserved. Democracy in education should focus on decision making and solving problems that people face in a democratic society (Glickman, 1993).

Marshak (1997) indicates that students in most schools are uninvolved and underutilized in contributing to decision making that affects their lives at school and beyond. Two reasons for involving students in school-wide decision making include: (a) The improvement of teaching and learning, and (b) Schools would be more successful if students are involved in a providing real input and have substantial influence on actions taken to solve problems. Schools should be models of democratic decision making by encouraging student participation. No group has a monopoly on "good" ideas. People ought to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives. All people, including students, are likely to be more loyal to policies and processes in which they have had a vital part in determining standards related to their well being. However, people are

resistant to conditions that change their environment or behavior. They do not realize that everyone is involved in subtle conditions of change daily.

Conditions in the world change and bring about new issues and problems. New problems require increased knowledge and a vision that leads to solutions. Solutions require change, in the way things are done, in behavior, and in the way we affect each other and the environment as we continue to adapt and grow (Fried, 1998). Change conditions must maintain a flow that will eventually redefine the look and feel of the entire structure of high school. In order to increase performance, organizations must have a vision that provides a sense of purpose, direction, and ideal future. Boyer (1983) concluded: "High schools lack a clear and vital mission. They are unable to find common purposes or establish educational priorities that are widely shared. They seem unable to put it all together. The institution is adrift." (p. 7).

A new construct must be created to address fragmentation and overload which clouds the path to successful change. The process selected must be one that provides meaningful change as educators move away from programmatic efforts to change its delivery system. School change requires a great deal of preparation, planning, and study – a systemic process that over time leads to alterations in rules, roles,

responsibilities, and relationships. Researchers (Fullan, 1996; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Gibboney, 1994; and Schlecty, 1990) suggest that past efforts to reform public education or restructure schools are insufficient to meet the needs of a nation entering a new information age and increased global competition. Proponents of school reform agree that the future of the nation hinges on the strengths of its public education system. The same proponents agree that educators have lost their way and the original purpose for schools has been distorted (Apple & Beane, 1995; Glickman, 1993; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Need for the Study

The current leadership of the high school under study was involved in the struggle to identify needs and employ a democratic process to bring about change. Faced with poor attendance, gang violence, limited staffing and supplies, the staff began to construct a path leading towards democratic school renewal (Glickman, 1993) and authentic teaching, learning and assessment (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Student achievement is greater in collaboratively organized schools (Lee & Smith, 1995).. The way teachers and students interact in the process of collaboration may enhance student learning by changing the instructional process and the way teachers work (Pounder, 1998).

The leadership and staff in the urban high school examined in this study have initiated a change process designed to foster democratic decision making to improve teaching and learning. A review of data provided by the state office of accountability documented improvement in test scores. This indicated that the staff had met with some degree of success in raising student achievement, teacher esteem, and school pride. There was agreement that more could be done to maintain the momentum and raise achievement levels even higher. The school staff identified needs, problems, strengths, and weaknesses. One concern of significance indicated that students did not play a significant role in evaluating school programs and staff. A second area of concern indicated that students did not actively participate in school improvement planning. The final weakness of significance showed that students had no formal role in setting school priorities. The school leadership was beginning a new democratic process through shared decision making. It appeared appropriate to discover ways to include students in the new process. Thus, through student interviews, the researcher sought to discover an answer to the main research question: What is the scope of involvement for high school students in making school-wide decisions?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine student participation in school-wide decisions. The research question focuses on the extent, type, and quality of involvement for high school students in school-wide decision making. Scholars have studied the phenomena of school change, restructuring or school renewal for decades. They suggest that systems failure results from not enough involvement of people to achieve goals required to initiate school change (Fullan & Miles, 1992). However, there is no place better suited to test the ideals of democracy, include increased participation, and employ shared decision making techniques than high schools. There is a captive audience in high school whose talent and leadership skills are underutilized (Bullough, 1988; Goodlad, 1984).

Students who participate in school decision making and activities develop leadership skills. In addition to skill development in high school, students should be included in educational decision making for discussions affecting their lives in school. The researcher is interested in observing and recording interactions between students and teachers during advisory and leadership classes. These classes were selected because they provided access to a diverse student population. Additionally, there is interest in the perceptions of school administrators, teachers and parents as the question under investigation relates to student involvement.

Assumptions

This study was conducted within the boundaries of the following assumptions:

1. Students should take responsibility for more than peripheral matters in high school (Glickman, 1993).
2. Students should influence core education decisions related to curriculum and instruction (Fretman & van Linden, 1998; Glickman, 1993).
3. Students will attend and perform better at school through greater participation in decision making (Apple & Beane, 1995; Lee & Smith, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).
4. Students can reflect on reasons for major social problems among and between youth, and work earnestly toward sustained solutions (Apple & Beane, 1995).

Implications for Practice

The findings in this study will be used to inform the staff at this urban high school of ways to include students in decision making. Also, national and regional scholars and practitioners may read and conduct further research or implement suggestions. Practice will center on the democratic ideas that students should have a voice in transforming the policies and practices that affect their education. Strategies used in

addressing educational decisions usually involve school administrators, teachers, and parents, and sometimes community agencies and representatives to differing degrees. Students are generally left out of the decision making equation. Students should be able to influence core education issues such as student learning, curriculum development, social problems, and bring to the table different information to help better inform the decision making body (Fretman & van Linden, 1998). This idea does not assume or propose that students and school staff share equal power. However, students need to know that their ideas and suggestions have merit and that they can share their thoughts without fear of reprisal and undue pressures for voicing their ideas.

Inclusion is one way to practice the democratic principles. Dewey (1916) points out the impact of association with others. He indicates that human beings... "depend upon the expectations, demands, approvals, and condemnations of others" (p. 87). Further, Dewey states, "All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members" (p. 7). The core of democracy and democratic schooling is linked to equity and equal opportunity for all citizens. Giroux (1996) concurs that democracy encourages all citizens to actively construct and share power over those institutions that govern their lives. The challenge of democracy resides in the necessary recognition

that educators, parents and others will have to work hard to insure that future generations will view the ideas and practices of democracy as a goal worth believing and struggling to attain. Glickman (1996) summarizes the thought by concluding that democracy involves the active participation of the people.

Decision making is an important facet of leadership. It is making choices that influence others in an ethical and socially responsibly way. Fretman and van Linden (1998) suggest that as students becomes more autonomous, they make many decisions related to their personal needs. It is during adolescent years that students learn to cope with conflicting demands of peers, parents, school, and work. Shore (1995) describes high school years as encompassing some of the most difficult, and potentially rewarding, developmental challenges of human experience. These are years of dramatic physical, cognitive, and social growth because young people are beginning to embark upon a more complex and demanding world. High school is the final arena completing the foundation for making informed decisions. Likewise, it is in high school that students become eligible for employment, many young men become eligible for the military draft, young people begin to make choices concerning extracurricular opportunities, and they become responsible for their own learning. These are the years that young people begin to think

about the next stage of life, orienting themselves to the challenges of the workplace or post-secondary education. There is a need to support and guide students as they cope with the demands that occur during the high school years.

The high school examined in this study has a history of gang violence, poor attendance and low academic performance. Perhaps more than in most schools, the staff must discover answers to help students become better citizens. The school leadership has joined a cluster of high schools that are members of the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education (ONE) to share concerns and best practices. ONE is a partnership between schools, the community, and the University of Oklahoma dedicated to building democratic schools. According to O'Hair (1995, 1998), the networks are committed to working collaboratively to enhance the intellectual quality of student learning. The membership assists schools in moving from conventional schools to democratic, community-oriented schools. Such schools are characterized by a respect for teacher and student knowledge and a collective sense of responsibility for student and teacher learning. ONE promotes a set of ideals which include inquiry, discourse, equity, achievement, shared leadership, and service.

In addition to the work of ONE, the school staff has adopted as appropriate school-based action plans based on the works of Glickman (1993, 1997) related to democratic schools, the Coalition of Essential Schools' (1994) nine principles, and the framework of the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education (O'Hair, 1996). It is most important that an action plan be inclusive of all representatives of the total school community. A specific plan should be developed that reflects the needs of this school. A "cookie cutter" approach will not work because there is no single "one size fits all" standard to reform a school or a standard that supports the use of students in school-wide decision making.

Definition of Terms

ONE - ONE is an acronym for Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education. The Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education (ONE) was established in 1996 as a partnership among schools, community members, and the University of Oklahoma - a kind of think tank designed to enhance the quality of student learning. ONE brings teachers, administrators, students, parents, community members, business leaders, and university faculty together to share ideas, observe best practices, discuss concerns, and develop strategies to improve teaching and learning. The major objective of ONE is to help schools move from conventional schools to democratic, community-oriented schools. Such schools are

characterized by a respect for teacher and student knowledge and a collective sense of responsibility for student and teacher learning.

School Renewal - School renewal is a uniform process to redesign bureaucratic procedures and policies that have traditionally charted the course of public schools. Currently, there is a major focus on student achievement and long term commitment to fundamental systemic change and networking among schools (Lieberman, 1996).

Critical Study - A process whereby teachers study and constructively critique their schools as well as each other. The nature of critical study can range from formal to informal. Critical study informs current and future practice. The process provides a systematic way of collecting and analyzing student data in order to set learning priorities (Glickman, 1993; O'Hair & Reitzug, 1996). The primary purpose of critical study is the improvement of teaching, learning and school practice in classrooms and the school.

Conventional Schooling - This term refers to confronting or adhering to traditional educational standards in which the power of control and routine rest with administration or the administrative staff. A form of schooling marred by fragmentation, overload and excessive red tape. According to Darling-Hammond (1997), conventional schooling is a school deeply rooted in tradition, largely fact-based, rote-oriented curriculum through structures

that do not allow long term teacher-student relationships. Schools that are best described as administered by hierarchical decision making. The focus of schools is frequently more on the control of students and teachers as opposed to the development of intellectual growth and achievement. More often than not the focus of instruction is standardized test and textbook assignments.

Democratic Schooling - Schooling that is characterized by a belief in equal opportunity for participation by all people. Power, authority and decision making are shared by all (Glickman, 1993). Spring (1997) suggests the democratic role of education is to aid citizen debate and decision making by fostering ideological diversity. According to Apple and Beane (1995), democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making. It includes committees, councils, and other school-wide decision making groups, such as students, their parents, and other members of the school community along with professional educators. Giroux (1996) contends that "democracy is both discourse and a practice that produces particular narratives and identities in-the-linking informed by the principles of freedom, equality, and social justice." Darling-Hammond (1997) concedes that public education's mission is the development of an intelligent populace which has access to education that

prepares individuals to engage in debates and discourse which sustains democratic institutions and ideals.

Shared Decision Making - The process of shared decision making may be described as learning to work together with a common purpose, while at the same time increasing levels of trust across key stakeholder groups.

Shared Leadership - Shared leadership is a joint effort of a group to act in unison to achieve certain goals that represent their values and motives - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations (Phillips, 1992). Shared leadership is a developmental process comprised of four stages according to Sergiovanni (1992). He describes the developmental stages as (a) Bartering: trading wants for needs; (b) Building: providing conditions which enables one to shift from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards; (c) Bonding: developing a set of shared values; and (d) Binding: committing to a set of shared values.

Stakeholder - a person who has a vested interest in an activity in which he/she stands to gain knowledge or prestige from some social action.

Limitations of the Study

The focus of this study was to gather data from high school students related to their participation in school-wide decision making. It was understood that generalizations of the findings could only be used with the population under study. The data were descriptive of the participant's

perceptions of their involvement in the development of an environment that valued their opinions and input in the creation of a democratic school renewal system (Glickman, 1996). Such considerations are important in a total study of decision making in high school and must be addressed in other studies. Before change occurs, it is prudent to develop a broad body of knowledge concerning the present system of student participation in school decisions.

Summary

Chapter I provided an introduction and description of the need for the study, the purpose of the study, and the question to be answered. Also included were definitions of terms, the limitations of the study, and the implication for future practice.

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter Two will present a review of the literature pertinent to the study. Chapter Three will present the research procedures used to conduct the study. Chapter Four will present the profiles of participants in the study, including the data collection technique and analysis of the data. Chapter Five presents emerging themes and patterns, and Chapter Six presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The literature search was completed by using computer search of related terms and by consulting the Comprehensive Dissertation Indexes, the Education Index, and the Current Index to Journals in Education. The literature covered some historical factors leading to a new emphasis for democratic school communities.

The review provided a theoretical and conceptual grounding for this study. Six areas of emphasis served as the foundation for the literature review. In the first area, historical factors driving school renewal in America and the impact of the publication of A Nation at Risk are addressed. The second area focuses on legal influences from the courts and how they examine complex social issues embroiled in subjects related to school change. School reform efforts are highlighted in the third area. The fourth area place emphasis on the need for democratic community. Democratic school renewal theories are the focus of the fifth area, particularly student involvement in decision making and the changing role of students in high school. The sixth and final area of emphasis is the implication for high schools.

Historical Factors Driving School Renewal

The efforts to bring about educational reforms are not always understood by the public because the varying views of complexities involved cloud the path to change. When one thinks of the size of the nation, its diverse population, and the perceived needs, the task takes on awesome proportions. Various commissions at the state and federal level have analyzed the status of public education and they continue to find public systems lacking. The critical focus has been on the kindergarten through twelfth grade system for its apparent inability to prepare students to function as competent workers who think critically, or who readily grasp basic skills. The most resistant and difficult school community to change is high school.

Shore (1995) points out that high school remains one of the nation's most important institutions. It is during the high school years that students form habits of thought and behavior that have a lasting impact on their lives. It is in high school that young people identify and solve challenging problems, refine, develop and learn skills they will need to become productive adults. "High school lays the foundation for what Americans become, and what Americans become shapes the high school" (p. 1).

The history of American education is an ongoing effort to honor the past, yet break with tradition. According to Best (1968), when educational institutes were first established in America they were greatly influenced by European culture. European schools differed in the purpose for which they were established. Early education efforts were closely linked to religion and primarily served the children of the gentry and aristocracy. American schools were established to maintain the ideals for the existence of a new nation - democracy, freedom, and liberty.

In the nations' infancy, some elder statesmen espoused the importance of federal support for education as necessary to maintain a sense of nationalism. Washington's 1796 Farewell Address promoted the idea of education for the national welfare. Washington's idea continues to be one of the aims of education today.

Benjamin Franklin began a crusade in 1749 to establish education in his community as opposed to sending students abroad. He championed the cause of establishing schools by writing letters to influential people and by publishing proposals in the Pennsylvania Gazette with ideas for establishing learning institutions. Franklin thought that an education was the foundation to supply men with the necessary qualities to "serve the public with honor to themselves and to their country" (Best, 1968, p.129).

Thomas Jefferson as president submitted three proposals to provide for tax supported schools to educate students free of charge to gifted poor children. While these proposals were turned down, Jefferson continued to support the idea of free education being underwritten by the new republic after his service as president ended. He believed that in a free society "it is better that a person be sought for and educated at the common expense of all, than that the happiness of all should be confided to the weak and wicked" (Lee, 1961, p. 84). In a August 13, 1786 letter to George Wythe, he wrote the following statement: "I think by far the most important bill in our whole code (laws) is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness" (in Mosher & Wagoner, 1978, p. 99). The idea of tax supported education was not accepted until the early 1800s. Before that time, American secondary education was provided in private schools and academies designed for the rich.

America became a Mecca for immigrants in the mid-1800s because of the general decline of economic and health conditions throughout Europe. People came and settled in cities that later became slums. Labor laws regarding hours for working children were non-existent; however, labor leaders began to agitate for educational equality. About this same time, the idea of common schools was taking shape. Horace Mann

originated the idea and used his biweekly publication Common School Journal to influence public opinion to favor free public schools. Downs (1903) pointed out that Horace Mann initiated American reforms to professionalize teaching in 1839 by establishing the first publicly supported "normal" school for preparing teachers. Most teachers working in urban settings during the 1900s had attended normal schools.

The common school movement was not without its critics. Many thought the movement was prompted only to train workers for the emerging industrial society. The idea of common schools gave rise to other issues such as the wealthy underwriting the cost of their employees' children's education by paying property tax to support schools; the problem of public schools competing with parochial schools; and the question of whether workers needed a formal education (Carlson, 1996; Goodlad, 1990). Rappa (1986) states that the movement for public schools faced two major problems: (a) the general belief that a free education was only important to children of poor families, and (b) the use of the rate bills that permitted the public schools to levy a special tax on a per diem basis on those parents with children enrolled in schools.

It was not until the end of the Civil War that support for public education gained legislative action to end the rate bill. At that time, many states agreed to three principles related to public education. The states

became committed to the idea that: (a) the cost of education should be the responsibility of the state, not the family; (b) the state could levy taxes to underwrite the cost of education; and (c) the school should be nonsectarian, public and free regardless of financial status. The most distinctive feature of American education is the consistent push to have open public education. This ideal has stood the test of time past and present (Rappa, 1986). Early educators did not concern themselves with the education of African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, women, the handicapped or other groups. It was not until the civil rights movement that massive change began to find its way into education policy.

Policy issues were not the only concern in early American education. Attention was also given to instructional and curriculum practices. According to Cuban (1990), in America over a century and a half ago, pedagogical reformers condemned teacher-centered instruction with its emphasis on the textbook from which students recited already memorized information, with teachers doing most of the talking to the entire group and asking rapid-fire questions (p. 4). The pedagogical reformers criticism helped to create new theories about student learning.

During the late 1880s and early 1900s emphasis was placed on suggestions that schooling be connected to the child's real world.

Advocates of the child-centered theories became known as progressives. The progressives argued for such innovations as more active involvement of the learner, small group instruction, joint planning between student and teacher, and the use of the new technology.

Harvard University President Charles Eliot chaired a group of educators called the Committee of Ten in the late 1800s. The recommendations from this committee sought to develop a common curriculum for secondary education. The committee argued all high schools should teach four years of English, three years of history, science, and mathematics, and foreign language. Passow (1986) points out that this was the turning point for reform in secondary education. Some of the early recommendations stemming from the work of the Committee of Ten are under attack even today. The idea of "one best system" does not exist for most educators, although many push for reform. These innovations led to additional criticism and brought about another set of reform efforts after the second World War.

Harvard University President James Conant during the 1950s answered public criticism of highs schools' so called "soft" curriculum. He conducted a study of secondary schools and concluded that the academic content was rigorous enough for college bound students. Based on his recommendations, small schools were closed and extensive school busing

began transporting students to centralized comprehensive junior or senior high schools. School consolidation led to school closings, loss of personnel and school boards deferring their authority to outside professionals.

Politics appears to have played a very important role in the growth and development of public schools and continues to do so today. There are two political events that had a profound influence on American education. The 1957 launching of the Russian satellite "Sputnik" and the 1983 publication A Nation at Risk both created cause for public alarm concerning the state of education throughout the nation. These events had great impact on public opinion and created a climate of mistrust leading to the government establishing the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Following the initiation of the NDEA, the federal government expended massive funds to improve education nationwide. Teachers applied for stipends to upgrade their skills for teaching science, mathematics, and foreign language. Counseling and guidance became popular and each grade level was concerned with employing early intervention techniques to ensure student success at school. National foundations began to offer financial support for enhancement programs to improve student achievement.

The launching of Russia's Sputnik I in 1957 opened the floodgates for criticism. Criticisms of high schools were especially difficult to face.

The critics questioned the ability of the comprehensive high schools to provide an appropriate education for its clientele. James B. Conant had begun an educational study a year before the launch of the space craft. His committee concluded that "no radical alteration in the basic pattern of American education is necessary in order to improve public high schools. However, Conant proposed twenty-one recommendations that became a directory for school reform across the nation.

The At Risk report sent shock waves throughout America. The active support for the report by government officials including the President gave recognition and credibility to the educational issues addressed. A simple emphatic sentence "Our nation is at risk" (p. 5) became the adhesive that encouraged one to read on. The report implied that American schools were in dire need of reform. It suggested that the security of the nation was at serious risk or in grave danger because the quality of education was declining. America was losing its preeminence in world leadership. The ability to compete with other countries was deteriorating.

Urban school systems, in particular, were facing a multitude of critical challenges, including increased rates of poverty, illiteracy, community and school violence, family instability, demoralized teaching and administrative staffs, distressed school facilities, ineffective

instructional practices, massive and unresponsive central administrations, and cumbersome management systems. Other concerns included the shifting ethnicity, mainstreaming the physically challenged, a shrinking world and changing values. There were suggestions for more rigorous academic standards, higher standards for teachers, increased requirements for graduation from high school, increased math and science, and requirements for lengthening the school day. These overarching problems require a paradigm shift in order to meet the demands necessary to survive such enormous conditions for change. Cuban (1990) pointed out the emphasis on reform is mostly top-down problem solving. He indicated that little attention is paid to the fact that schools are unique organizations supported by taxes. This makes schools dependent on any number of constituent groups for survival. School leaders are influenced by the perceptions of those they represent because of this dependence.

Legal Influences

Many social and legal interventions dictated the pace of education change. Over the years courts have played a crucial role in the development of fundamental policy shifts. The shifts in policy not only influenced educational policy, in some instances the policy shifts defined the schools' and communities' obligations in educating their children as well as the rights of students and teachers in school (i.e. Free speech, due

process, religious right, etc.). When so many social issues are foisted upon a system for change, efforts to reform are divided, uneven, and fragmented. Disputes are eminent in most cases. Wirt and Kirst (1997) compare the role of the courts to that of an umpire or referee for a baseball game. There is a need during conflict to have a third party to label the action of the runner. Upon reaching the base, the runner is either safe or out. So it is with the court system: they manage disputes between people and the government. The history of education has been shaped by important court decisions on the duties and responsibilities of school officials and of students. Court decisions have promoted educational programs such as desegregation and compensatory, special, and bilingual education. All of these decisions have led to some reform action in schools. Reform efforts caused by court interventions are more uniform today in their focus on professional arenas such as governance, structure, learning, delivery, and assessment. Implementation of reform, on the other hand, is difficult, complex and often contradictory (Fullan, 1996; Schlechty, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1990; Smith & Smith, 1994).

There were legal actions that caused educators to focus upon the multiethnic nature of the national population (Bennett, 1995; Debo, 1991; Grant, 1996; Neito, 1996; Peshkin, 1993; Smith & Smith, 1993). Educators were forced to take new directions that were more inclusive and

addressed the needs of all children. The change began with Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education. A 1954 Supreme Court decision stated that segregated schools are unequal. State laws providing separate schools for black and white students were declared unconstitutional. Following this legal ruling came legislation establishing the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1957. The purpose of this commission was to investigate complaints alleging denial of the right to vote by reason of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices. In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was passed. The intent of this law was to help students in school who spoke language other than English. Issues related to the treatment of women came next with the passage of Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. This act stated, "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in , be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Lau vs. Nichols was one of the most significant cases related to bilingual education. This Supreme Court case was a class action suit against the San Francisco Unified School District that led to a decision that school districts must provide education in languages that met the needs of students who attend school. This battle is still being fought in a recent election in California under

Proposition 210. The citizens reversed the decision of the Lau case and will allow school districts to ignore language education other than English.

These laws stressed human rights and the need for bilingual education. Out of this thrust came multicultural approaches to teaching that recognized the need for awareness of a culturally diverse society. Legislation and court decisions reflect the thinking of the times. However, it is important to realize that laws cannot affect change alone. The task as a democratic nation is to find ways to provide true equality of educational opportunity for all historically underserved students.

Past Reform Efforts

Reform efforts have been a prevailing feature of twentieth century education (Evans, 1996; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Short & Greer, 1992). O'Hair and Odell (1995) observed in their research that most reforms enjoy brief moments of glory before being labeled trendy and becoming outdated. Past efforts to reform education have rarely been successful (Sarason, 1996). Failures are contributed to system overload and fragmentation (Fullan, 1996; Fullan & Miles, 1992), the inability of reformers to confront the deterioration of school accomplishments, the intractability of early reform efforts (Sarason, 1996), the personal and political changes in power relations (Bredeson, 1995; Goodlad, 1984; Sarason, 1996), the need for change coexisting with the need to keep

schools functioning (Purnell & Hill, 1992), the isolation of teachers (Fullan, 1995), lack of time for planning (Darling-Hammond, 1997), and ongoing professional development (Wood, 1991). These records of failures give powerful reasons to revisit the mechanisms of school reform.

There is an abundance of educational research to guide making schools more effective (Apple & Beane, 1995; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Gibboney, 1994; Glickman, 1993, 1997; Goodlad, 1984; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Millions of public and private dollars have been invested to design, redesign, implement and evaluate pilot projects. A few pilot initiatives have been successful and significant changes have occurred in some classrooms and schools. According to Cawelti (1994), changes appeared here and there, but for the most part the more traditional ways of doing things still dominate the present scene. What has not happened, however, is that few systems have been able to implement or duplicate many workable and innovative practices on a system-wide basis, especially in large urban districts where reform efforts have mostly failed. The challenge for educators is to create a new paradigm that will raise the level of learning and quality education for all students by redesigning school to assist students in preparing to engage productively in a democracy.

Democratic School Community

The central mission of public education is to prepare students for productive participation in a democracy (Apple & Beane, 1995; Glickman, 1993 & 1997; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Many reformers suggest that our schools have not met the mission and schools must restructure to do so. If current educational institutions are to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, consideration for new policies and practices must be collaboratively designed by schools and their communities. For public schools to survive the current crisis involving alternatives to public schools systems, practitioners and theorists alike indicate that schools must become more inclusive and collaborative - including expanding the scope of decision making to include students (Apple & Beane, 1995; Glickman, 1993 & 1997; Meier, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Research indicates that past public education efforts to reform schools are insufficient to meet the needs of a nation entering a new information age and increased global competition. Proponents of school restructuring agree that in the future practical steps must be taken to redesign, reengineer or reinvent public education. Advocates for school restructuring specify the need for greater participation. One way to increase participation is to listen to students. Research that focuses on

student input is relatively recent and scarce (Bullough, 1989; Glickman, 1997).

Given that schools are faced with a myriad of social problems involving students and families, the new paradigm change must involve students in the solution to such problems as teen pregnancy, gang warfare, and drug abuse. It is therefore imperative that American schools are redesigned to prepare students to engage productively in a democracy. Schools must provide access to ideas and the inclusion of students in the decision making process may be an idea whose time has come. Inclusion of their ideas may lead to solutions for some of the current social problems that plague schools today.

High school is essentially the same as it was at the turn of the century (Bullough, 1989). Every aspect of student life is dictated in school, while larger society requires students to be self-determined and make complex decisions. Democratic schools cannot exist without educators who provide students with learning and understanding the principles of democracy (Glickman, 1997).

Glickman (1993) might suggest rather than a new paradigm, that there is a need to capitalize on redesigning American schools so as to live up to their true purpose - to fulfill the promise of preparing students to engage productively in a democracy. Apple and Beane (1995) emphasized

that democratic schools cannot exist without the leadership of educators who provide students with learning experiences that promote the democratic way of life. This idea was noted earlier by Glickman (1993) who said "Educators cannot teach students how to gain entry into the knowledge and power of the profound discussions of a democracy unless they themselves have gained entry into the knowledge and power of the profound discussion of their schools" (p. 28). This statement is a direct challenge to teachers and principals. It becomes imperative that they understand and examine the implications and preparation required to commit to systemic reform efforts. This is especially true given the range of democratic models for inclusion—all of which might be appropriate in a given time and place. Since there is not one consistent definition used to determine what systemic reform should look like or how it should operate, there is no correct model.

According to Greenfield (1982) and Sergiovanni (1992), models cannot be imported or duplicated in other settings but instead must emerge to fit the uniqueness of school community. This gives the school and the local community tremendous power and freedom to respond to the needs of students, etc. How the power is distributed is of concern to all stakeholders - parents, student, teachers, community agencies and school leaders. Thus, all stakeholders take part in defining and shaping

the way change will occur for the school in their community because wide participation provides opportunities for access.

Apple and Beane (1995) state that public schools in a democratic society are meant to offer access and critical examination of a wide range of ideas. This inclusiveness is referred to by Sarason (1990) as altering power relationships and thereby causing the decision making process to change. Therefore, systemic reform takes bold but practical steps to redesign, reengineer or reinvent public education. While the public has always had the opportunity to lend their voices in creating the content of education; the idea of sharing equally in the decision making process is a new source of power. It is also an opportunity to leverage learning by creating strategies and soliciting feedback from a broader knowledge base. Those who traditionally had ownership of power must now share it because the process of systemic reform provides for involvement at the base of change. In other words, those who were not previously involved are now considered key players in shared decision making.

Shared decision making and systemic change are essential to each other for success in the process of rehabilitating or creating a new paradigm for public education. Traditionally, the central office administrators and consultants have had formal responsibility and authority for making decisions regarding who, what, why and how that

events, practices and problems were carried out at a school site. Site personnel did not participate in the decision making process; they mainly follow directions. The process of shared decision making may be described as learning to work together with a common purpose, while at the same time increasing levels of trust across key stakeholder groups. It requires teachers and administrators to reexamine their bureaucratic rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities and develop consensus and approval of commitment to act in a way that supports desired results. Shared decision making provides opportunity for ownership and commitment to agreed upon ideas and strategies that are fundamental to creating a high achieving school – a school in which students participate and share in decision making that helps to shape their future.

Democratic School Renewal Theories

This study is grounded in recent work on democratic school renewal (Glickman, 1993 & 1997), successful school restructuring (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Newmann and Associates, 1996) and Democratic IDEALS Framework (O'Hair, McLaughlin, & Reitzug (in press).

Glickman (1997) maintains that educators must understand that democracy is the best way to learn to make individual and collective choices – and until that understanding is put into practice in classrooms, schools, and communities, democracy will continue to be merely a

rhetorical device obscured by the lack of belief and commitment. In addition, he states that educators cannot teach students how to gain entry into the knowledge and power of discussions relative to democracy until they themselves have gained entry into the knowledge and power of discussions of their schools.

Glickman (1993) presents a three-dimensional framework for supporting school renewal. First, he suggests a covenant - principles of learning that give the school a consistency of educational purpose. The second dimension is a charter that provides a vehicle for democratic governance and school-wide decision making. A process for critical study provides a systematic way for analyzing and collecting data in order to set priorities. These are tasks for beginning the renewal process. When completed, these tasks bring the people needed into the renewal arena through ownership in creating a plan.

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) synthesized five years of research conducted by the University of Wisconsin's Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. The researchers found that improving part of a school was not a good measure of success. The reforms under study included: decentralization, shared decision making, school within a school, flexible scheduling, team teaching, ability grouping and tracking, different forms of accountability, and portfolio assessment to name a few. They

agreed that all the reforms in their study had merit and advanced student learning to some degree. However, none of them - single or in combination - offered lasting remedies. The authors point out that the quality of education depends not so much on specific techniques and practices, but rather the focus is on the human and social resources in a school. Teacher commitment and competence are important along with student effort and willingness to learn (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) indicated that recent reform movements have placed too great an emphasis on organizational change as opposed to a focus on the quality of student learning. They point out that improved learning will occur in a framework of high intellectual quality. Such frameworks will engage students in the construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, production of products and performance at valued levels beyond school. The researchers suggest that students can meet these high standards with public support in three ways: (a) teachers who practice authentic pedagogy; (b) building organizational capacity by strengthening professional community, and (c) involve external agencies and parents that support school. The studies indicate that schools need to have a clear, shared purpose for student learning collaborative activity to achieve the purpose, and collective responsibility among teachers and students for student learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

The authors acknowledge that there is value in structural changes when joined with human and social resources. They indicate that this combination strengthens professional community. The examples of strong organizational capacity aimed toward high standards were found in schools that had well defined missions, had authority to hire staff consistent with the mission, and had effective leadership, freed from conventional constraints (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

The framework developed by O'Hair, McLaughlin, and Reitzug (in press) supports a set of core democratic ideals. They maintain that democratic education and democracy are conditions which involve educators in an ongoing struggle to practice democratic IDEALS. Democratic education has as its core ideals of inquiry, discourse, equity, authenticity, leadership (shared) and service. This framework is not intended to include everything involving democracy and education. It is used to assist in the development of one's educational foundation as an educator.

The authors define educators in democratic schools as acting on ideals through commitment. Democratic schools are goal-oriented and guided by a shared and collaboratively developed vision of education. Such schools encourage all students, teachers, administrators, and parents to participate in developing principles and beliefs that guide curriculum,

instruction, and daily practices in schools. Educators in democratic schools develop effective practices through a critical study process that is ongoing and decisions are made with respect to what is best for students (O'Hair, McLaughlin & Reitzug (in press).

Implications for High School

Conditions necessary for shared decision making to succeed will not occur in a vacuum. It must be recognized for high school students to be included in shared decision making that a process evolves very slowly. The school district and school site leadership must provide support, training, and modeling for the process to become institutionalized. School Board members, administrators, teachers, and staff need to understand there are no predetermined results. A measure of success can be determined by the goals over time.

High schools have proven to be relatively resistant to change (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). However, research conducted over the past decade has increased knowledge regarding the kinds of change efforts that can improve the quality of student work, enrich their lives, and improve their prospects for adult living. High school students have always faced social, emotional, and intellectual tasks as they begin the process of separating from their parents, from childhood friends, from close personal relationships with peers, and assume greater autonomy for decision

making. Graham (1992) points out that the growth of high school as an institution bring about dramatic changes in the lives of adolescents. Early in the century, few were privileged to complete high school. Today, a basic premise of our educational system is that all students are entitled to, and are expected to complete, thirteen years of schooling. Education plays a larger and longer role in the lives of young people than ever before. Therefore, the challenge for educators who serve high school students was to expand the mission by addressing the need for students to learn to make sound decisions. High expectations can structure and guide behavior, can also challenge students beyond what they believe they can do (Delpit, 1996). If given the opportunity for active involvement in decision making in high school, can students rise to the occasion and make effective decisions?

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter focused on historical factors driving school renewal or reform, legal influences from the courts, past reform efforts, the need for democratic community, democratic school renewal theories, and implications for high schools. These highlight student involvement in decision making and the changing role of students in high school. The following chapter describes the design of the study and methods used to collect and interpret data.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Design of the Study

As described in Chapter I, the purpose of this study was to examine student participation in school-wide decisions. The focus of the research questioned the extent of high school student involvement in school decision making. Chapter II presented a review of the literature concentrated on the historical growth and development of education, legal influences, past reform efforts, democratic school communities, democratic school theories, and implications for high school. This chapter defines and describes the research design. The research method which guided this case study was qualitative naturalistic which seeks participant descriptions to give information relative to decisions.

Rationale for Method Selection

There is considerable debate among researchers relative to the worthiness of the major paradigms used in deciding the nature of reality. Because the researcher seeks to gain insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied, qualitative inquiry offers the greatest opportunity to provide new knowledge and inform practice. Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection

instrument sensitive to the underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Merriam (1988) points out that humans are best suited for using methods of interviewing, observing, and analyzing. In other words, the researcher becomes the main research instrument (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Merriam, 1988; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1991).

The selection of a research strategy is a decision based upon the problem presented. Marshall and Rossman (1995) and Yin (1994) suggest that the researcher ask four questions: (a) What is the form of the research question? (e.g., describe or demonstrate distribution of such phenomenon); (b) does the research require control over behavior? (c) does the research seek to describe naturally occurring events?, and (d) is the phenomenon under study contemporary or historical?

In this study, the researcher is not interested in predicting behavior or statistical data, but rather in studying a real life educational phenomenon. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) indicate that selecting a specific research method can include both quantitative and qualitative methods. However, qualitative methods are generally preferred when, according to Creswell (1994), the inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem is based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted

in a natural setting. Qualitative research allows for thick data to be collected that demonstrates an interrelationship with content. Merriam (1988) explains that qualitative research requires that inquiry be inductive, focusing on process, understanding, and interpretation, rather than deductive and experimental. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) defined five characteristics of qualitative research as

- natural setting being the direct source of data,
- the researcher is the key instrument,
- the research is descriptive,
- the researcher is concerned with process rather than simply outcomes,
- the data are analyzed inductively, and meaning is essential.

(p. 27)

The research model used for this study will be an interpretive paradigm using qualitative methodology. This model relies heavily on interviewing both individuals and focus groups that participate in various school activities. The interpretive approach acknowledges that meaning emerges through interaction and is not standardized from place to place or person to person. The interpretive approach underscores the importance of understanding and developing meaning in the context of student participation. Because the study takes place in one school culture, it is

important to allow students to voice their perceptions as they relate to school-wide operations and decision making (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

There are several ways to conduct qualitative interviewing. The foundation for qualitative interviewing centers on three basic themes. First, there is a need to understand the culture from which information is drawn. Culture affects what the researcher hears and understands. Second, the researcher does not play a neutral role in the interviewing process but builds a relationship as a participant, because emotions and culture have impact on the interview. Third, the purpose of the interviewing process is to give voice and meaning to the interview conversations. Interviews relative to culture in this high school will be about how students perceive and interpret the world of school in terms of their involvement in decision making and school operations. In addition, to understand this particular school culture, topical subjects might arise related to changes in events and organizations that affect student life. If topical questions arise, follow up interviews will be conducted to determine what happened, when it happened, and why.

Interviews relative to topical questions seek to define, explain, or describe events, processes, and procedures. In contrast, cultural interviews are concerned with details or factual information. The topical interview involves a more active role for the researcher in directing the

questioning and in keeping the conversation on a specific topic. Both interview types enhanced the findings in this study. Use of both cultural and topical interviews broadened and enriched the descriptions. It also resulted in solutions that could increase utilization of high school students contributing to decision making that affects their lives at school and beyond.

Population and Site Selection

The population used in this study consisted of 140 high school students (85 females and 55 males) in grades 9-12 from both advisory and leadership classes. Nine students were interviewed. Twenty-one students formed three focus groups that were interviewed. The remaining 110 students formed committees that met for three weeks discussing prepared problems related to testing. Advisory and leadership classes provided a cross-section of students by grade and ability levels. In addition, the combination of students involved cut across attitudes or opinions (positive, negative or indifferent) and social groups, and thereby created a more valid and realistic picture of the high school's culture.

Preliminary meetings with teachers were conducted in advisory and leadership classes to explain the study. Volunteers were requested to sign a consent form to take part in the study. Students also obtained a parent signature.

The sample population came from a public school system in north central Oklahoma. The specific location of the study was determined by seeking the school districts' permission to conduct the study where the school principal, teachers, and students would volunteer to participate. The site selected had made some significant changes related to attendance, school safely, scheduling classes and subject additions.

When selecting a site, Marshall and Rossman (1989) recommend that (a) easy entry into the site be possible; (b) the resources offer a rich mix of process, people and programs for study; and (c) time would not be a factor in completing the study. The site selected for this study was a high school consisting of an enrollment of 1025 students and 98 teachers. This high school met all three recommendations suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1989). The identity of the site and research participants was protected by use of pseudonyms. Confidentiality was assured in the Consent Form each participant was required to sign (Appendix A).

Early Impressions

Based on my early impressions, approaching Rose Hill High School (pseudonym) was akin to the feeling one got going to work in a large 1930s eastern style factory. The campus was dotted with huge smoke stained red brick structures. A dilapidated chain linked fence surrounds the parameter of the parking lot and grassed areas. Cars are parked on

both the parking lot and grassed areas. The wrought iron grates that covered the windows on the lower floors were rusted from weather, lack of care, and age. It is a short walk to the main entrance of the school from the parking lot.

A cornerstone near the entrance is adorned with the words of Diogenes, "The foundation of any state rests with the education of its youth." I wondered silently if the quotation had meaning for anyone inside. Upon entering the building, one is greeted by the most modern method of security — a metal detector. No officer was on duty. There was no doubt that the building is quite old. Everywhere one can see the signs of age in the form of wax buildup on the baseboards, dim lighting, scuff marks, and peeling paint in some places.

Once inside the main office, school personnel were warm and cheerful. The office was congested with workers and visitors. Bulletins and awards were neatly displayed around the room. Each item posted told a different story that reflected positively on the school. Parents were waiting to be served and students were bustling about taking care of school business. The principal was in the copy room running sheets of information for teachers and other interested personnel. Benches located on both sides of the door were filled. It was standing room only. A police officer and a custodian were engaged in conversation about the boiler

room. They reported to the principal that a door to the basement had been jimmied open and it appeared that students were using the room as a safe place to smoke undetected. The three men conversed about possible solutions to the problem, because this was not the first time someone or persons unknown had entered the basement. Two secretaries and a student aide answered the telephones that rang often. All observed activities were evidence of a typical day in an inner city high school.

A bell sounded indicating the end of a period and a change of classes. The principal entered the hallway to oversee the passage of students. This provided a view of the school population as students passed in the corridors. The majority of students appeared to be Hispanic. Students were friendly and talkative. They rushed to the stairwells that lead to the next two floors. The students were dressed in the latest baggy pants and oversized T-shirts and big, thick soled shoes. Most of the young women wore shoes with enormously huge heels. All carried book bags of varied descriptions. Most students walked with a tilt from the weight of the content in their book bags. Some of the students looked old beyond their years. Some young women wore heavy make-up and hair creations from braids to weave attachments of different lengths. The young men wore heavy gold jewelry around their necks and many sported an ear stud or ring. Almost everyone who passed gave the principal a cheerful hello.

Some students approached him with questions and others shared information about the state of current events in the school. The corridor cleared rapidly. The principal began his visits to the classrooms.

The Beginning

Rose Hill High School is located in a city of about 600,000 people. The doors of the school were opened for the first time in 1921. The school was built to house both junior and senior high school students. Old yearbooks (1926, 1927, and 1929) indicate that this section of the city, a suburb at the time, was growing and was in dire need of a senior high school because of increased enrollment. Construction of six new classrooms and an auditorium in 1925 helped to relieve the demands brought on by increased enrollment. The school operated on half-day sessions to eliminate student overcrowding. Senior high students attended classes in the morning and junior high school classes were held in the afternoon. The school housed only the senior high school in 1926 and boasted of graduating a class of twenty-one. Early residents, civic leaders and employees boast of the past with pride. They recall the days when the name Rose Hill stood for opportunity, achievement and hope. They share stories of debate teams, football glory and basketball championships. It was the school to beat both in academics and physical activities. They also shared what an honor it was to attend a school that

was classified as "state of the art" in the curriculum offered, equipment available and in architectural design.

Population Shift

The days of glory have long since passed. Today is a different story. The entire community has transformed. The community is one in which the demographics have shifted thereby changing the complexion of the school. Today the majority of students attending this high school are people of color. The ethnic makeup of the area is about 38% Caucasian, 40% African-American, 3% Asian, 14% Hispanic and 5% Native American. The same percentages are not reflected in the school's enrollment. The students attending this school face a multitude of critical challenges. A few of the challenges are family instability, illiteracy, community and school violence, distressed school facilities, drugs, physical abuse, and language barriers. Teachers are faced with preparing students for the world of work, as well as dealing with school violence, irate parents, classroom disruptions and lack of materials to meet the needs of their students.

Oversight Board Report

The 1998 report from the Education Oversight Board and the Office of Accountability indicates that about 73% of parents in this community have completed high school or college. The report points out that

research shows a strong correlation between educational attainment of parents and educational success of their children. This fact may account for a student performance grade point average (2.90) higher than the district average of 2.27. The data collected related to juvenile offenders and offenses indicate one offender in every 11.1 students. Each offender had committed an average of 1.5 offenses and 33% of offenders were gang members. The percentage of gang members attending this school is four times larger than the state percentage. In spite of the high gang membership, 62% of students complete a college bound curriculum. The college completion rate stands at 21%. This rate is higher than the district rate.

Community and District Finances

Community support is limited economically. Few, if any, parents participate in school activities other than sports. There are 18 scholarships underwritten by community and corporate sponsors. The Office of Accountability report showed that the school district received 33.2% of its revenue from local and county sources. The state provided 54.1% of all revenues coming to the school district. The federal government provided 12.8% of all revenues. Fifty-five percent of the budget was used for district instruction compared to the state budget of 59.4%. The budget for Rose Hill High School was a little over $32,000. There was a shortage

of supplies (i.e. books, science equipment, math materials, teacher's guides, etc.). Sponsors of clubs and the student council were permitted to raise money for operations and activities. A vending machine provided an additional $3000.00 for school supplies per year.

Data Collection

Data were collected in several ways. One primary means of data collection on which the patterns and conclusions were largely based was two rounds of interviews conducted by the researcher. The principal provided a list from which to choose students, teachers, and community members to be interviewed in addition to student volunteers. The primary source for data was interviews. All interviews were taped and transcribed. Transcriptions were reviewed by participants and checked for accuracy. Informal conversations and discussions also provided data for the study.

Secondary sources of data included observations and documents. A field log (Appendix H) was kept to record items of interest and for purposes of recalling information and events. Observations of student/teacher interaction in classrooms and at events served as a third means of data collection.

Various documents, including faculty meeting agendas and minutes, school improvement plans, various governance and school-related documents and videotapes of special events such as student council

elections and awards assemblies were used to supplement interview data. The researcher was the primary instrument for the collection of data; however, the school secretary and attendance clerk assisted in this task by saving programs and materials that described the Rose Hill story. Observations, interviews, and document reviews were the primary methods for collecting data, ensuring triangulation of data sources and trustworthiness. Triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam, 1988). The most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging information from inquiry (Yin, 1989).

The procedure for on-site data collection began in March 1999. Data were collected for as long as necessary to gather pertinent information. The length of time was determined by the number of individuals interviewed (three focus groups of seven participants each plus ten individual interviews) or until the data because repetitious. The analysis of data began the first day of field work until the report was finally composed.

Interviews: One of the most important resources for information is the interview (Yin, 1989). An interview involved the gathering of data by face to face contact between the researcher and one or more participants. The interview gave the researcher an opportunity to interact with the

participants. Emotions and body language in some cases gave lasting impressions of joy and pain. The greatest advantages of this technique were that it allows the researcher to obtain confidential information, questions are not rigidly structured beforehand, and it allows the researcher to make value judgments based on the interaction between the researcher and the participant (McAshan, 1963). According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), there are three distinguishing characteristics that qualitative interviews share in common. First, the interviews are modifications and extensions of ordinary conversations. Second, the basic interest of the interviewer is understanding, knowledge, and insight of the participants as opposed to categorizing people or events in term of academic theories. Third, the content, flow and choice of topics can change to match what the participant knows and feels.

Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. Participant checks were initiated to ensure the credibility of the study. Each participant was provided with the opportunity to review the data from his/her interview. A follow up thank you luncheon for participants was held at La Fiesta restaurant. After transcriptions of interviews were completed, copies were sent to each participant with a letter of explanation. Follow-up telephone calls or school visits were made to confirm receipt of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1989) state that participant

checks are the single most important technique for establishing credibility. They further indicate that participant checks serve the following functions:

- allows an opportunity for the participant to correct errors of fact or errors of interpretation,
- gives opportunity for additional information,
- puts the participant on record as having said certain things,
- provides opportunity for the researcher to summarize information,
- gives the participant an opportunity to judge overall accuracy of the interview (p. 239).

Documents: Documents were reviewed to indicate evidence of impact on students and staff and instructional leadership. Documents are defined to include, but were not limited to, public records, school yearbooks, faculty meeting agendas, bulletins, and artifacts (Merriam, 1988). Documents are helpful in verifying the correct spellings, titles, or names of organizations, and can provide other specific details to corroborate information and form the basis for inferences (Yin, 1989).

Observations: Opportunities for building support without approval can arise when interviewing is preceded with a period of observation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Periods of observation communicate respect for the culture overall, even if there are some practices that may be

disturbing. Observations show some level of understanding of the group being studied. One does not need to be a member of the participant group to show care and understanding. One can be understanding and still be authentic in an interview relationship, agreeing with some things and disagreeing with other things. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981) "Participant observation maximizes the advantage of the human being as instrument" (p. 193). Merriam (1989) states that participant observation is a major means of collecting data in case study research. When combined with interviewing and document analysis, case studies allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher visited the school three days per week for nine months talking with students in casual conversation. Students knew who the researcher was long before interviews began. They observed the researcher taking pictures of events, attending assemblies on special days and counseling students about going to college and how to find work or obtain a social security card.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data was ongoing and recursive. That is, at periodic intervals, data was analyzed, shared, and discussed with students, teachers, and principal, while more data were collected. Ongoing analysis, sharing and discussion of data served to continuously inform the effort,

consistent with the principles of qualitative, fourth generation evaluation (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Data analysis was focused on identifying recurring themes that deal with successes and struggles involving student participation in decision making.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of data was facilitated by triangulation of data sources, both from formal and informal member checks. Formal member checks were conducted with the school during late spring 1999. Informal member checks occurred via regular conversations with the principal, students, and teachers. Data collection continued through spring 1999, thus serving the trustworthiness criterion of prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba).

Lincoln and Guba (1995) asked "How can an inquirer persuade their audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (p. 290). Triangulation of data was accomplished by reviewing multiple sources. Its use increases the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Multiple courses may imply multiple copies of the one type of course, or different sources related to the same field of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305). In this study, credibility was established through triangulation of the data from three sources of data described in Bogdan and Biklen (1998).

Researcher Bias

Personal ability and professional experiences should be taken into consideration when determining a research problem (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Langenbach, Vaughn & Aagaard, 1994). Interest in this topic comes from having been an active participant as a classroom teacher, a program specialist, a vice-principal, a school principal, a Senior Associate of the National School Reform Network, and cluster coordinator for the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education. The background and experience provided both advantage and disadvantage in the judgment of the researcher. Past experience with students was of value in establishing a level of trust and respect. It was important to hold judgment until all information is gathered and analyzed.

Summary

This chapter presented the design and procedures of the study. It described the process for selecting the sampling population and the method of contact for inclusion in the study. There is also a description of the methods for collecting data, the interview process, and the data analysis. The next chapter will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV

Findings: Student Profiles

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent of high school student participation in school-wide decision making. This chapter briefly profiles the background of each student and their responses to the main question—How are students involved in making school-wide decisions? The data sources are presented as (a) individual interviews, (b) focus group interviews, (c) observations, and (d) documents.

Data Sources

Nine (9) individual face-to-face interviews of 45 minutes to one hour were recorded. Each group was racially mixed and inclusive of both genders. Each student was asked to provide some background about him/herself. There were three focus groups composed of seven students each. In addition to the main question, the researcher probed for answers to questions that would help in drawing conclusions, i.e.: Have students played a meaningful role in bringing about renewal in this high school? Were students actively engaged in school committees? What were the opportunities for students to make decisions? Were students able to vote on decisions regarding their welfare?

This study provided an opportunity for students to give their perceptions of the school's climate, environmental conditions and safety. They discussed teacher support and principal effectiveness as the subjects arose. The following vignettes are designed to give some insight into the participants who volunteered for the study. They are typical of students who usually attend inner-city schools. The information that follows is in the form of direct quotes as stated by the student or students. Answers have not been altered for grammar or sentence structure; therefore, the language and expressions used may be ethnic or colloquial.

Individual Interviews

Kalli is a nineteen year old Euro-American female. Her body language portrayed an appearance more mature than her age. Small in stature and on the thin side, she entered the room in puzzlement. She appeared almost unfriendly as she reviewed the consent form, then signed it. Kalli lives with her mother. Her parents are divorced. She has three brothers and two sisters who live elsewhere. Two of her siblings are married and her younger sister lives with her grandmother. Rose Hill has been her home school for four years. She is happy about graduation this year. Kalli indicated that "It's been kind of a rough four years here, but I've managed and I'm going to graduate." She works 20 hours a week at Tucker Air Force Base in the ball bearing department. Her assignment

calls for rotating job station activity every three months. She is not quite sure how the bearings are used - she thinks they may be used in airplane jet engines.

The most interesting thing about this young lady is that the courts assigned her the guardianship of her mother. Her mother has completed a five-year prison term. The older women was recently released and has been lucky enough to obtain a job. Kalli feels that while her mother is readjusting to life outside jail, it is her responsibility to help her. She says "I'm nineteen, so--, if I'm still living with my mom I should help her. So I pay half of the rent. I buy my own clothes. I give her grocery money and I pay the cable bill."

Kalli expressed disappointment because senior activities were canceled. However, she was excited about the Robing Ceremony. During this ceremony, students are assisted in trying on their graduating regalia by a special person they select.

Kalli spent the greater portion of the next day (Friday) trying to secure a ride for her sister, who she had chosen to participate in the Robing Ceremony with her. Anxiety began to set in as the hour for the ceremony drew near. She hung around in the office to use the telephone and wait for people to call her back. Later, she paced in the hallway. Parents and relatives began to arrive in large numbers. They stood

around waiting for the auditorium doors to be opened. The faces of some in the crowd showed the strain of age and the pressures of being poor. This was the first time many of their relatives had returned to school since they had attended school. Everyone attending was scrubbed and clean; some of the young adults were dressed in the latest fashions. People moved through the crowd, stopping occasionally to speak to someone they recognized. They were going in and taking seats, but Kalli was waiting for her sister. I wondered what she would do if her sister didn't show up. She returned to the office and asked an office helper to stand in for her sister. Graduation was one of the most important moments in her life and she would have to face it alone. How does it feel to be an honor student with a bright future and no help? College is not in her immediate plans because she has her eye on being a secretary at Tucker Air Force Base.

When asked about her plans she said "I want to go to college too, but I'm going to work out there for a little bit to save some money, then go to college." Another question about further education got this response: "I want to work at Tucker long enough for people to know who I am – get noticed. Then eventually I'm going to move my position somewhere else. Like, there are high paying secretary jobs that are up there that are really interesting. I'd rather do that. They say I could do

that as long as I stay there long enough full time. You got to get a certain amount of hours in, then go to the employment office and apply."

Her response to giving ideas to make their school better was "Maybe more discipline. Some of—I mean, anyone could come in here and do whatever. You know, we don't do that much security around here and stuff like that... and they need to be more aware about that." She indicated that sometimes she was apprehensive about her safety. "Sometimes I do (feel safe) and sometime I don't... because I know if I wanted to, I could walk in here with anything and they wouldn't expect nothing. Because there's no one—right now, there's probably no one, you know—at the front or at that door right now. You know, they could do anything and no one's aware about it."

Romeo is an eighteen year old African-American male who is described as brilliant by those who know him well. There are claims that Romeo never studies and is bored at school most of the time. He ranks seventh (7th) in his class. The only organization he belongs to is the National Honor Society. He claims to have been a basketball player, but quit because he and the coach did not get along. He thinks the school is "pretty good." Romeo thinks that friendly relationships with teachers and having cool classmates are important to having a good school. When asked what makes a good school he replied, "The right teachers. The

right principal and some pretty cool classmates would be the right school." He has known the principal since eighth grade before his assignment to Rose Hill. He speaks of having a good understanding with the principal.

Romeo has been accepted to City College but wants to attend a four-year institution. He indicated, "I want to major in computer engineering. That's the class I want to take. The thing about it is, I haven't had any computer classes yet. I had one, but I wasn't learning anything so I dropped it, so I could take another class that I needed." He has no idea how to apply for college.

Speaking about the security of the school, Romeo suggested that it was an area of needed improvement. "I just don't think it is secure, really. Because-I don't know-if it was (secure), there wouldn't be as many fights as we had this year. Or as much gang violence, or-I don't know...(he stopped as if he caught himself revealing too much). Continuing to talk about security, he later said, "In a way, it is (enough security), and in a way it's not, because, I mean, the metal detectors-they work-but not all the time they don't work. They should have the metal detectors for all day. Like, somebody comes late, they should have to come through the metal detectors. You could easily get a weapon in. That's about it."

His worry was not just confined to security of the school. There was a legitimate concern about racial matters and equal treatment. He gave

the following example. "Like History Month. We don't really have a Black History Month. We have a Multicultural Day. Now, the other day they had a Cinco de Mayo Day which was all Hispanic. But when we have to have all races involved, which I don't think is very fair, because we don't have a chance to show what our culture is about. I think they could improve on that. Because when we asked to have a Black History Month program, we have to have a multicultural program, but when we have Cinco de Mayo, it's nothing but Mexican. I don't think that's fair. I mean, not giving us a chance to show what Black culture is about."

On almost every visit to Rose Hill, I saw Romeo in the hallway. He would often stop and talk to me about what he was doing or share his current dream. This was a typical young teen African-American male student. He appeared never to be missed from class. He moved about the school freely and spent a lot of time in the office visiting the attendance clerk. He seemed unchallenged and too care free. He really had not thought much about how he was going to survive his next steps. It appeared that the school was providing little guidance for him.

Cecilia is an eighteen year old Mexican-American senior who maintains a 3.5 grade point average. She sees little or no change in the school except for a needed "paint job." After graduation, she will continue

working for Tucker Air Force Base. She is a jet engine mechanic who plans to attend college in the year 2000.

Cecilia is expecting a baby in July. After the baby is born, she will work full-time and save for college. Her mother will care for the baby while she works and attends school. She has no plans to marry the baby's father because they don't communicate any more.

Her real desire is "to go to college to become a mechanical engineer. It's dealing with what I'm working on now and I'm learning a little bit about it. Dealing with engines and different types of airplanes and aircraft and stuff like that. So, I just want to go into more details in mechanical engineering. I was planning on going to Capitol College, but City College caught my eye." She has no idea if mechanical engineering is a program offered at either Capitol College or City College.

I did not feel that she was totally unaware of the changes that were occurring in the school. Students were painting the walls with symbols that identified their racial heritage. They were helping to clean and repair. The changes were apparent.

When she was asked about student inclusion in school-wide decision making, she said, "Yeah, they let students give their opinion about what they think that's going to happen in the school. They let us vote. I feel that's the right thing to do. Because, I mean... they're including the

students on what goes on in their school. It's the students that are the ones that makes the school."

Lashona is an African-American emancipated minor. She said, "I've been living on my own since I was 17 years old and I work at the Zoological Park." She is a cashier in the food and beverage stands. Her work begins in March, continuing through mid-October. The work is seasonal; therefore, in order to maintain her standard of living she must find another job to pay rent and utilities on time during the off months. Lashona works for $5.25 an hour. Every time she returns to the park her salary increases by a dime each year. She is paid every two weeks.

This student is completely on her own living in a Section 8 (Federal Government housing set aside for low income people) one bedroom apartment. Her mother helped her furnish the apartment, but anything Lashona needs now she must supply. She said, "I buy my own clothing, my own food. I pay my own bills-- rent, gas, electric, and telephone." It is difficult for her to get to school so she comes every other day on the "B" block schedule (students have subjects in 80 minute intervals. Often subjects are integrated to accommodate an "A or B" schedule). There was no place for her to sleep when her mother moved out of their house. "We had to go stay at my grandma's. I was staying with my grandma for over a year. My mama still lives with her. My mama lives with her boyfriend

and my brother lives with my aunt. So then, my grandma let my grandpa move in with her because he got sick. Then my aunts and them live with my grandma and there's nowhere to sleep really and stuff... That's why I had to try to get somewhere on my own."

Her next project is to purchase a car and she has saved $300.00 for a down payment. She needs a car to get back and forth to work. Lashona maintains a 3.09 grade point average. She boasts that her grades have never been lower than a 3.0.

Lashona was absent from school on the day her interview was scheduled; I had to track her down. When I finally caught up with her for the interview, she was asked to talk about the changes she had witnessed in the school. She indicated there were changes. "Sport-wise, like... we're cheerleaders. We never had funds or nothing to help us with uniforms and stuff. They didn't have transportation to get nowhere this year. That's why our cheerleading squad wasn't even... they didn't even want to participate and stuff, because we didn't have any help doing anything this year."

Answering a question related to things that happened around the school, she added,

> Around here? We had fires, too many fights this year. And the new districting (redistricting), where all the kids go to school in their

areas - is I don't think they should have did it. Because, it just... they just bringing in every race... just like... one race in one school, then one race... they taking over this race, especially this school. Like the Cinco de Mayo thang (thing) we did today. It was a Mexican thang. But when Black History Month comes in February, they say we'll do a multicultural 'thang'. That's just what makes us all upset. See, because Mexicans all in town (school), they get to do what they want to do, which I don't have a problem with it; it's just that they could at least let us do something on Black History Month instead of Multicultural Month. That's one little problem we've been having at this school.

Antonio: "I am a senior and I'm graduating. Yes, there's a lot of guys and a lot of girls that knew me when I first started high school. And I've changed... like my attitude toward life is different. It's not running the street no more. And I used to be like that. In a way, they (other students) see that if I can stop doing it (gang banging), why do they even have to start. There's nothing there. That's what I tell them. 'Man, there's nothing there, so why do you even want to start, you know?' It has somewhat of an effect."

Antonio is a former gang member. He claims he and his guys (fellow gang members) did whatever they pleased in the past. He has

attended Rose Hill off and on for the past six years. It took a drive-by shooting at a party in his neighborhood to bring about a change in attitude. Seeing his mother, family and friends in tears because they believed him to be the victim of the shooting made him question his lifestyle. After graduation, he will attend vocational school to become "certified to do auto body or painting."

He has reached a level of appreciation for school that he did not have in his "gang banging" days. He indicated that changes that have taken place in the school are all good. He describes what has happened.

> Just the pride there is here now, you know... There's some pride here when there used to be none. You know, you just came up here to associate (hang out) and stuff. I don't know... it feels good to come to school here, you know. Because kids here, guys and girls here, like Rose Hill, you know. It's different than what it used to be here when I was a freshman. That has been a while back. And, in a way, I think it is because when we used to have rumbles (fights), it was way different. There is more discipline in a way, you know... It's not very much liked by the students, but it's done, you know. Even though the kids say, 'No, we don't like this, we don't like that' but it has accomplished a lot for a lot of them, you know... It has accomplished for me, you know, because if there wasn't that

discipline, I wouldn't have gotten through this year, you know... Because I would have skipped out on school all the time, you know... things of that nature.

His pride showed through his tough exterior when he talked about the Principal's Advisory Group.

I was chosen out of my advisory class to be part of the principal's advisory group. And, I don't know... in a way I've always been told since I've came here, you know... 'you can make a difference' by some of the teachers that were here. I didn't really realize until last year when something happened to me. Personally, something happened to me. I was, like, man... if I couldn't do it, why keep other people from doing it? That in a way made me think about not just myself, you know... if I couldn't do at least help somebody else get through it. That's why I came back to school this year. To show myself that I could do it for myself and that I could help others on my way up or on the way getting out also. Out of school, influence somebody. Because there is somebody... my mom always said that there is always somebody that is looking at you. That's why you should try to do your best and that's one of the main reasons I came back. To show me and to show others, you know... that believed in me as my mom and family members did. I could

get out and I could graduate without having been kicked out of school. I think in a way I do have some influence over some kids. Because it is not only being told to me, it's been told to me by some of the students themselves, you know. I think that that's a real good thing to be in school and at least help just one person."

Sweetie spends part of her school day at a local vo-tech and comes to Rose Hill at noon. She maintains a 3.0 grade point average. She has attended Rose Hill for four years. This eighteen year old student feels the environment in her school is fine. She said, "At first, in my freshman year, there was a lot of gangsters and stuff like that, but I guess they grew up and grew out of it or something."

When asked what she would change to make the school a better place, she replied, "I don't know. I wouldn't really change anything. Some of the teachers are stingy with their school supplies, but they're reasonable because of the kids just run with it anyways. And the cafeteria food, like I said before... that food is nasty. And that's about it. I would try to see if we could get open campus or something. Because closed campus is kind of boring. You can't really do anything. Lunch is too short."

Attending college is a goal for Sweetie, but she has no idea what is required. Her favorite subjects are math and consumer education. She

likes the teachers because they worry about their students. "They take time to help you out. She will attend the local vo-tech in the fall if she is not accepted at City College.

Selena is a sophomore who works for Tom's Ice Cream. She is Euro-American and 16 years old. She is referred to as "motor mouth" because she loves to talk. She doesn't find the name offensive-in fact, she laughs when the name is used. "I do the cash register," she said. "I do the grill. I work basically everything, because they train us to do everything." She has attended Rose Hill for one year. This is her first big city. She came from a small town in Louisiana. Her school in Louisiana was K-12. The total school enrollment was about 400 people. She thinks where she came from allowed her a lot more freedom to leave school to purchase lunch off campus. According to her, "the teachers" are the best thing about Rose Hill. "Next year, I want to be a Teacher Cadet. I think they are pretty cool."

Selena was suspended from school for "ditching". She thinks this is a big problem in this school. It is no longer a problem for her because her parents were called to school. She was grounded. "Ditching" was something she would not have done if she still lived in Louisiana. "I guess I was just following the crowd." After high school, she dreams of going to college to become something in the medical field. Presently, she is taking

Health Science classes at vo-tech. "I am trying to learn all I can about medicine so I will be ready when I graduate from high school."

She was a part of the Principal's Advisory Group. Describing how the advisory worked, she said "It's where he (the principal) gave us ideas and we wrote speeches like, you know... about it. Ways that we can help each other, and like... it was during the testing, that week of testing. And we just had better advisories. You know... things that could help us... you know what I'm saying? Some people would stay in the field house for over three hours without anything to do. That's what we worked on. And we had a lot of different topics that we worked on. We did it for like... three weeks.

Selena had many opinions about educational supplies (not enough), discipline (e.g. suspending students was unfair because the punishment was inconsistent and ineffective.) Giving two days or two weeks suspension did not have an impact on students. She thought that when students get caught "ditching" or stealing, they should be sent to Thrive (a detention center behind the school) and parents should be fined $100.00.

Enrique is nineteen. He came from the School of Advanced Studies. He was attending to learn techniques in advanced art. "Over here, they help me know what I need to do to graduate. This school helped me get a job at Tucker Air Force Base." Enrique is an aircraft

mechanic. He earns $10.55 an hour. He needs the help because he has been on his own since age 16. He says, "Just my hands-on experience in engines. Knowing how to build up and tear down an engine and stuff like that" helps get his bills paid.

This young man is living on his own. He was kicked out of his home by his alcoholic father with whom he does not get along. His dad is out of work and his mother is employed by a local discount house. His dad was a rehabilitation counselor in a mental hospital.

Enrique wants to go into Law. He says, "I think it would be something I'd like to do. I'd like to argue. I see a lot of my family and they don't equal out to nothing. I think... in ten years, where am I going to be? I figure instead of just deciding what I'm going to be just go though law and in ten years I could be somebody. Instead of looking back at my family—they ain't really situated. They've been out like ten and fifteen years. They are still working at restaurants. I want to be somebody, financially or something."

Focus Group Interviews

There were three focus groups interviewed. They were the teacher cadets, the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education (ONE) students, and the Navy ROTC. The students in these organizations made themselves available for interviews as a group. All groups in the school

received an invitation to participate in this study. There were many other organizations in the school; however, these groups volunteered and they represented different groups of students. The groups in this study also had the support of their sponsors. Other students volunteered and did not know what they were volunteering for. The same main questions were asked of all groups that were asked in individual interviews. Each group is briefly profiled followed by voiced concerns. The direct quotes as stated by the student or students have not been altered for grammar or sentence structure; therefore, the language and expressions may be ethnic or colloquial.

Teacher Cadet Focus Group

The ethnic make-up of this focus group is reflective of the schools' enrollment. There are two African-American students, two Hispanic students, two Euro-American students and one Native American representing the teacher cadet program. When asked to share something about their organization, the response was, "Okay, teacher cadet is basically this group of students who go to Rose Hill Elementary School. And, we show the students basically how to read, you know... We help them with their words and enunciation. We help them, you know... play games with them, have fun with them, basically. You know, read along with them... just help them out." The cadets visited the elementary school

two or three times per week depending on the number of weeks in a month.

The cadets have an opportunity to work with fifth grade pupils. The elementary pupils are described as "little angels." The cadets believed their interest in the pupils caused them to earn better grades. "The children seem to try harder." Some of the fifth graders did not speak English well. The high school students thought their assigned students were a perfect match for them. They indicated that there was always plenty to do with the students. If assigned pupils were absent, it gave the cadets an opportunity to work with someone else. The teacher cadets worked with three to five elementary pupils on each visit.

When asked what was interesting about working with the elementary children, Mason said, "You get to help other people... the little kids that don't take much interest in schools since they can't really read English. Or they just came from another country or something." Nancy followed with this explanation,

> You know, they don't feel very comfortable with people. Like teachers talking to them, since they can't understand. Sometimes they would put one of the students with one they can relate to. Not as old as they are, but you know... There's a lot of things they have

in common-maybe they speak the same language. They can help them that way. That makes them have better grades.

Mona spoke about how this school was different. She identified the learning environment as being very different compared to other schools. She commented, "They hard on you. All up in your face, you know... When you get bad grades, they put you on this list or whatever and they might kick you out. They are on you about your grades, about your academics. Here, really it's like... laid back. It's whatever you do. It's based on what you doing. I mean, if you want to learn, then you're going to learn. Other schools... they on you. They're going to make you learn or you're going to go somewhere else."

I asked Gloria her opinions.

I like this school. I've been to several different schools. I really like this one. There is a lot of people that I can relate to. I'm Hispanic, and most of the people in this school are Hispanics. And, you know... we do a lot of programs and help people. If you have a problem or anything, you can talk to your principal or your teachers. They don't see you as just another student. They try to help you and are there for you. They are not just there as supervisors or school administrators. They are there as friends also. You can always plan activities with them, go out. We've been to several

events with our principal. And he's not there just to represent our school. He's there to support us and show us basically what we're supposed to be doing.

Tamika had an urge to share about change and defend the school. I don't see any change here. It might be the best school in the district, as far as grown-ups may not see, but they're not the ones that come here everyday. They are not the ones that have to share with people every day what we go through. You know, there are just people-you walk through these halls and people know you. They would be saying 'Hi' to you, your principals and everything... It's not what people grade your school as to be, it's what we know. And we're the ones that have to look everyday at these people. And these people are great. These people don't put a title on them saying we're the best school to them, but to us it is. We just see things different.

Sara states, "The best thing about it to me is I got to participate in a lot of things this year. Besides being a teacher cadet, I'm a peer mediator. I've participated in the ONE program and went to PC-Pace City original. It was nice. We went to them. We had fun... just basically kicked it. You know, it was a good time."

When asked what was learned as a result of the ONE visit, Sara continues,

> In the program, I learned... I was supposed to go to a lot of stuff, but basically what I focused in on was the peer mediation part. I learned about their peer mediation program over there. And was a couple people there telling us theirs. So I learned a lot about that and how they interact with their students. And how it's different from over here to over there, because they are a little bit more advanced than we is. It was kind of educational... I mean, I learned a lot from them, from their daily experiences and what they go through.

Nancy said of her principal,

> He's always trying to make this school look better. Trying to see what improvements he could make so that other people can see what a good school this is. He's trying to constantly put students into programs... getting them involved in community activities. And trying to give them a positive message for them to keep in school and keep trying even though you don't get it the first time, you will get it someday... somehow. Just trying to keep them in balance and not giving them a hard time. Make them more a friend than a principal. And he's there for them whenever you need him.

Mason gave this statement about the principal's leadership that everyone agreed upon.

> So far he's doing a good job. Keep doing what he's doing. Keep expanding. Keeping going to things like ONE. Keep making Rose Hill known for good things instead of bad, because school got like... a rep. What he is doing now, by making this school known for the good things... I mean, that's good. I mean... you should keep it like that. Basically, just keep doing what he's doing.

Tamika was the first to answer the question: "What do you value most about this school?" She answered, "Education, being smarter, expanding your mind. Can't live without being smart."

Nancy's response was more specific. She said,

> I would value education also. It depends on the way they feed it to you. You don't just get information. It's got to be set up in a special way that you can learn. You don't just open the book and the information will come to you. It's got to be taught in special ways so there is a lot of people that make that happen up here. You just don't learn by yourself. There's a lot of people who spend extra time, not being just teachers to you, just... you know... teaching you whatever and just leave your classroom... and whatever you do after that is your problem.

The subject of school safety was discussed and Sara shared her ambivalence by stating, "To a certain extent (she feels unsafe), because a perfect example would be the Colorado incident (Columbine High School). That could happen any day, you know? It's unpredictable on safety at school, because this is like... open campus—it's not open campus, but anybody could just walk in, really. You can't feel safe at school. I mean... it's true. You have to watch your back." When does that bother anybody here? Gloria answered, "I think they're taking measures to present that. In the morning they set up a scanner and they scan everybody. They take your purse, they take your bags, and I think that's a very good way to enforce that nobody brings in stuff that they're not supposed to in here." Mason chimes in with, "Then again, you have the fact that if you want to get something in really bad, you can. If you put your mind on it, you can get something in the school if you want." Mona's response to that suggestion, "Right, anybody can. It just depends on the person. But as far as being safe, they're doing everything they can to keep this school safe."

Sara gave a reply regarding students involved in decision making and giving opinions. "(The student are) Not really, not really asked. If you want to give your opinion, you give your opinion. But, it's not really stressed on, to give your opinion. If you want to, then you can. It's all

about what you want to do." On the same subject, Tamika said, "Sometimes what we see as not being a good decision might be for the best interest of the school. Sometimes what we think is good might be bad for the school. So, there's a lot of... you can give your opinion, but it might be taken..."

In general, the students think the school is a pretty good place. One way to help the school become a better place, according to Gloria, is by:

> Helping students, other students work. As I said, I'm a Hispanic and I'm in Spanish class. In there, you know... there are a lot of students who don't know a lot of Spanish at all. The teacher really has a hard time, you know... she's just one teacher for several students. So, we get to help other students, other peers, do their work. Sometimes, it does work better with students working with students, because there's more contact. You know, it's not as formal as you were talking about a teacher. So that would be one way.

Mona added, "Basically getting out and doing things like all the ONE things that have been going on. Getting into that... doing that... sports. Just basically interacting with the school. Getting into the programs and things like that. Representing Rose Hill, you know... just representing it."

Some cadets had been involved in making the physical changes to the school. They thought the things they had done—painting outside poles and walls—made the school look better. Mason indicated that "If students put an effort into what they are doing, their work, I think they're going to take better care of their stuff. Because, you know... it's their hard work that makes the school look better. So, they're going to treat it as it should be. They're not going to mistreat it since it was their work."

Rose Hill High School ONE program

This focus group was composed of seven students (three young ladies and four young men). The students ranged in age from 16 to 19 years old. The group was reflective of the racial balance in the school (i.e. African-American, Euro-American, Hispanic, and Native American). The Rose Hill ONE group was formed when the school became a member of the Oklahoma Network for Excellence in Education. There are about 60 students in the core group. The members have had the opportunity to attend workshops, visit other high schools in the area, lead discussions about school change, and share ideas.

Joining ONE began first with teachers and administrators. Students were brought into the Network as the school moved to become more inclusive and democratic. The students claim they gained from the visits because they were able to learn other ways to unite their school to make a

better place. They also got ideas of how they could help their community by sharing beyond school. Participation in ONE facilitated the adoption of a new model for democratic education. ONE provided for more collaboration involving new practices; however, the best part of the program involved students and their ideas.

Our conversation began with a discussion about the principal. Nora said, "I think when they did the redistricting it helped a lot. And I know the principal as well as the vice-principal have straightened out the school." Nora went on to say that the leadership had become strict. "People actually follow the rules now. And they've (the principal and vice-principal) earned their respect here. I mean, I think that a big step. Just earning the respect and people actually following the rules.. And they changed the school in the last couple of years."

The students shared that they now have choices, they have a few extra minutes of passing time. This was the day they pre-enrolled for the coming year. Nora said "They're letting us choose our classes and what teachers we want. So there won't be no schedule changes and complaints next year. They've changed the school, physically as well as the student body."

Susan responded to the safety issue by saying, "We've heard on the news what happened in Colorado or wherever. We have detectors and

stuff that detect that stuff before it could get into the schools." Nora spoke again, "It's not 100% safe, but like I said, the way they make us feel, giving us choices, making us feel comfortable, then that makes us feel safe also. As far as an event happening like what happened in Colorado... it could happen anywhere." The group agreed that they were not exempt from the outside world. "We are the world. You know... this is the real world" Susan concluded.

Alfredo focused on some of the problems faced by the staff. "Littering is a problem. I think we need more trash cans, where people aren't too lazy to walk over and throw their trash away. Other than that, they're cleaning up the school. They're making it look good." Ray said, "This school isn't bad at all. It's like any other school. Yeah, we don't have the high quality equipment... the computers and all that. Pace City has all kind of gadgets here and gadgets there, but we... you know. We don't really, really need them."

Decision making was discussed and how they were involved in the process. "You know, we don't say 'We want this instead of this', but they make the decisions that convenience us more. Like they changed advisory to before first hour, because a lot of people came late to first hour. And, a lot of people had their math class or English class, you know--credits you need to graduate—first hour. Then teachers, due to attendance policies,

they would count them absent or tardy and three tardies equal one unexcused absence. If you are tardy everyday, then you would fail the course for your absence or your tardies. So they changed the advisories to before first hour so that there is no way you're going to be late for first hour."

When asked about their ONE experience, the students all agreed it was fun. They liked having people coming to school to see how they were doing and how they were progressing. All of the students on the ONE committee cooked small snacks and finger foods. About 10 different kinds of committees met for three weeks.

Alfredo said,

> By seeing the students at the other schools, the way they carried themselves, you know. My personal opinion... having so many things, gadgets and stuff, I mean its clean stuff, you know. I'm talking about Pace City. They have carpet in their hall, okay? That's not necessary. And I think that makes the student act different from what they really are. I think they act like, 'Oh, we go to school, we need to act this way. We need to dress this way.' Here, you are who you are, because that's who you are. You're not going to change just because you come here and it's ghetto. You're not going to act ghetto. And just because you go up there and they say

it is preppie, I'm not going to dress preppie, because I am not preppie... that just not me. I think up there, the school did change them as to how they carry themselves or how they present themselves. Stuck up, I guess. I just learned that our school has more 'original students'. They have 'original students.' (Gangs are present in both schools.)

Nora indicated that more elective courses would make the school better. Luz said, "I like it the way it is. They've tried to make it look nicer, but I like it the way it is." Miguel, who had said very little that made sense said, "Escalators, 'cause it's hard to get up them stairs." Miguel is very short. He could be classified as a midget. There are three floors in the main building. Alfredo ended this discussion with "I don't think that there is anything else to make this school better. We have everything that we need. We have good administrators, good teachers. The students are making this school look better. They're acting better."

Navy ROTC Focus Group

This group of students is composed of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. They range in age from 16 to 19. They all have plans for the future. They dream of going into business, studying nuclear propulsion, or joining the service. Some have been accepted into college, others have been accepted into the Navy, and still others will go to junior college.

They took the interview seriously and interacted very well with each other. However, they appeared to have agreed beforehand that they would be supportive of each other. After all, they were ROTC and they did everything together.

This group brags of being the largest organization in the school. The members in this focus group share a common belief that being a part of ROTC makes you a better person and builds a stronger mentality. "It builds leadership skills. You become a better citizen. We gain more respect. It helps us gain a lot of respect for each other." They all spoke about the good opportunity provided for them to experience exposure to careers and learning about different trades.

These "young adults," as they like to be called, take a great deal of pride in their accomplishments for the school. They have worked to restore some of Rose Hill's past glory in terms of entering drill team competitions and winning trophies. They have restored an old tradition after a 10 year absence—an annual Military Ball. The group has been heavily involved in a major school drive. They have volunteered on one Saturday per month with the Navy Seabees to assist with painting, plumbing, and planting flowers to beautify the campus. In addition to their regular school activities, these students are leaders. All are National Honor Society members. Each has completed 72 hours of community

service. Over and above these accomplishments, all have jobs after school. Some students work until 1:00 a.m. three days per week in order to assist their families financially. They all agree that ROTC is the pride of Rose Hill High School.

The information that follows are direct quotes as stated by students. Answers have not been altered for grammar or sentence structure; therefore, the language and expressions may be ethnic or colloquial.

The group began this conversation with a brief discussion about school-wide decision making and the principal's attempt to involve students. When the question was asked about decision making, Jake replied, "I've never participated in any decision making."

Chuck indicated that Mr. Ricardo (the principal),

> He tries to involve the whole faculty... wants to. They basically keep it that student body in decision making, but like the first time he makes a decision, you know... we tried it out for a minute, to let the students try. Then later on, they do what the staff wants. I think they should do it the way the students want to do it. It would be better that way. Advisory, it used to be between first and second hour. Then, like the end of the year... I'd say nine weeks left in the school year, they want to change it to first hour. I don't know about anybody else in the room, but that brings havoc on me. Getting up

in the building early in the morning, like... I used to have to go to the field house in the morning. You know, that was... like... just go to the field house, then go to first hour. It was basically like that. Now I got to go all the way to third floor, then walk all the way down to the field house, then do all this. This is, like, a whole bunch of work early in the mornin', man.

Going from the third floor to another class was distasteful, according to Martina. "They get you from the far corner of the third floor to get out to the field house, and they expect you to get there in five minutes. And they don't want you to run in the hallways."

Jay Kay wanted to make exceptions for upperclassmen. She said, This is our senior year. This is our last year. It's not doing us any good to change it like this. So they can leave it here for us to be through the rest of the year. When we leave, change it... because we are not the ones causing us problems. And that's one thing I think they should at least ask the juniors and the seniors what they want to do. Instead of listening to the freshmen and the sophomores, because they are going to say anything just to get what they want. Maybe we could make a reasonable compromise and negotiate some type of way where it really does make sense. Because advisory first thing in the morning... nobody comes to

school. Nobody. We stay in the class with nothing to do, watching the TV... Channel 1 (a closed-circuit school channel). That's about the most interesting thing we do is watch Channel 1.

Observations

Observations took place throughout the school the first semester. Any place students congregated I was seen: in the hallways, the cafeteria, the library, classrooms, the field house, the auditorium. I also observed during visits from parents, students and teachers from other educational institutions.

The first observation was conducted on 9-29-98. My rationale for visiting was to gather information and data relative to the history of the school. Along with the historical information, I secured an updated copy of a report from the State Office of Accountability. The 1998 comparative analysis for the city school rankings had been received by the school. This document is very important to the school because it charts how well students performed on the state tests. It also lists some socioeconomic information in addition to a comparative bar graph showing state, district, and local school percentage ranks.

This was a beginning effort for me to become more visible among the students. I wanted to create a comfort level and develop a level of trust so that they would talk to me with ease when the time arrived for

interviews. I wanted them to know my name, who I was, and my purpose for visiting the school regularly. This also gave me an opportunity to be selective about who would participate in the interviews. I did not need to depend upon the school administration to recommend students for participation. I made monthly unannounced visits to the school to attempt to avoid any pre-planning by the students; however, I believe that responses were coordinated or coached by a person or persons. Observations were continued until I received approval for the study from the Planning, Research and Evaluation department of the school district and the Institutional Review Board at the University. The final approval from the school district was granted on October 21, 1998.

Documents

The following documents were used to supply historical data related to the construction of the school, the kind of curriculum used, and the extracurricular activities. Old yearbooks, newspaper articles and school records were available through the school library and the central office. The reports from the State Department of Accountability were used to support and provide information regarding socioeconomic data for the district and the community. Also, district expenditures, educational attainment for adults in the local community and general school district information was provided in a profile of the district. Other important

documents used were Teachers' Handbook, Students' Handbook, School Improvement Plan, School Calendars, meeting agendas and school programs.

Summary

This chapter presented the profiles of student participants in the study. There were nine face to face individual interviews and three focus groups composed of seven students each. One hundred ten (110) students reported on committees that made recommendations to increase testing attendance and scores. Also, a listing of documents used in the next chapter (Chapter Five) will list and discuss themes and patterns.

CHAPTER V

Findings: Emerging Themes and Patterns

Fourth generation evaluation provides an opportunity for stakeholders to give voice to claims, concerns, and issues. The purpose of this chapter is to isolate the claims, concerns and the issues for analysis. Guba and Lincoln (1989) maintain that the involvement of stakeholders in fourth generation evaluation implies more than simply identifying them and finding out what claims, concerns and issues are. The participants are required to confront and take account of the inputs from other groups. There is no mandate that dictates acceptance of opinions or judgments of others. However, it is required that attention is paid to differences and conflicts. Inclusion of stakeholder inputs greatly broadens the scope and meaningfulness of an inquiry and contributes immeasurably to the discussion necessary for positive outcomes.

One conclusion can be drawn from the data obtained through the interview process. Being heard is a concern with students in this school. It needs to be understood that the knowledge that emerged from this study is based on students' particular circumstances, experiences, and values. The interviews began with all individuals and groups having the same main question.

Main question - Student responses

Have you been involved in decision making as to what happens to students in this school ?

Kalli: I was a DECA (Leadership) for my freshman year and my sophomore year. We did a lot of, you know, bulletin boards and we ran the student store. I was in leadership my junior year and the beginning of my senior year. We tried to sit around and think of ways we could get kids more involved, you know... spirit. Leadership was just about sponsoring sport stuff and running the student store and planning stuff. But leadership was the main class that ran everything. Basically, all the assemblies and stuff. We tried to sit around and think of ways that we could have our peers more involved in our school activities and maybe they would appreciate our school better."

Jake: "I never participated in any decision making."

Chucky: "Mr. Ricardo (principal), he tries to involve the whole student body in decision making, but like the first time he makes a decision, you know we tried out for a minute to let the students try. Then later on, they do what the staff or faculty wants to do. They basically keep it that way. I think they should do it the way the students want to do it. It would be better that way. Advisory, it used to be between first and second hour. That's the way every body liked it. Then, like the end of the year, I'd say

nine weeks left in the school year, they want to change it to first hour. I don't know about everybody else but that brings havoc on me. Getting up in the building early in the morning, like. I used to have to go to the field house in the morning. You know, that was like... just go to the field house then go to first hour. I basically like that. Now I got to go all the way to the third floor, then walk all the way down to the field house."

Nancy: "This is like a whole bunch of work, early in the morning before school in the rain!"

Martina: "They get you from the far corners of the third floor to get out to the field house and they expect you to get there in five minutes. And they don't want you to run in the hallways."

Jay Kay: "This is our senior year. This is our last year. It's not doing us any good to change like this. So they can leave it there for us to be through the rest of the year. When we leave, change it-because we are not the ones causing the problems. That's one thing I think they should ask at least the juniors and the seniors what they want to do. Instead of listening to the freshmen and the sophomores, because they are going to say anything just to get what they want. Maybe we could make a reasonable compromise and negotiate some type of way that really does make sense. Because advisory meets first thing in the morning, nobody comes to school. Nobody! We stayed in the class with nothing to do,

watching the TV Channel 1. That's about the most interest we do is watch Channel 1."

Romeo: "Yeah, sometimes... not all the times though... most of the times. Student ID's were a problem. We voted that out, probably my sophomore year. When they (school personnel) used to... they used to park in the back where we parked cars, they used to cage the cars in. One year a student's car got broke in when it was caged in. So we voted that we wouldn't have the cage where our cars were locked in. I think that's about."

Mason: "Well, Mr. Ricardo had a principal's advisory. That's what he had called it. It was the principal's advisory. I was part of it. It's where he gave us ideas and we wrote speeches, like... you know... about it. Ways that we can help each other. And, like... it was during the testing. The week of testing we just had, we had better advisories (meaning better advisory classes). You know, things that could help us, you know what I'm saying? Some people would stay in the field house for over three hours without anything to do. That's what we worked on. We had a lot of different topics that we worked on. We did that like three weeks. That's what we worked on. We had a lot of different topics that we worked on. We did it for three weeks."

Nora: "I mean, not literally. You know, we don't say 'We want this instead of this', but they make the decisions that convenience us more. Like, they changed advisory to before first hour, because a lot of people came late to first hour. A lot of people had their math class or English class, you know--credits you need to graduate—first hour. Then the teachers, due to attendance policies, would count them absent or tardy and three tardies equal one unexcused absence. If you were tardy everyday, then you would fail the course for your absence or your tardiness. So they changed the advisory period to before first hour, so that there is no way you are going to be late for first hour."

Enrique: "Not really, not really asked. If you want to give your opinion, then you give your opinion. But, it's not really stressed on, to give your opinion. If you want to, then you can. It's all about what you want to do."

Antonio: "I was chosen out of my advisory class to be part of the principal's advisory group. I don't know... in a way I've always been told since I came here, 'You know, you can make a difference' by some of the teachers that we have. I didn't really realize until last year when something happened to me."

There were mixed opinions or responses as to whether the students were involved in decision making. It appeared that some students were

more active than others. The interviews provided information for students as well as the researcher. It never quite surfaced during the interviews as to why the principal's advisory groups only met for three weeks. It appeared from a review of the minutes and reports from committees that the committees were formed to deal with only the questions related to testing.

While the answer to the main question was inconclusive with multiple answers such as "You could give your opinion if you wanted to" or "Decision making wasn't really stressed" and "I was never asked", probe questions may provide a clearer picture of student involvement in this school or of ways students indicated they are involved in decision making. The last week in January 1999, the principal of Rose Hill High School had teachers release selected students to come to the school library to meet with him. This was a meeting designed to organize students into groups to help in making decisions about testing, reward systems, creating a study guide, ways to improve attendance, field trips, and providing a solution to breakfast and snacks at school. There were 10 committees formed with 110 students participating. Each committee provided a draft of procedure and content for the topic discussed at each committee meeting. There are two probe areas discussed related to suggestions to make the school a better place and the change in the physical plant. The

following is an account of suggestions made by students during interviews and committee meetings.

Answers to probe questions:

Kalli: "If some of the teachers that are really hard would open themselves up and make the kids more comfortable around them and be more funner. Don't make school so boring for kids. That's what they dread. They don't like going into a class where a teacher just, you know... this is what you do in here, do it. You know... talk to them, make it more funner for them."

Romeo: "They could be more secure about things. I mean, probably a little bit more security."

Cecilia: "The thing I would change is most of the behavior in some of the students that really are trouble makers. I would make them respect the school a lot more. I would let them know that this school is there for them and not just be playing around. I mean, to take education seriously.

When Cecilia was asked how she would go about carrying out this suggestion, she replied: "I would tell the staff members to be more strict. To let them know that they are not going to go into their classroom and play. Let them know that they need to get their work and sit there and listen.

Lashona: "Bring everybody together. We don't get to mingle with nobody that much, because we don't have school functions or nothing. You know, we just have... we'd have more dances, bring people together. Have more assemblies, pep rallies so that's what I would do. Plus get some study groups for the slow people-the ones that is always in the hallways and stuff. I'd rather have students help them than teachers because they (students) are on their level."

Selena: "I think we need more, like educational supplies for biology and English and stuff. We should be able to experiment and stuff. You know, all we have is textbooks. We don't have anything. We should have more hands-on stuff. If you have a workbook, you'll get it, but experiments make you think. You know... stuff that will make you think will make you learn."

Mason: "Keep expanding. Keep going to things like ONE. Keep making Rose Hill known for good things instead of bad, because this school got like... a bad rap."

Susan: "Better teachers."

Luz: "I like it the way it is. They have tried to make it nicer, but I like it the way it is."

Alfredo: "They need a larger variety of electives. This year, they are teaching Spanish and French. What if someone wants to take another language? I think they should have a large variety of electives."

Gracie: "Put everybody in ROTC."

Chucky: "If they'd put everybody in ROTC, I think it would be kind of neat. I think we could handle it. I know I could."

Committee Reports on Testing Problem:

Group 1: This group was composed of students in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. Their task was to come up with a reward system. They filed the following report as agreed-upon ideas for rewards related to testing. They suggested a field trip for the best test scores at any given grade level or for the students scoring highest. A second reward discussed was if test scores increased by ten percentage points for any grade, they get an hour for a dance in the bin or to have a special movie. The third suggestion was to have a special lunch for one whole extended lunch period-a pep rally, or performance from the dance class.

Groups 2, 3, and 4: The three groups debated the merits of developing procedures that will allow each grade level to take the test at one time by grade level. Acceptance of this idea would assist in keeping classes straight and no one would miss a class. Everyone could be tested in the cafeteria. They agreed that testing should not take place in the afternoon

because there are students who only attend school for half a day. The idea of testing during advisory was thrown out because of limited time in that class; however, advisory teachers could be allowed to proctor the test.

Group 5: The task for this group was to discuss and decide how they could create a study guide for the test. In order to create a test study guide, it would behoove them to visit a university library to secure a copy for each grade level. Then, with grade level copies of the test, they would be able to create a study guide. The final idea was to have teachers conduct workshops to learn how to put together a good study guide, especially for the IOWA Test.

Groups 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10: The focus of these five groups led to decisions about supplying snacks during breaks between testing periods and the need to improve attendance on testing days. The group decided that they should have juice and milk with donuts before testing. When the 15 minute break time comes, a snack of crackers, cookies or anything healthy. They indicated that they wanted the advisory period to have a small snack that would help them throughout the day, every day. They thought that the best way to finance the breakfasts and snacks would be to have fundraisers such as change drives, Mexican candy sales, and bake sales for Valentine's Day. They indicated that all advisory representatives

would be responsible for working with the fundraising. They thought if they put into practices these ideas, by the time of the test, they would have enough money to provide juice and snacks for everyone.

Another big issue for the school during standardized test time was attendance. Suggestions were made to improve student attendance during testing. It was suggested that so many bonus points would be given to students who attended more than half of the test. If a student attended every day, an A+ would be give in their choice of subject or in the most difficult subject.

Group 10: This group was more procedural in their suggestions. They indicated the following: (a) "Testing-first week, study for one subject. That same week on Thursday, take the test. Second week, same and so on.", (b) "To better improve our testing attendance, the school should offer incentives so the students will want to attend it. Like, if you attend three days, get 50+ points in the hardest subject, and if you attend all testing days, you get an A+ on any assignment in any class.", (c) "I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream. Let's have an ice cream social after the test. Everyone will be there!"

When students were asked "Have you been involved in the changes taking place in the physical plant?", most of the students had not, with the exception of Nora who is doing an artist piece of an Aztec Calendar on the

wall. She is very proud that she is making a contribution of beauty to the school that will be lasting. She said, "If students put forth the effort to do the work around school, I think they will take better care of it. It's their hard work that makes the school look better. I see it as a part of community service." The students have come to school on Saturday to lend a helping hand to the Seabees. Others have assisted in planting 2000 tulip bulbs and still others have picked up trash to keep the school looking its best. In spite of all the changes that have gone on, there are those who say they see no change.

Discussion of Emerging Themes and Patterns

A review of the answers appeared to present the following patterns and themes recurring throughout the interviews and discussions:

Good teachers: These students would define a "good teacher" as one concerned with not only their academics, but also their physical and mental well-being. This theme suggests support for their teachers in the face of general criticism that teachers are not performing their jobs. Schlechty (1990) points out that the public may argue that teachers accomplished more in the "good old days", and what is needed now is accountability coupled with merit pay. It can also be argued that students are learning less; however, only 22% of the 25 to 29 year olds in America had completed four years of high school in the good old days of 1925. By

1940, that number had increased to 41%, 64% by 1960. Some 87% of 25 to 29 year olds Americans had completed four years of high school by 1985. One thing that can be debated is whether teachers are doing more or less for students. Students are staying in school longer. Could it be that school is organized in such a way to better meet the needs of students preparing for a career?

Security: The students in this study have developed a level of tolerance for some degree of turmoil in their lives. Their senses are filled with the effects of poverty, poor schools, high rates of joblessness, and the restrictions of opportunities in the broader society. Therefore, they learn to live with violence and aggressive behavior. Stith and Weissman (1991), in their study of teenage violence found that despite their fears and their eagerness to learn, students have trouble going against the unwritten code that says you must protect the honor of your mother, your girlfriend's fidelity, and your reputation. Firearms, physical force, injury, and death and intimately known by these students and may account for their complacent response ("If someone want to do harm in this school, they can find a way despite the metal detector.")

Student behavior: The majority of students who spoke to this issue implied that some students needed a heavier hand in setting limits on their actions at school. Many teens want strong guidelines from adults. When

they don't get those directions and limits from home, they look to the school and their teachers. Stith and Weissman (1991) indicate that students need to know that adults are in control. They claim that young people hunger for parental limits. "Most want their parents to save them from their own most extreme impulses." Students are disappointed and hurt when adults do not care enough to pay attention to what they are doing and intervene when they disapprove.

Bring people together: This is a key in the formation of democratic community. The essence of democracy is the struggle for participation and togetherness. Glickman (1993) affirms, "The value that unites Americans as a people, regardless of religion, culture, race, gender, lifestyle, socioeconomic class, or politics, is a brief in 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people'." Public schools are the only institutions in America designed and funded to protect the core value of this nation. Why shouldn't students be expected to see models of togetherness?

More electives: Students expressed a desire to have additional subjects taught that would better prepare them for college and other vocations. Most of the students had excellent grade point averages but little or no counseling regarding their preparation for higher education had occurred.

Some students did not take a placement test because the test is not administered at their school site.

Have the whole school belong to ROTC: This suggestion developed as students described their experiences in ROTC. These students indicated that they had become disciplined and focused because of their membership in this organization. They felt prepared for a vocation or they could enter a branch of the service in addition to attending college.

The following emerged in answer to the question of decision making: "They tried to get students involved." Other responses were "I was never asked" and "Not literally." This assortment of replies leaves one to believe that what was being observed and heard was more rhetoric than reality.

Time to talk about school-wide issues versus what to talk about when time was made available. While time to work on issues is a legitimate concern, Glickman (1993) indicates that a balance must be struck between the time people are willing to give to school-wide democratic process and the time individuals are willing to devote to the process. The basic solution to the issue of time is not to solve it." Instead, allow members to decide how much time can realistically and willingly be devoted to the process and what can be done within the time allowed. However, if you "talk the talk," you must be willing to "walk the

walk." If you asked any staff member, they would tell you that students at Rose Hill High School are making school-wide decisions. That answer would be correct under the old established traditional organizations in that the student leadership was allowed to make decisions under the watchful eye of a sponsor. The formation of committees was meant to demonstrate that students at this school were far ahead of students in other high schools and that a democratic plan was in place that made allowances for the inclusion of students.

It was evident by the answers given to specific questions that an effort was made to involve students in a democratic way, but there appeared to be little or no interaction with the teachers in the discussions that were held. There was no evidence of "give and take" and democratic procedure appeared not to have been established as a guideline for discussions, or procedures agreed upon, just conclusions reached were the end results of the committee meetings. While this was a good effort, it was not a joint group decision involving members from the entire school community. What happened in this instance is a loyalty code in operation. It appears that students were called together and expectations were set. The students met expectations - they defended their school. Although every effort was made to randomly select participants, pretesting the students' ability to make decisions on their own is not the same as being

part of a joint plan in which democratic practices are really in place and action agreed upon by the total school community. While change has occurred and continues to occur at Rose Hill High School, it has not attained democracy. There are traces of authority running through the total school operation.

Another theme that deserves mention was providing choices for students to increase student satisfaction and responsibility. Selena's story is an example of authentic teaching and learning. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) indicate in their study that students have learned to use their minds when they can apply what they have learned to meaningful situations. Students should at least be able to apply what they learn to other situations where appropriate. Authentic teaching and learning requires the implementation of high level thinking and performance. If the goal of schools is student learning, and the purpose for learning is cognitive development, then it is critical that students learn complex functions as well to prepare for future schooling or work (p. 7).

Summary

The study provides documentation of student behavior relative to decision making. Findings were drawn from individual interviews, focus group interviews, observation, documents and student committee reports concluding three weeks of discussion on testing and surrounding

problems. Chapter six will provide a summary, conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER VI

Summary, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This chapter presents a review of the study and a summary of the major findings from the analysis of the data. Conclusions about the study's findings are then presented along with their relationship to the professional literature. Next are proposed recommendations for future research.

Summary

This study recounts the efforts of one high school community to become more democratic by involving students as major participants in school-wide decision making. First, a brief background was given on the development of the secondary school movement in the United States and the role students had played in the past. In addition, legal influences, past reform efforts, democratic school communities, democratic school theories and implications for high school were discussed. In this chapter, the researcher will contrast democratic and authoritative principles as they relate to the findings, discuss the linkage of the three frameworks used to begin a democratic process in Rose Hill High School and its attempt to include students, and examine the implications for the subject school.

Although this school staff has chosen to pursue democratic principles, there is a field of thought that supports the idea that inner city students need to experience a more authoritative environment. While these students speak of giving their opinions freely in making decisions, they envision the role of teacher as being the authority. The responsibility of a teacher is to give directions as opposed to choices. There is a difference in being told what to do and given a choice of what one would like to do. Many people of color expect authority to be earned by personal efforts and exhibited by personal characteristics such as control through personal power and building relationships that demand respect. Such a teacher has an abiding belief that "all students can learn" and, therefore, establishes standards of expectation students will attempt to reach. Some members of other middle-class cultures, by contrast, expect to achieve authority by the acquisition of an authoritative role (Delpit, 1995).

Effective inner-city schools serving people of color are characterized by school and classroom environments that are orderly and routinized, but not rigid. The school and classroom management literature underscores the need for rules and routines, but flexibility, too is important. Hard and fast rules only work in settings where there are few exceptional circumstances (Natriello, McGill, & Pallas, 1990). The diversity and

pressures in inner-city schools, in contrast, require flexible responses (Jackson, Longdon & Taylor, 1983; Levine & Lezotte, 1990).

Students observe and judge teacher behavior by their ability to control their classroom and exhibit personal power. Students show respect for teachers who exhibit strong beliefs and will push them to achieve high standards. The students in such surroundings value directness and control. This study reflects students' desire for democracy, authority, and some form of control. Students appear to want a healthy balance when it comes to decision making.

This study is informed by recent work on school renewal (Glickman, 1993, 1998); successful school restructuring (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Newmann & Associates, 1996); and democratic IDEALS framework (O'Hair, McLaughlin, & Reitzug, 2000). A common link exists in the three frameworks. Glickman (1993) presents a three-dimensional framework that supports renewal which includes a covenant, collaboratively developed principles of learning, a charter for school-wide decision making, and a critical study process that includes a systematic process for the study of individual and school practices. His process encourages ownership through democratic participation.

Newmann and Wehlage (1995) introduced a framework that supports a context for successful school restructuring by building a "circle

of support" for students. The focus of this support is student learning, authentic pedagogy, school organizational capacity and external support. The authors sought to determine how the tools of restructuring were used to improve learning with emphasis on current practices. This process prescribed a mix of activities and interactions used to instruct and assess student thinking by investigating realistic problems. In their study of 1500 schools, they found that authentic pedagogy improved student achievement equitably for students of all social backgrounds. The report of the study conducted by Newmann and Associates (1996) also found external resources extremely important to the success of restructuring.

An avenue for educational intentional networking was on the way at the University of Oklahoma and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Under the guidance of co-authors O'Hair and Reitzug (1995), a democratic IDEALS framework was developed. Their framework supported the work conducted by Glickman (1993, 1998), Newmann and Wehlage (1995), and Newmann and Associates (1996). They charted a path which demonstrated how renewal moves from conventional school practices to authentic democratic school practices. The IDEALS framework provides support for greater student participation in decision making.

Each framework is offered in such a way that self-analysis can occur through democratic participation. According to Glickman (1993), "Areas of

achievement (e.g. reading, writing, mathematics, art, music, etc.) are fully learned when they are viewed as subsets of student involvement in core issues." The practices at Rose Hill High School reflect initial stages of the three theoretical models provided. Members of the school staff joined the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education secondary cluster to study the phenomenon of developing democratic school communities in-depth. While only in the first year of ONE membership, the entire staff did not fully participate in the activities to bring about change in school operations. Not all staff agreed that they wanted students to participate in decision making. The study represents a beginning analysis of a school engaged in democratic school reform and the role of student participation in the process. Looking at the continuum of practices in moving from conventional schooling to democratic community developed by O'Hair and Reitzug (1995), some teachers have moved from isolation to sharing leadership and making decisions collectively. Although this may not appear to be of much consequence, it must be remembered that the process is slow and some teachers are comfortable operating with past practices.

The common links that join each framework are teacher commitment, shared learning principles and decision making, collaboration on quality learning, decentralization, flexible scheduling or block

scheduling, integrated curriculum, teachers networking, and support for best practices. The democratic ideals promote inquiry, equity, achievement, shared leadership, and service. Each leaves room for local creativity in that development, pace, and specific needs are among the many decisions made through these on-going processes. Each process calls for the active inclusion of students.

The link of teacher commitment is being personally connected to the decisions that are made. Shared beliefs in common and working to meet the challenge of each belief causes collaboration to take place and lifts the burden of the work load. Block scheduling provides an alternative for students and an opportunity for teachers. Students who have a real need to work or train for whatever purpose can find worthy use of their time because the block schedule helps them meet their requirements by integrating classes. Teachers have a greater opportunity to share ideas and practices for integrating the curriculum. Decentralizing allows local school members to take greater control of the governance of their schools. Networking provides for teachers and school personnel to come together to share ideas and best practices.

Perhaps the most unique links of all are those that spell out a core set of IDEALS. This acronym represents an interpretation of democratic education. Inquiry refers to ongoing study, Discourse refers to

conversations, discussions, and debates about shared purpose, Equity is ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to learn once they attend school, Authenticity refers to genuine teacher practices that actively engage students in learning new things, Leadership as a democratic concept is facilitating shared collaborative power and knowledge with those who follow the ideals, Service alone is insufficient to support the idea of a democratic school. One must extend knowledge and performance beyond school to ensure meaningful learning.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions may be drawn from this study:

Conclusion 1: Students played a meaningful role in renewal efforts that were low impact at this school.

Conclusion 2: Students did not have the opportunity to serve on school committees with teachers regarding teaching and learning issues on their welfare.

Conclusion 3: Safety is a legitimate concern of students.

Conclusion 4: A high level of support and loyalty for changes exists among Rose Hill students.

Discussion

Conclusion 1: Students played meaningful roles in renewal efforts in this school. Evidence was found throughout the school that led to this conclusion. Students work daily on painting walls and completing murals on each floor. Some student gifted in art spent weekends painting pictorials of history related to each ethnic group. All students have participated in one way or another in visual or performing arts. Some students have helped keep the school clean by working alongside the custodians. Students come to the office and offer to do any task. The horticulture classes have spruced up the outside of the building by planting flowers and other greenery around the school. The students were able to secure a water fountain for the school by meeting with maintenance personnel in the central office of the district.

Conclusion 2: Students did not have the opportunity to serve with teachers on school committees regarding teaching and learning issues of their welfare. After reviewing the School Improvement Plan, few names of students appear. Students made no mention of any individual or group representatives who carried their concerns for needed change or to find solutions to problems. Most students referred to their individual ability to take care of concerns as individuals with the exception of the ROTC group. They spoke of how they are supportive of one another.

Conclusion 3: Safety is a legitimate concern of students. The students tried to supply common sense answers to this concern, but it appeared that because where they live and attend school, it is accepted that "things happen." They have learned to live with turmoil in their everyday lives and appear to expect nothing different in their lives at school. The common belief among students is that anyone who wants to do harm will have access to the school.

Conclusion 4: There is a high level of support and loyalty among the students for the changes occurring in the school. The students who participated in the individual interviews, focus group interviews and committee interviews agree that their school is not perfect. They agree that change is necessary and good. They would like to be a part of the process that allows them full participation. They will provide support and loyalty to whatever spirit resides at Rose Hill High School.

Implications for Rose Hill

The information gained from this study appears to have many implications for practice. This section presents three audiences for which the findings have particular relevance. Specific implications are provided to inform the practice of administrators, teachers, and students. These implications will be discussed in the following section.

This school took an important step in determining to take action to make this school a positive force in the community. Since the school provides service to students, it made perfect sense to begin by examining the student climate and the students' ability to fully participate in the projected changes. Glickman (1993) supports this idea, hence, "Studying a school is part of taking action in that school. To study without acting gets a school nowhere; to act without study gets a school somewhere—lost." (p. 55). Maintaining purpose requires the integration of acting and studying. What has happened in this school emphasized creativity and risk-taking. It was a creative move to give the school to the students by involving them in the clean-up process and a real risk. Turning the school over for clean up gave the students a kind of ownership - a protection/loyalty bribe. The walls became theirs, not for graffiti, but history or just an artist work that deserves respect because it belongs to the students.

Risk taking is an act that leaders chance every day. They go back to the old adage of "nothing ventured, nothing gained." The most physically dangerous thing involving students was the mission to clean up the school. These students were not insured by the school. The school leadership was extremely fortunate that no students were injured while lifting, moving heavy equipment or using electrical tools. However, there is a lesson in

their participation. They proved capable of doing work that mattered, working long hours, and making sacrifices based on goodwill. The situation had just enough balance between structured and unstructured activities. The students were freed to experiment with learning new things in an authentic, meaningful way.

Outside partnerships provided work for students to help themselves and their families. The implementation of a flexible school schedule permitted emancipated minors the opportunity to attend school and to work. Attendance improved, the student population stabilized and enrollment improved. More students are likely to work as the century changes. Schools, like families, will retain and increase partnerships so that students will have more choices to learn first hand about occupations. Therefore, there is a need for flexibility in curriculum, governance, time, and space. Students will need to experience decision making first hand. Democratic communities demand participation to renew education. As the school creates a vision for itself, students must learn how to create visions and set goals for their future. Whatever the career choice, the best place for students to practice and learn is in school. In every case for change and decision making, students cannot be overlooked as resources in school renewal. Students need to be engaged in all facets of school decision making, goal setting, data collecting, and the critical study. A democratic

community is fueled by information and differing points of view (Glickman, 1997).

Recommendations for Further Study

The results of this study suggest other research which could be conducted to increase understanding of the democratic process as it relates to student participation.

1. While this study was designed as an exploratory study and discovered student involvement in low impact issues, future research could examine student participation in regards to high impact issues that focus on teaching and learning.
2. Students should have greater exposure to literature developed expressly for high school students. There should be more student involvement for change to be successful. The results from this study could begin discussions for change.
3. Future studies should gather more specific information about other areas that should involve students. These studies could seek to determine specific types of activities that lead to enhanced teacher-student interaction.
4. Another study could address the same research questions as examined in this study using in-depth interviews conducted with participants from other role groups. The researcher could use the

results of this study to guide the development of questions to generate a deeper understanding of how students can contribute to school-wide decision making.

5. This study collected information from students that could be used to conduct studies in other high schools in school reform networks. The information gained could be shared to expand findings.

6. The findings related to the main question ranged from "no involvement" in decision making to "you can give your opinion but it is not really stressed." However, using more objective methods might reveal results much different. Other studies need to be conducted to determine whether there are differences among high school students elsewhere. A process should be put in place that includes the opinions of students. Their ideas may not always be used, but they learn the art of give and take. They also learn by example and participation in the democratic process.

It is important to note that:

> Every day, millions of students enter school wanting to learn, hoping to be stimulated, engaged and treated well, and hoping to find meaning in what they do. And every day that we, as educators, stimulate and challenge our students to focus their minds on meaningful tasks, to think about

important issues, and to construct new understandings of their worlds, we – and they – achieve a meaningful victory.

Brooks and Brooks, (1993)

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APPENDIX A

Request for Permission

Appendix A

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION

August 31, 1998

RE: Permission to conduct study

Dear Sir:

I am requesting permission to conduct research at Rose Hill High School (pseudonym) to determine the scope of involvement for high school students in making school-wide decisions. The baseline data found in the study will be used to inform school personnel of ways to employ democratic and inclusive practices involving students in school-wide decision making. The theoretical framework used for this study is grounded in the set of democratic ideals as embraced by the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education (ONE).

I have been in touch with Mr. Jorge Ricardo, Principal (pseudonym). He has expressed an interest in Rose Hill High School participating in the project. Mr. Ricardo has initiated a number of policies and procedures that have improved the climate at Rose Hill for all concerned. He has expressed in interest in my research study as it relates to student participation in decision making. Therefore, I am requesting you approval to conduct the study. In addition to your approval, this study must be approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oklahoma. Attached to this correspondence is a brief description of my proposal.

Please contact me at 325-2644 should you need additional information regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Martha Carroll Dauway
Doctoral student, University of Oklahoma

cc: Dr. Mary John O'Hair, advisor
Mr. Jorge Ricardo, Principal

APPENDIX B

Permission Granted by School District

Appendix B

Permission Granted by District

October 16, 1998

Ms. Martha Carroll Dauway
657 NW 129th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73114

Dear Ms. Dauway:

Your proposal to conduct research in the Oklahoma City Public Schools entitled High School Students as Stakeholders in School-wide Decision Making has been approved by the OKCPS review committee. Please feel free now to initiate contact with , Director of Secondary Schools (297-6543) and , Principal of the High School (xxx-xxxx) to schedule times and coordinate procedures for your research. Further contact and coordination need only be accomplished through them. Interviews and/or survey administration should be conducted in whatever manner causes the least disruption to the school environment.

Best of luck in your data collection and analysis. We look forward to seeing the results of your efforts when the study is complete.

Sincerely,

George H. Kimball, Ph.D.
Planning, Research & Evaluation
Oklahoma City Public Schools

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Appendix C

LIST OF QUESTIONS

Preliminary questions

Please tell me a little bit about yourself.

How old are you?

How long have you attended this school?

Main question

Have you been involved in decision making as to what happens to students in this school?

Probe questions

How would you describe your community?

Describe this school before the arrival of the present administration.

How has this school changed under the present leadership?

In what ways have you been instrumental in supporting the changes here at school?

Can you make any suggestions on something that would make this school better?

What are some problems you have had in this school?

How do you feel about the security at this school?

NOTE: The probe questions are listed in no particular order. Not every question was used in every interview.

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
This research is being conducted under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma Norman Campus. This document serves as the participant's consent to participate.

Introduction

The study "High School Students as Stakeholders in School-wide Decision Making: Reality or Rhetoric" is being conducted by Martha Carroll Dauway and sponsored by Dr. Mary John O'Hair.

Description of the Study

Students who participate in school decision making and activities develop leadership skills. In addition to skill development in high school, students should be included in educational decision making for discussions affecting their lives at school. I am interested in observing and recording student-teacher interactions during Advisory and Leadership classes. I am also interested in the perceptions of school administrators, teachers, students and parents of this phenomenon. Therefore, I will conduct audiotaped individual and focus group interviews. I will transcribe the interviews and confirm the accuracy of the transcription with teach participant. There will be three kinds of questions used during interviews. They are: (1) the main question, (2) probe questions to clarify answers, and (3) follow-up questions to examine themes and events. Video recordings will be made of special events (i.e. assemblies, extracurricular activities) as appropriate to the topic under study. I will share with you the interpretation of the information and ask for your opinion.

Potential Benefits and Risk of Participation

The baseline data found in this study will be used to inform school personnel of ways to employ democratic and inclusive practices involving students in school-wide decision making. It will also add to the body of knowledge related to school reform efforts that prompt educators to reach out and expand school boundaries to include the larger community in the decision making process. All data will be protected from non-participants through storage in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed when no longer needed for data analysis. Publications will not identify the school or individual participants. However, pseudonyms may be used for writing clarity where appropriate and for continued participant protection. Each

participant will be required to sign an informed consent form to be a part of this research.

Participant's Assurances

Participation in this study is purely voluntary and your child may withdraw at any time without penalty. Your confidentiality will be protected at all times by keeping records in a locked file cabinet. Your child's name, title or identifying materials such as written notes, papers, or published reports will not appear in transcriptions or published reports. If you have any questions about the research itself, participants may contact me, Martha Carroll Dauway at (405) 325-2644 (O); (405) 748-3020 (H), or Dr. Mary John O'Hair at (405) 325-1267 at the University of Oklahoma. Please contact the Office of Research Administration, Paula Wolfe (405) 325-4757 about questions related to your rights as a participant in this study.

I agree to my child's participation in the study described above.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

APPENDIX E

Observing Settings

Appendix E

DATA COLLECTION

SETTINGS:

Public places

Teachers' lounge or lunch room
Classrooms
Meeting rooms
Auditorium

Private offices

Counselor
Vice-principal for scheduling
Principal
Teachers (advisory and leadership classes)
Teachers committee (focus group in Library)

EVENTS:

Events during which teachers interact
Faculty/department meetings
Lunch/conference periods
In-service sessions
After school

Events during which teachers interact with students:
Teaching acts
Extracurricular activities
Suspensions and expulsions
Crisis counseling
Assemblies (Awards, Pep rallies, etc.)

PARTICIPANTS:

- Administrators
  - Principal
  - Vice-principal for discipline
  - Vice-principal for curriculum
  - Vice-principal for scheduling
  - Vice-principal for activities
- Counselors
- Coaches
- Teachers
  - Department heads
  - Beginning
  - Tenured
  - Different departments
- Students
  - Different ability levels
  - Diverse participation

ARTIFACTS:

- Documents
  - Newspapers
  - Policy statements
  - Attendance records
  - Disciplinary records
  - Achievement scores
- Objects
  - Logos
  - Mascots
  - Trophies
  - Decorations
  - Artwork
  - Physical arrangements

APPENDIX F

Participant Information Record

Appendix F

Pseudonym _____

Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

Participant Information Card

Number ___ Gender ___ Ethnicity _____

Please circle one: Teacher Administrator Student Parent

Degree _____ College Major _____

Subject taught _____ How long have you taught? _____

How long have you attended this school? _____

Worked? _____

Do you belong to a school committee? _____

Do you chair a school committee? (teacher) _____

Do you belong to a school club? (student) _____ If so, name the club or clubs _____

Are you a member of a professional group? _____ If so, name the group or groups _____

Have you ever been recognized for special service to the school community? _____ If yes, why were you recognized? _____

How many students do you teach per day?_____ Do you teach more than one subject? If so, list the subjects _____

If your child were high school age, would you want him/her to attend this school? _____. Please elaborate: _____
_____

Comments: _____

APPENDIX G

Special Events Tracking Sheet

Appendix G

SPECIAL EVENTS TRACKING SHEET

Date Time Room# Person/Group

Interviews

Focus Group

Individual

Video

Follow-up activities:

APPENDIX H

Field Notes

Appendix H

FIELD NOTES

10-6-98: Not long after my arrival at the school, a parent entered the main office screaming profanities about a teacher. The parent felt that the teacher should be fired because of her inability to keep track of her students. It appeared that the woman's mentally handicapped daughter had wandered away from this teacher's classroom for the second time. The mother was demanding to talk to someone in charge. Office personnel tried to explain that everyone was out attempting to find her daughter.

The administrative personnel in this school are assigned in such a way that each floor in the building has an administrator in charge of that particular floor who has a variety of duties, such as observing teachers during class and acting as hall monitor during passing periods and lunch. The administrators also monitor busses before and after school.

Rose Hill High School is a very busy place. There is foot traffic all day long. Some classes are inconvenient for students to get to in the time allowed.

10-19-98: I observed the police close the campus at lunch time. It was amazing how many students were able to leave the school in spite of the precautions taken to limit student movement. It appeared that students

had several ways offering easy access to leave campus. They could have used the main entrance and side doors to get past the barricades to the parking lots, and chains that indicated limits. However, because of the block scheduling (A and B) which allows for alternative attendance to class, it is difficult to keep track of students. Some students leave school to take classes at the vo-tech and still others have jobs after school. Other students serve as aides at the nearby elementary school in the afternoon. The level of trust for students seems to be high. Continuous foot traffic made it difficult (almost impossible) to contain students and retain them in school. Yet most students remained in school.

10-21-98: My mission today was to check the monitoring system placed in the attendance clerk's office. Upon entering the office, I spoke with the police officer assigned to Rose Hill. He was there on another matter - to pick up two students implicated in gang activity away from school. If the boys were in attendance at school, his search would end. However, he needed to talk to the principal before taking any action. The officer expressed feelings of helplessness because of school district restrictions, saying that he was "frustrated today." When asked why, he replied, "I must wait here in the office for the principal. He is in a meeting with someone visiting the school. I have so much to do today."

I waited for a while and observed students and parents coming and going. While waiting, I noticed the office environment had changed. The bulletin boards had recent newspaper articles posted about the students' efforts in community service. There were also new announcements of coming events for the new school month ahead. Neatness is valued in this office - you can tell by the up-to-date displays of interest to everyone. Everything was displayed in a creative manner - with colorful borders, lettering, and matting for each items. Student workers and office personnel appear to keep things orderly.

10-28-98: Today was the first time I observed the video monitor kept in the attendance office. It was an interesting piece of equipment. The machine surveys the campus focusing on "hot spots" or places for potential trouble. One could view close-up shots as well as view four different areas simultaneously on a split screen. The cameras also zoomed automatically to pre-planned locations on campus - in hallways and the main entrance. While this is useful, it did not appear to add to the school's security. Most of the locations being observed were far from the main building, so it would be difficult for help to arrive in time in case of an emergency. The school is huge, and has many "nooks and crannies."

NOTE: November was testing month for some students and everything was off schedule. Students visited other schools and

celebrated Thanksgiving. I waited to receive final approval for my study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University.

2-2-99: I went to the IRB today and received the approval to do the research with the students. My next hurdle was development of my prospectus, then presenting it to my doctoral committee.

Rose Hill High School-Criterion Reference Testing began today. It takes lots of time and attention to everyone. The bells are off schedule and the students are confused as to where to go to take their test. The principal was pleased with the parent-teacher conferences. He claims to have had over 400 parents visit the high school. This was highly unusual for high school parents to show such interest in their children's' grades, but I found out that the parents must pick up the child's report card or it will be mailed to the student's home.

The Honors Assembly was announced today. It will be on February 24 at 9:00 a.m. Seniors who work at the Air Force Base were being recognized. They attend school half days and work the other half. It was pointed out that work makes a difference in the behavior and discipline of these students.

There is lots of traffic in the office today. Problems ranging from a partially sighted student walking off campus without permission to students not understanding the testing schedule change. The sight-

impaired student's mother entered the office, freely using profanity in her demands to speak to someone in charge. No one could be found. Eventually, the principal returned from a class room observation and calmed the parent. The principal made it clear to the parent that using profanity was not acceptable in dealing with him or the office staff: "I will not take that. You will need to leave." The parent apologized. The next moment, the police arrived with the missing student. The principal initiated paperwork to have the girl moved into another program geared for students who need additional attention and perhaps a smaller classroom situation. This student needed the type of attention that is not provided in a public high school.

3-30-99: Rose Hill is a busy place today. Everything is being polished and shined. Students were putting the finishing touches on the auditorium and mounting the backdrop for the performance the next day. It was obvious that "company was coming." I later found out that the next day their ONE cluster partners were visiting the school for the first time.

As I walked further down the hall I met the principal who asked me to go put my things in his office, then come back. When I returned, he told me to go look at the faculty restroom. Upon entering the restroom I noticed that the old cracked and dingy grouted flooring had been replaced with new ceramic tile. A new cabinet with mirror and light replaced the

old. Air freshener perfumed the air, and a new light made the place bright and clear.

We walked through the building to see other improvements that had been made. The principal gave credit to the Seabees and students for the cleaning and repair efforts. "They came on Saturday to help remodel this place. They even went downtown to talk to the 'powers that be' to get this place presentable."

3-31-99: Newspaper headlines for the school could have read "The Rose Hill High School Community Turns Out in Support of Students." Cluster coordinators, students and parents came to school in large numbers. The visitors were greeted at the main entrance with a "bag of goodies" put together for them by the Rose Hill ONE student organization. The students took an active part in planning for the visit. The ceremony was held in the auditorium. Each visitor was given a program listing the day's activities. The entire school was focused on the Oklahoma Networks for Excellence in Education program. Group discussions were offered by organizations, and demonstrations were given in art and home economics. An explanation of how the school was funded for the year was discussed, and the principals in attendance were able to compare finance in and between districts. Lunch was provided for all students, parents and visiting school personnel. The afternoon gave way to performances by

organizations, the school choir, and the dance club. Community partners, central office personnel, board members, consultant types, and parents were invited to participate. The day went well with everyone proud of the job they had done as a school community.

4-19-99: Today an interview was scheduled with a Board of Education member who forgot the interview because it was the day before the income tax filing deadline. Mr. Grant is an attorney whose main business is preparing taxes for large corporate entities; I was interviewing him in his role as a volunteer for the school HOST program. HOST is an acronym for Help One Student Succeed at a Time. The focus of the program is reading, primarily helping bilingual students. Mr. Grant comes to Rose Hill every Wednesday to help as many students as he can. I ended my visit by checking on participants for the focus group interviews.

4-19-99: Began interviews. Students were slow in coming in after they were called from class. I spoke with three students-one male and two females. I felt they all spoke freely and we had established a level of trust. They were told at the beginning of each interview that what they said was confidential. The stories they told were moving and sad in a way. It was difficult to believe some of the things that were said.

4-21-99: Individual interviews were continued and the ONE representatives came for the interview. The students in this group needed

help in knowing the focus of their group. The group allowed one person to do most of the talking. I felt I had to facilitate too much with this group; most students had to be prompted to speak. I couldn't decide if their reluctance was lack of trust in me or in each other. The conference became a strain, but we managed to continue the interview for an hour.

4-28-99: Interviews continued today. The students were resigned to the way things were happening in the school. Hundreds of students were in the hallway and at lockers. The students "hang out" in hallways during the lunch period. Few students eat in the cafeteria; they complain about the food and indicate that they need a longer lunch period because of the slow service. They said that some students are still in line at the end of the lunch period and cannot make it to class on time. It was suggested that the school have more sports activities and additional fund raising activities to underwrite the cost of uniforms for different team sports.

4-29-99: I had to get a new list of students because some students scheduled for interviews had been absent for days due to illness. I spoke with the attendance clerk who knew most of the students and their patterns for coming to school. Arrangements were made for students to come to the office at a given time the next day for the interviews.

Students practiced for the Cinco de Mayo program. The Folklorico dancers practiced in the hallway in front of the Spanish class room. The

students were excited because this was the first time they had been able to share their dances in costumes. Both the young men and young women were dressed in native attire. The costumes were made by the students' parents and friends of the Spanish teacher.

5-5-99: The May 3rd tornado because the most destructive event in the history of the state. The tornado caused the Cinco de Mayo program to be postponed until things were back to normal. Some teachers and other staff members lost everything in the storm. The school community rallied around those who suffered losses and brought in clothing, bedding, canned good and toys. Everyone helped in some way, no matter how small or large.

5-11-99: Today individual interviews were conducted. The comments made by students about their lives were moving. I couldn't help but wonder how I would have fared if my parents had kicked me out of our home when I was in high school. The burdens the students bore were unbelievable. What would I have done had my mother been incarcerated?

The principal was pleased to share that attendance and enrollment figures had both improved greatly since his arrival at Rose Hill. He felt that, for the first time, both were holding the numbers. Last year (1998) at about this same time, he indicated that enrollment had dropped from 1000 to 600. However, there is a dramatic difference this year. He said,

"The year is ending and we have over a thousand (1025) students who began school in September (1998) remaining in school." The principal pointed out that it should be noted that the majority of students participating in the interviews had grade point averages of 2.90 to 4.0. The number of students on the Honor Roll had tripled under his leadership. He credited the difference to student needs being met both physically and mentally.

One of the most controlling practices I observed took place today. Hall sweeps were randomly done after passing periods. Students who were caught after the bell rang were sent home. Their parent or guardian was required to return them to school and to talk to the vice-principal; otherwise, the student couldn't return to class.

5-12-99: Today the school celebrated a belated Cinco de Mayo. There were some students and teachers who thought the celebration was inappropriate because of the numbers of students and staff who had lost family and friends in the tornado. Neighboring elementary and middle schools were invited to join in the celebration. The program was composed of lots of singing and dancing. The art teacher was the Master of Ceremonies. He was dressed in the traditional sombrero and gaucho outfit.

APPENDIX I

Participants in Study

PARTICIPATION IN STUDY
FOCUS GROUPS

TEACHER CADE			
NAME	GENDER	AGE	ETHNICITY
Mona	F	17	HP
Mason	M	18	AA
Sara	F	18	EA
Nancy	F	18	EA
Tamika	F	16	AA
Gloria	F	17	HP
O.N.E.			
NAME	GENDER	AGE	ETHNICITY
Nora	F	17	HP
Alfredo	M	18	HP
Paco	M	16	EA
Ray	M	17	AA
Luz	F	19	HP
Susan	F	16	AA
Miguel	M	18	NA
ROTC NAVY			
NAME	GENDER	AGE	ETHNICITY
JayKay	F	18	AA
Chuck	M	17	AA
Jake	M	17	EA
Gracie	F	18	HP
Martina	F	16	HP
Luisia	F	18	HP
Geraldo	M	16	HP
ETHNIC CODE			
AA = AFRICAN-AMERICAN			
EA = EURO-AMERICAN			
HP = HISPANIC			
NA = NATIVE AMERICAN			

PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY

INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWS

NAME	GENDER	AGE	GRADE	GPA	ETHNICITY	EMPLOYED	OCCUPATION	TIME IN SCHOOL	EDUC. ASPIRATIONS
Kali	F	19	12	3.5	EA	Yes	Ball Bearing Sorter	1/2 Day	College
Romeo	M	17	12	3.7	AA	No	None	All Day	Computer Engineer
Cecilia	F	18	12	3	HP	Yes	Jet Engine Mechanic	1/2 Day	Mechanical
LaSohna	F	18	12	3.05	AA	Yes	Cashier Concession Stand	B Schedule	College
Antonio	M	19	12	UKN	HP	Yes	Auto Mechanic	A Schedule	Auto Mechanic
Sweetie	F	17	12	3	HP	No	None	1/2 Day	Office Worker
Selena	F	16	12	3.5	EA	Yes	Cashier Ice Cream	All Day	Something in Medical Field
Enrique	M	19	12	2.9	HP	Yes	Aircraft Mechanic	1/2 Day	Law Enforcement

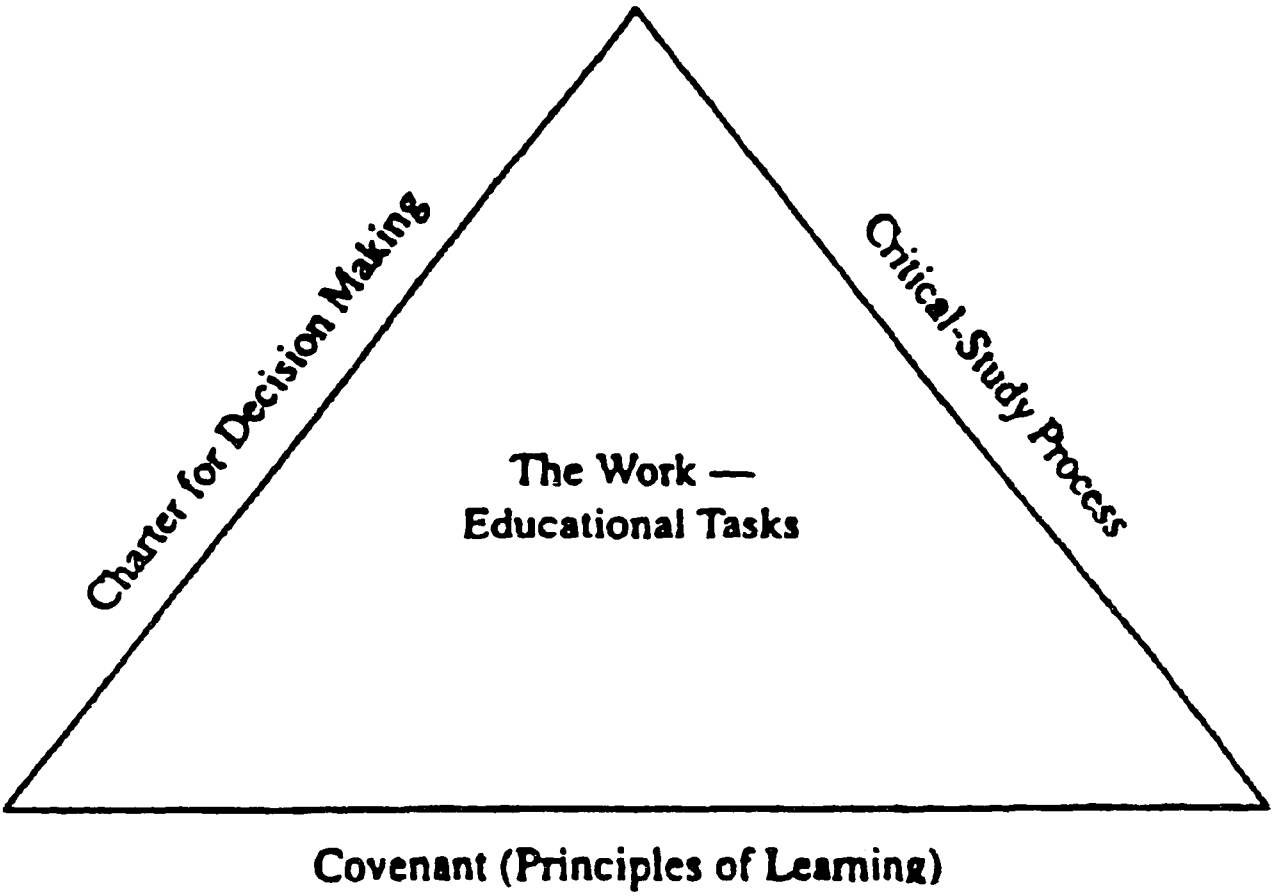
ETHNIC CODE:
AA = AFRICAN-AMERICAN
EA = EURO-AMERICAN
HP = HISPANIC

TIME:
1/2 DAY = MORNING or AFTERNOON CLASSES
B or A SCHEDULE = EVERY OTHER DAY

APPENDIX J

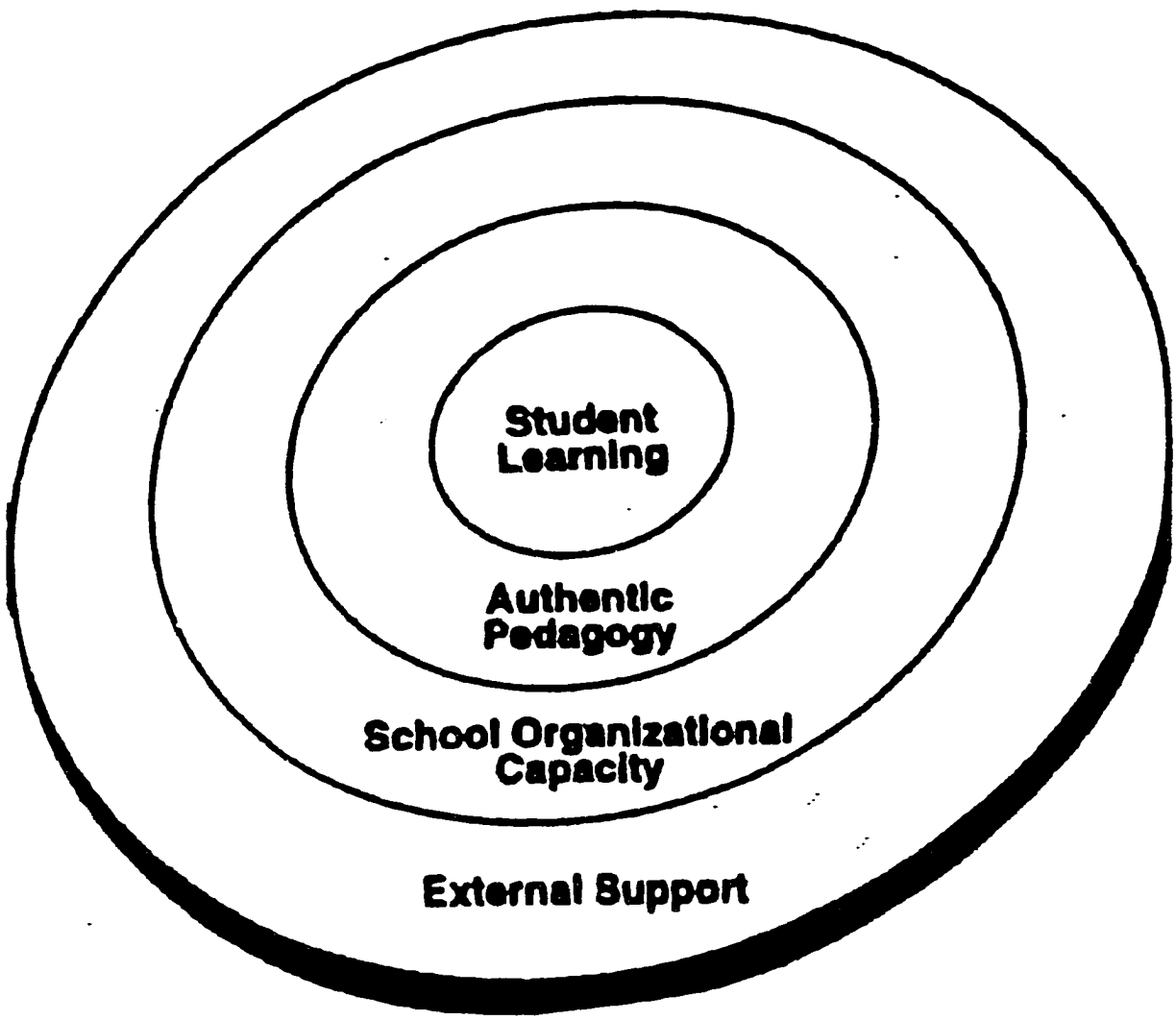
Theoretical Models

School Renewal Framework



Glickman (1993)

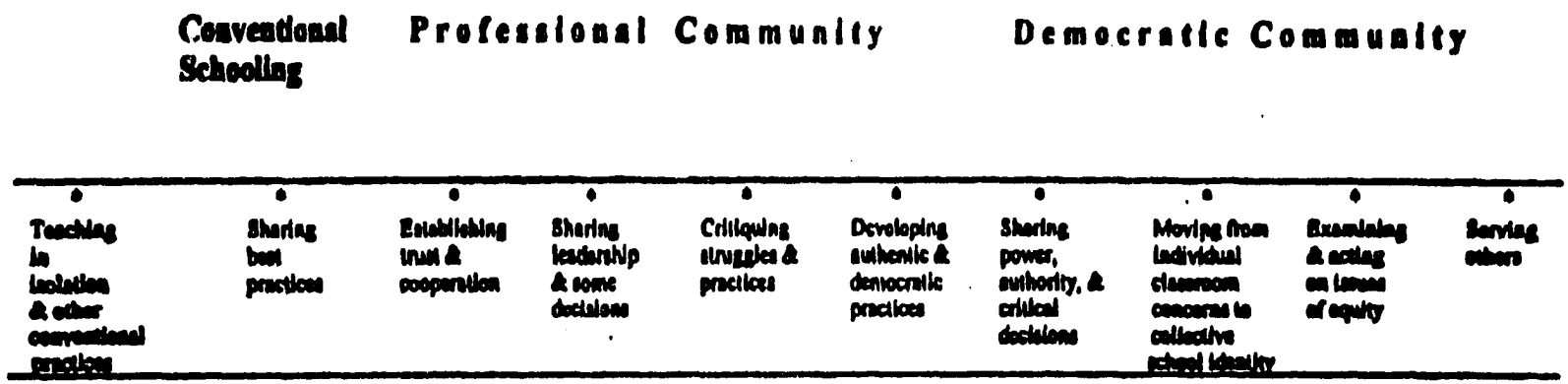
The Context for Successful School Restructuring



Circles of Support

Newmann & Wehlage (1995)

Continuum of Practices



O'Hair, McLaughlin & Reitzug

Continuum of Practices in moving from conventional schooling to democratic community