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Constructing An Educational Seawall:

A Study Of Leadership, Organizational Dynamics, Policy, And Purpose

by

Janet K. Zuber

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree: College of Education

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Abstract

Constructing An Educational Seawall:
A Study Of Leadership, Organizational Dynamics, Policy, And Purpose

Janet K. Zuber

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee:
Professor Kenneth Sirotnik
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This descriptive case study challenges the notion that top-down leadership is ineffective in engendering ownership and lasting commitment by those in the schools responsible for promoting educational change. My research examines the impact of a top-down directive initiated by a new superintendent on elementary principals and teachers. The directive, focused on teacher evaluation, required principals to effectively manage the routine activities within their school, *while at the same time* authentically demonstrating their value for instructional leadership by completing a minimum of 70 classroom observations during the school year. This study traces the implementation of the policy in a Pacific Northwest school district over the course of two years. It study focuses on the reflections, experiences and actions of six elementary principals and a sample of teachers in their schools. It examines the conditions within the organization and the human dynamics among the superintendent, principals, and teachers that promoted and challenged the policy implementation and ownership, and commitment to change. The actions of the superintendent are analyzed, first in an effort to see how one man elected to exercise leadership from his position of authority, and second to see how principals responded to the superintendent's initiative. And finally, this study examines the influence the policy had on principals' conception of their leadership role, how it altered their responsibilities, and the impact it had on the manner in which they worked with teachers.

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DEDICATION

To my husband Chuck for his patient and persistent support,

and to

Andrew for his wry and witty manner of helping me to maintain perspective.

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I --

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference."

The Road Not Taken

Chapter I

The Research Problem--Constructing An Educational Seawall

"The futility of school change is legendary.

Perhaps no American institution has been reformed more often,

with less apparent effect, than the school."

(Evans, 1996, p. xi).

A solitary figure strolls down the beach. Behind him, a zigzag of footprints marks his path. A foamy wave washes over the sand. As the wave recedes, the sand shimmers in the sunlight. No trace remains of the imprint made by the lone passerby.

As the beachcomber walks further, he leaves the beach and climbs up rocky steps to the top of a craggy seawall. As he journeys along the wall's ledge, he studies its construction. Countless flat stones are piled on top of each other to form a barrier between the ocean and the land. Crevices between the stones are filled with a lumpy gray mixture of cement and straw. On the ocean side, the wall's surface has been worn smooth by countless years of battering waves.

What astounds the hiker is the startling contrast between the beach he has just traveled and the grassy meadow protected by the seawall. He has trekked along a vast expanse of smooth sand dotted with shells and the occasional piece of bleached and weathered driftwood. Crabs scurried under rocks to avoid his footsteps. And now he stands in a patch of grass dappled with yellow dandelions. No empty shells chronicle the existence of snails or clams nor idly wait to become the adopted home of a hermit crab. Absent is the ebb and flow of the sea.

While the hammering of the workers who constructed this wall has long been silenced, the affects of their efforts endure. The rocky seawall barred the ocean from reclaiming the land piled securely behind the barrier. A sand dune became a verdant meadow. Grass replaced sand; flowers replaced sea shells. The seawall altered the relationship between the ocean and the land and supported the creation of a new environment.

The Construction of A Seawall

To say that dealing with change is a major problem in the administration of public schools is to say nothing new. The pressure for change is constant and insistent; and these days it seems to come from all directions. Improved student learning is the central goal voiced by the multitude of current national and state school improvement initiatives. In our increasingly complex society and rapidly changing, technology-based economy, the school reform movement is directing public schools to educate the most diverse student body in our history to higher academic standards than ever before. However at its root, achieving high levels of student understanding requires immensely skillful teaching, which in turn requires schools that are organized to support teachers' continuous learning.

Library bookshelves are well stocked with literature that documents the rise and fall of educational policies, of school leaders and of the decisions they made and the actions they initiated aimed at making a positive difference for students and their learning, for teachers and their teaching, and for the culture within the schoolhouse (for example, Goodlad, Soder & Sirotnik, 1990; Sarason, 1996; Schein, 1991; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1996).

Too often, the outcome of these initiatives are like the sandy footprints of the beachcomber--fragile and temporary. Change occurs only on the surface--a strategic plan, a

new organizational chart, a curriculum adoption, and the impact at best, is only temporary. Without the support of a seawall, a wall built of policies and practices that promote and enable the deeper transformation of a culture, the imprint of the initiative disappears with a change of leadership or legislation or simply the passage of time and lack of sustained attention to and nurturing of the innovation.

This study is an account of leadership and decision making that manifests evidence of a deeper change. There are early indicators that a school leader is in the midst of building a seawall. Signals suggest that the actions and efforts of this leadership is not only altering the role of the principal, but is transforming a learning environment and reforming a school district so deeply that the culture will not quickly return to a traceless sand flat once the mason's hammer is silenced.

The Purpose of This Study

In the spring of 1996, Bellevue School District hired a new superintendent. The new superintendent firmly stated that school principals are the "chief instructional leaders in the school district." He maintained that their ability to provide instructional leadership in their schools was their primary responsibility and an important factor in the improvement of instruction for students. In order to actualize his convictions, in August, 1996, the superintendent introduced a new teacher evaluation policy to school principals. While the focus of the policy was directed on student learning and the professional decisions and actions of teachers, the policy implied a significant impact on the work of the principal. Principals were directed to adjust their use of time during the school day in an effort to devote two-thirds of their work week to activities directed at teaching and student learning. Principals were to carry out a minimum of 90 classroom observations during the school year. These observations were

intended to provide principals with evidence regarding student learning to be used in frank and thoughtful conversations with teachers about their instruction. Principals were to complete written narratives for each observation documenting evidence of student learning and the actions taken by the teacher that supported or inhibited learning, and to provide teachers with recommendations aimed at instructional improvement.

The superintendent expected principals to introduce this policy to their faculty in September and then begin immediate implementation.

This study examines the story of how this top-down intervention by a strong instructional leader played out. I describe the first two years in the life of the teacher evaluation policy--its conception and introduction by the superintendent to principals, its introduction to teachers by principals, and the implementation of the policy by principals in the school house. I report principals' initial reactions and actions, their longer term understanding, impressions and adaptations of the policy, and the impact the policy made on their role, responsibilities, and learning.

This study challenges the notion that a top-down decision linked with top-down leadership is ineffective in engendering ownership and lasting commitment by those in the schools responsible for promoting educational change. However, as we will see, this was not a typical top-down strategy. Typically, top-down decisions are likened to "intervention strategies fashioned in the tradition of Frederick Winslow Taylor's principles of scientific management. The 'time and motion' studies of the turn of the century have become the research, development, diffusion, adoption, implementation, and evaluation of modern times" (Sirotnik, 1989, p.90). One associates an autocratic, authoritarian, militaristic environment with a top-down, centrally mandated directive. However, this was not the intended style or tone of the new

Bellevue superintendent. In this study, most recipients of the directive at first made that predictable association and demonstrated a variety of reactions. Yet in time, perceptions and attitudes changed, and after two years, principals and teachers describe evidence of some inchoate changes in the schoolhouse. They also describe a leader who though relentless in his efforts to improve the educational environment for every student, had gained their trust through his actions. His hands-on style of leadership provided them with a model, a clear sense of focus, and a unity of purpose directed toward student learning.

My research describes how a top-down decision supported bottom-up decision makers to work collectively and collaboratively with their administrative colleagues and with the teachers in their schools to intentionally focus on student learning. This study looks closely at the work of an acting school superintendent in a Pacific Northwest school district, first in an effort to see how one man elected to exercise leadership from his position of authority, and second to see how principals responded to the superintendent's initiative. It examines the conditions within the organization and the human dynamics among the superintendent, principals, and teachers that promoted and challenged the policy implementation and ownership, and commitment to change. And finally, this study examines the influence the policy had on principals' conception of their leadership role, how it altered their responsibilities, and the impact it had on the manner in which they worked with teachers.

The interrelationship between central office and local schools has been the subject of much thought and query (Crowson, 1988; Crowson & Morris, 1992; Cuban, 1989). It is widely believed that "instruction in most schools is not likely to improve unless a leadership consciousness at the district level develops in such a way as to forge linkages between schools and central office" (Wimpleberg, 1987, p. 106). Yet, as cited in Goldring and Rallis (1993),

"less is known about the role superintendents play in school effectiveness and improvement than the roles of teachers and principals (Wimpleberg, 1987)" (p.57),"despite the prevailing view that central office administrators are crucial to school change processes (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

While the research is sparse on the study of the superintendency (Bridges, 1982; Johnson. 1996), the landscape of research examining the relationship of superintendents and school principals working in partnership to improve educational excellence is even more barren. Rather, most studies have focused solely on the role of the superintendent *or* the principal. Such studies describe the needs superintendents and principals seek from each other. For example, superintendents typically desire a communication link with the schools that keeps them informed and warns them of unexpected events (Goldring & Rallis, 1993). In like manner, principals look to superintendents for support in the form of resources for the school and for assistance in buffering a demanding or volatile parent community (Goldring & Rallis. 1993).

Studies discuss factors that inhibit a superintendent/principal partnership directed at instructional leadership. A commonly cited reason is the plethora of managerial demands associated with carrying out the roles of both superintendent and principal that are fundamental to maintaining organizational stability. Such demands often take priority over spending time in schools or classrooms (Cuban, 1989; Smith & Andrews, 1989). Goldring & Rallis (1993) state that some studies suggest that the alliance between superintendents and principals is commonly "driven by the conflictual nature of the superintendent's job and his or her need to manage risks (Crowson & Morris, 1992; Cuban, 1989; Hannaway, 1989)" (p. 58).

Hence, superintendents engage in "administrative distancing between the central office and schools (Crowson & Morris, 1992)" (p. 58).

Not all superintendents and principals operate at a distance. The work of Goldring and Rallis (1993) claims that principals of dynamic schools value "their relationships within the complex hierarchy of public education" and appreciate and "benefit from a close link with their superintendents and central offices" (p. 66).

However, much of the research contends that the "central office" has little impact on schools and principals. As Goldring and Rallis (1993) note:

> When school systems are conceptualized as loosely coupled (Weick, 1976) and/or as organized anarchies (March & Olson, 1976), then it is predicated that the central office will have little impact on individual school sites and their principals. This view is supported by research that indicates that the central office has little control over teaching and learning activities (Hannaway & Sproull, 1978). (p. 57)

Thus, the intent of this study is also to help fill in the gap in research, lodged in the realm of educational leadership and policy, that examines the relationship of the superintendent and school principal and their ability to work together in addressing the goals of improved teaching and student learning.

Study Design

From the outset of my study, I selected a qualitative mode of research. To borrow from Glesne and Peshkin (1992) I knew that I was dealing with "multiple, socially constructed realities or 'qualities' that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables" (p.6). I knew that my task would be to come "to understand and interpret how the various participants in a

social setting construct the world around them." And as I pursued my research, I came to appreciate the evolutionary manner in which qualitative research unfolds. While I began my inquiry confidently focused with a problem statement, a design, interview questions, and a massive collection of documents, I soon found that I was uncovering unexpected themes and needing to assimilate new understandings.

My research started out as a descriptive case study of the teacher evaluation policy. Initially, I was interested in understanding the impact on principals of a top-down directive initiated by a new superintendent; a mandate that ordered principals to effectively manage the routine activities within their school, *while at the same time* authentically demonstrating their value for instructional leadership by spending a significant portion of their workday in classrooms and in focused conversation with teachers.

In the first stage of my research, I was interested in understanding the principal's impression of the policy; the impact of the policy on the principal's work and relationship with teachers; the manner in which the policy was being implemented by the principal; and factors supporting and challenging implementation. While the relationship between the district or central office and the school house was an element of my initial conceptual framework, the primary focus of the study was targeted at examining the policy and its impact on the school and the principal.

My conceptual framework was based on the following assumptions:

- The principal plays a significant role in mediating both the individual's and the collective community's capacity for learning.

- The key to improving teaching, and ultimately student learning, is by principals and teachers continually reflecting on instructional practices and altering the curriculum and instruction as a result of this reflection.
- The culture of the school exerts a powerful influence on the quality of learning for adults and students within the school.

The overarching questions that guided my initial data gathering were.

- How did the principal conceive the policy's purpose?
- How did the principal introduce and implement the policy?
- What factors influenced the implementation of the policy?
- How did the policy implementation impact the principal's role and responsibilities?
- How did the policy implementation impact the principal's working relationship with teachers?

I completed semi-structured interviews (refer to Appendix B for sample interview questions) with four elementary principals in spring, 1997, at the end of the first year of policy implementation. The sample of principals was selected to achieve as much variety as possible on a range of variables: leadership, school demographics, and teacher experience. Leadership focused on the school principal--years of experience as a principal and as a teacher; length of tenure as principal of the school. In considering school demographics, family income level based on the number of free and reduced lunches, ethnic diversity, and student achievement based on standardized tests were the factors used. The staff development literature describes the impact of adult development and life transitions on teacher learning and teachers'

willingness to accept change (e.g. Glickman, 1990; Costa & Garmston, 1993; Guskey & Huberman, 1995). Because I did not have access to data revealing the age of teachers, I substituted teacher experience to roughly compare the maturity of the staffs.

A second consideration I used to select the principal participants related to the constraints caused by my role as an administrator in the district and the limitations placed on my study by the Human Subjects review process (see Appendix A for sample of Consent Form). I directly supervised the principals of eight of the sixteen elementary schools located in the Bellevue School District. None of these schools were included in my study. Due to the reassignment of three of the four principals at the end of the first year of the study, I was able to continue my research with only one principal from the initial group. I added two additional elementary principals to my sample in the second year.

In the spring of 1998, I completed a second set of semi-structured interviews using a similar set of questions. In addition, in the second year of policy implementation, I interviewed a minimum of two teachers from each of the three principal's schools to gather information regarding the teacher's impression of the policy and its impact on the principal. Years of teaching experience was the primary criteria used to select teacher participants: three or fewer years and more than three years. I also interviewed the originator of the policy, the school superintendent, in an effort to document his purpose in introducing the policy and his observations and perceptions of the policy's implementation, its effect on his work with principals, and their work with teachers.

In addition to interviews, three other sources of information were collected to support this study. Documents referring to the policy--copies of handouts used by the superintendent to introduce the evaluation policy and principal expectations to building administrators, and

agreements made between the district and the Principal Association regarding the evaluation policy were collected and analyzed. The local newspapers described the departure of the former superintendent and the arrival of the new one. Information gathered from the press as well as various studies completed by outside consultants that documented recent district initiatives such as school-centered decision making provided context to the story.

Three months after the new evaluation model was introduced, the district conducted a survey (see Appendix C) of Bellevue's teaching staff to assess their reactions with respect to their principal's effectiveness as an evaluator. This survey was slightly modified and conducted again in the second year. This survey data was analyzed to assess teachers' confidence in their principal's knowledge of curriculum and instruction.

Participant Observer or The Politics of Working In My Own Back Yard

I gathered information as a participant-observer, the third source of data. As a member of the superintendent's Cabinet, I participated in the workshops and meetings at which the superintendent introduced and reviewed the policy. While I did not accompany the superintendent on visits to the sites included in this study, I joined the superintendent on similar visits to other elementary schools. In reading Yin's (1994) description of participant-observation as "a special mode of observation in which you are not merely a passive observer" (p. 87), I recognized that I could not legitimately ignore my role in the district and my connection with this policy. While my citizenship provided me privileges not available to most outsiders, my observations could be challenged as biased, as lacking objectivity. With this in mind, I strove to constantly heed the caution of Alan Peshkin, "One's subjectivity, however, has the capacity not only to enable but also to disable. It is necessary, therefore, to try to see what you are not seeing, to detect what you are making less of than could be made, so that you

can temper as necessary that which your subjectivity is pressing you to focus on. (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 104).

A Change In Focus

But like the beachcomber's experience, as I strolled the beach the lay of the land changed. While principals were willing to focus on the teacher evaluation stone that formed a portion of the seawall, and to describe its impact on their role, responsibility, workday, and relation with teachers, they wanted to talk about the deeper changes happening behind the seawall. Their responses kept returning to their own personal commitment to this top-down mandate and the manner in which they were changing as leaders in their building.

Moreover, the superintendent and his leadership style and actions became increasingly central to what I was hearing. Principals' and teachers' responses mirrored the research of Stanley and Popham (1988) regarding the importance of "leadership density." The role of strong leadership in the development of effective evaluation systems is well documented (Iwaniki, 1981; McGreal, 1983; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin & Bernstein, 1984). It appears that this necessary leadership is manifested in several ways. The most obvious need appears to be leadership that emanates from the top. While much of the effective schools literature points to the importance of the principal in providing instructional leadership at the school level, there is increasing evidence that the role of the superintendent and central office staff is every bit as crucial to instructional improvement efforts. McGreal (1988) says, "Successful leadership from the top must be active leadership. Superintendent and central office staff members must be physically and emotionally involved in the schoolwide process of planning, developing, and implementing a local instructional plan, especially the staff development and staff evaluation components" (p. 4-5). Thus, as conversations of principals

and teachers continually focused on the superintendent, and on both the positive and negative impact of his actions on change in the district, the focus of my study was redirected more intentionally on the district leader. The superintendent was no longer unacknowledged nor anonymous. With his full permission, Dr. Mike Riley became a central player in my research. And while many studies (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Saphier & King, 1985; Sizer, 1984) support the claim that a school culture supportive of improved practice and professional growth is essential to promoting school change, and this concept is deserving of further investigation, I chose to limit the scope of my study by removing that component.

Principals saw the teacher evaluation policy as only one stone in the wall. The passion of their conversations focused on the mortar that held the stones in place. This mortar was made up of a conglomerate of leadership, organizational dynamics and purpose or substance.

And so, while this study did not lose focus of that single stone, the policy that helped to form the base of the seawall, I restructured my conceptual framework and placed the relationship of leadership, organization dynamics, and purpose within the larger sphere of change. I refined my questions to focus on the mortar surrounding the policy. As I conducted a second set of principal interviews, I was interested in understanding principals' interpretation of the policy from a broader viewpoint. I wanted to move beyond the details of how principals conducted the supervision cycle and grappled with fitting the activities mandated by the policy into their workday. I wanted to search for evidence regarding the influence this policy and its author was having on principals' conception of their leadership; their vision for their schools; and the way they worked with teachers. I was interested in identifying indicators of ownership of this top-down directive, mandated by a first-year superintendent. Thus these interests prompted my second round of questions.

- How did the superintendent use his formal authority to promote and implement the policy and how did his actions relate to leadership and organizational dynamics?
- Who *owned* this mandated policy and how was that evidenced?
- What additional outcomes were generated by the policy implementation?

This time my questions sought out evidence of changes over time regarding the principals' impression of and commitment to the policy; their relationship with the superintendent; and their leadership role in relation to the policy.

Methods of Analysis

Conventional procedures were used for analyzing data. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcribed interviews were imported into QSR NUD*IST, a data management system designed for use with qualitative data. Data was then coded using a synthesis of strategies suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Initially, I focused on the interviews of the principals and teachers. Interviews were coded holistically marking sections of interviews and reading for the gist, rather than line by line or clause by clause. At first, I was interested in matching interview text with the questions that framed my study. However, as I read and reread the interviews, new information caused me to add to my codes. For example, principals and teachers reaction to the policy changed *over time*. Therefore, I went back and re-coded data (e.g. Policy Introduction by the Superintendent, Initial Reaction of Principals, Principals Introduce the Policy, Initial Reaction of Teachers, Factors Which Positively Changed Principals' Attitude) with chronology of events as a determiner. Eventually, I indexed the transcriptions using fifty-three different codes (see Appendix D). Guided by the constant comparative method of data analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and the advice of Erickson (1986 p.146), I repeatedly reviewed the data from the interviews, documents, and

survey to "generate empirical assertions, largely through induction" (Erickson, 1986, p.146). Data was searched for disconfirming as well as confirming details. Assertions were supported, rewritten, or discarded. My coding was refined as propositions emerged. Regularly, the questions guiding the study were reviewed as a method of maintaining focus and provoking reflection.

As I examined the actions of the superintendent from an organizational theory perspective, I used a different lens to code the interview with the superintendent and those documents describing both his evaluation policy and the actions he took during his first two years in his new role. I coded the superintendent interview using Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames -- structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. I simply looked for evidence of the frames in each text unit. To further define my analysis I employed questions described by Bolman and Deal including "How important are commitment and motivation"; "How much ambiguity and uncertainty is present?"; "How much conflict and diversity is present"; and "Are we working top down or bottom up?"(p. 326).

As my study narrowed to focus on leadership and the relationship of the superintendent and his policy with principals and teachers it was necessary to eliminate some data from further consideration. As an example, early on I was interested in pursuing more deeply the learning that occurred for principals as a result of spending so much time in classrooms. Was their understanding of specific curriculum strengthened? Were there changes in their ability to analyze lessons for evidence of student learning? Did their observations become more specific and refined? Did they add new skills to their own repertoire for the purpose of encouraging reflective thinking on the part of their teachers? While pursuing this topic, I observed and tape-recorded a series of post-observation conferences conducted by the

principals in my study. I collected two years worth of observation write-ups completed by each of the principals. However, as I tightened the boundaries around my topic of study, this data was set aside.

The Audience

This study is intended mainly for superintendents, central office administrators, principals, and teachers. Additionally, my hope is that academic scholars in educational leadership and policy studies will also read and benefit from this study. The centerpiece of this research is the case study of the implementation of a model of teacher supervision. Thus, this study should prove useful to superintendents and principals focused on the relationship of supervision of instruction and the improvement of teaching and student learning. With its focus on a newly appointed superintendent it could be of particular interest to those individuals either aspiring to the role of superintendent or those new to the role, seeking examples of what supported and hampered a leader set on facilitating change. Finally, students of leadership will find in this research another example of what leadership looks like in practice.

Chapter II

Mortar--A Mixture of Leadership, Purpose and Organization

Review of Relevant Research and Theory

The implementation of a teacher supervision policy is the focus of the case study that forms the centerpiece of my research. However, it is not the policy, but rather *the factors surrounding the implementation of the policy-- leadership, organizational theory, and purpose, all operating within the context of change*, that emerge as the key elements of interest to this study.

Recent History of Educational Change

"The history of school reform is littered with the debris of discarded changes" (Cuban, 1988, p. 90). Yet it is only since the 1960s that researchers began to carefully study the educational change process in practice. These thirty-odd years of research on change in schools have provided a wealth of information on processes that work and do not work. For many, however, the successful implementation of new programs and processes, or innovations, remains a dilemma. An abbreviated review of the insights gained through nearly four decades of policy investigation calls attention to the considerations which influenced my study.

The decade of the 1960s came to be known as the *adoption* era because educators were preoccupied with the number of innovations being attempted. This was the decade of new math, individualized instruction, open classrooms, non-graded schools and team teaching. Thus in the 1970s, when the research on change in schools began in earnest, change was viewed primarily as classroom change--one teacher, one classroom, one innovation. In fact, the central paradigm for planned educational change through the early 1980s provided an innovation

focused perspective on the implementation of single changes in curriculum and instruction (Fullan, 1985).

Around 1970, innovation met with disfavor and the term "implementation" came into use. It was during this decade that Goodlad (1970), Sarason (1971) and others exposed the problems plaguing the early adopter. Stiegelbauer (1994) reported these concerns:

> Innovations were being adopted with a lack of follow-through, lack of definition, lack of practice and training in the innovation. Change in these circumstances could be described as an event, because it was selected and announced; and it was assumed that change would then simply happen. Emphasis was on designing and adopting good programs, not on implementing them. (p. 1)

Educators of the 1970s, alerted to these concerns, paid attention to the factors contributing to the earlier "implementation failure" and a number of success stories were documented beginning in the late 1970s (Cox and deFrees, 1991; Lieberman, Darling-Hammond & Zuckerman, 1991; Fullan, 1992).

Unfortunately, criticism at the national level was focused on schools' efforts to implement one innovation at a time rather than tackling more basic structures and more comprehensive reform. *A Nation At Risk*, produced in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, attacked the quality of education in America and challenged educators to institute significant educational reform. With this report, the nation as a whole was alerted to the presumed plight of U.S. education and the need for a comprehensive revitalization of the school system. The document provoked legislative action at both the national and state levels as well as local district initiatives. This change direction promoted a

plethora of mandates. Increased definition of curriculum, mandated textbooks, standardized tests tightly aligned with curriculum, and specification of teaching and administration methods backed up by evaluation are just some examples of the collection of policy directives that converged on educators. (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Fullan, 1992). This focus of school reform continues to dominate the education agenda.

A Need For Renewal

Some argue, however, that change should be approached a bit differently. The research on change has generated an emphasis on process and its context. Effective change no longer affects one teacher in one classroom, but the very culture of schools. As Larry Cuban (1988) says, many of the early efforts at change might be called "first order changes." They are addressed to more superficial elements of the classroom and the school system and do not stress the organization to any meaningful degree. However, many of the changes required by current societal and educational demands go deeper than any surface treatment can address, and require what Cuban calls "second order changes"--changes that go deep into the structure of organizations and the ways in which people work together. This kind of change is multifaceted, slower, and means changing attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, relationships, and the way people collaborate.

"Many argue that making change operational and institutionalized within a system is only part of the challenge. Crandall, Eiseman, and Louis (1986) note that the goal of institutionalization is often tantamount to routinization, which decreases the capacity of schools to integrate responses to new needs and issues. The assumption is that renewal (Hall & Loucks, 1977), rather than institutionalization, is a more appropriate focus for school

improvement." (Stiegelbauer, 1994). Sirotnik (1999) differentiates between education reform and renewal:

> "Reform" is about whatever is politically fashionable, pendulum-like in popularity, and usually underfunded, lacking in professional development, and short-lived. *Renewal* is about the process of individual and organizational change, about nurturing the spiritual, affective, and intellectual connections in the lives of educators working together to understand and improve their practice. Renewal is not about a point in time--it is about all points in time--it is about continuous, critical inquiry into current practices and principled innovation that might improve education (pp. 607-608).

Purpose --The Heart of Educational Change

"Principled innovation" suggests the need to focus on *the purpose of renewal*. Fullan (1993) joins others (e.g. Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990; Sarason, 1996), in asserting that managing moral purpose is at the heart of educational change. He proposes that this moral purpose "is to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background, and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies" (p. 4). While he contends that these matters should start with individuals, the classroom teachers as the "agents of educational change and societal improvement"(p. 11), he continues by stating that this sense of moral purpose, this need to make a personal contribution, must expand beyond individual teachers and the classroom.

> Making a difference, must be explicitly recast in broader social and moral terms. It must be seen that one cannot make a difference at the interpersonal level unless the problem and solution are enlarged to encompass the conditions

> that surround teaching . . . and the skills and actions that would be needed to make a difference. (Fullan, 1993a, p. 11)

The purpose for change or renewal promoted by the policy implementation that is central to my study supports Fullan's contention that managing moral purpose is at the heart of educational change. Implementation of the policy is located in the classroom and is focused on teachers' teaching and on students' learning. The policy's ultimate intention is to promote maximal student learning, and thus to make a difference in the lives of students. In directing the actions of school principals to focus their classroom observations around the question "What did the students learn?," the superintendent's policy asked principals to consider for themselves the question, "What constitutes learning?"

Bellevue's new superintendent provoked principals to give thought to their own definition of learning *even before* he introduced his policy. Laying the groundwork, in his first summer in the district, the superintendent provided every principal and Cabinet member with a copy of Howard Gardner's (1991) book, *The Unschooled Mind--How Children Think & How Schools Should Teach.*

In his book, Gardner describes *three* types of learners. The *intuitive learner* is the "young child who is superbly equipped to learn language and other symbolic systems and who evolves serviceable theories of the physical world and of the world of other people during the opening years of life" (p. 6). Gardner describes the *traditional student* to be:

> The youngster from age seven to age twenty, roughly, who seeks to master the literacies, concepts, and disciplinary forms of the school. It is these students who, whether or not they can produce standard performances, respond in ways

similar to preschool or primary school youngsters, once they have been removed from the context of the classroom. (p. 7)

Lastly, "there is the *disciplinary expert* (or skilled person), an individual of any age who has mastered the concepts and skills of a discipline or domain and can apply such knowledge appropriately in new situations" (Gardner, 1991, p. 7). Gardner describes the disciplinary expert as a student who can use his or her knowledge to "illuminate new phenomena. Disciplinary experts' knowledge is not limited to the usual text-and-test setting, and they are eligible to enter the ranks of those who really 'understand'" (p. 7). Gardner argues that "an education geared to understanding is the proper one to pursue and that our burgeoning knowledge about human development and institutional arrangements can and ought to be mobilized toward those ends" (p. 20).

Wiggins and McTighe (1998) expand on the concept of *understanding* as the key to evidence of powerful learning. They define understanding as the ability to make sense of what is known, to know why it is so, and the ability to use it in various situations and contexts--not to simply give it back in the form in which it was learned. It is their contention that "Teaching for understanding is not the same thing as teaching for skill or recall of facts"(p. 159). Acknowledging that students reflect their understanding in various ways, Wiggins and McTighe developed a six-sided view of the framework describing facets or aspects of understanding. It is their claim that when we truly understand, we

- Can explain: provide thorough, supported, and justifiable accounts of phenomena, facts, and data.

- Can interpret: tell meaningful stories; offer apt translations; provide a revealing historical or personal dimension to ideas and events; make it personal or accessible through images, anecdotes, analogies, and models.
- Can apply: effectively use and adapt what we know in diverse contexts.
- Have perspective: see and hear points of view through critical eyes and ears; see the big picture.
- Can empathize: find value in what others might find odd, alien, or implausible; perceive sensitively on the basis of prior direct experience.
- Have self-knowledge: perceive the personal style, prejudices, projections, and habits of mind that both shape and impede our own understanding; we are aware of what we do not understand and why understanding is so hard. (p. 44).

Wiggins and McTighe caution that these factors are not hierarchical in nature, nor are *all* aspects necessarily evident in every lesson or even a unit of study. The authors do not advocate for a particular instructional style or method to support teaching for understanding. However, they do emphasize that good teaching is dependent on good design. Borrowing from Adler's *The Paideia Proposal*, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) categorize *three* educational aims paired with their teaching means. *Acquisition of organized knowledge* is linked with didactic or direct instruction; *development of intellectual skills* is linked with coaching or supervised practice; and *enlarged understanding of ideas and values* is connected with the instructional strategies of Socratic questioning and active participation (p. 159). While Wiggins and McTighe (1998) acknowledge that all three methods have their place,

they caution that "many common teaching moves support goals other than understanding, and [that] excessive didacticism . . . undercuts the questioning, research, discussion, and performance needed to develop understanding" (p.160). The authors agree with Sizer (1994) that "Understanding is more stimulated than learned. It grows from questioning oneself and being questioned by others" (p. 117). Thus Wiggins and McTighe advocate for "less teaching and more questioning" (p. 160), frequent checks for understanding, and incorporation of their six facets of understanding in teachers' lesson designs.

Techniques they offer teachers for checking for understanding include:

- oral questioning (e.g. What is the big idea?; What alternatives should be considered _____?; What is wrong with _____?), followed by further probes such as Why?; Could you give an example?; and What data support your position?
- asking students to construct visual representations such as concept maps, flow charts, or time lines to illustrate their understanding of relationships among elements; and
- asking students to display a designated hand signal to indicate their understanding of a specific concept, principal, or process (pp. 166-167).

Searching for evidence of student understanding was one charge that the superintendent placed on Bellevue principals. However, in directing the actions of school principals to focus their classroom observations around the question "What did the students learn?," the superintendent's policy challenged principals to grapple not only with the cognitive query, "What constitutes learning?," but to wrestle with moral questions such as "Do I believe

all students have unlimited potential?," and leadership questions like "How do I allocate resources to provide extraordinary additional support when it is required?" and "What is my own role in supporting student learning?" These questions broadened the policy purpose to "encompass the conditions that surround teaching . . . and the skills and actions that would be needed to make a difference" (Fullan, 1993a, p. 11).

Phases of the Change Process

The assumption that moral purpose is the ultimate compass for any educational reform and that it must be linked to a broader social, public purpose solicits the need for the skills of change agentry. Fullan (1993) describes change agentry as "being self-conscious about the nature of change and the change process" (p. 12).

As the collection of change initiatives has expanded and both success stories and failures have been studied, recognition has grown for the fact that change does not occur in a neat, linear fashion. Instead, the process is often messy and disjointed with fits and starts along the way. With this realization, most researchers continue to describe the life of an initiative within three broad phases of the change process.

> Phase I--variously labeled initiation, mobilization, or adoption--consists of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. Phase II--implementation or initial use . . . involves the first experiences of attempting to put an idea or reform into practice. Phase III--called continuation, incorporation, routinization, or institutionalization--refers to whether the change gets built in as an ongoing part of the system or disappears by way of a decision to discard or through attrition. (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 48)

To these three phases, Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) adds a fourth phase--outcome.

> Outcome, depending on the objectives, can refer to several different types of improvement in relation to given criteria. Results could include, for example, improved student learning and attitudes; new skills, attitudes, or satisfaction on the part of teachers and other school personnel; or improved problem-solving capacity of the school as an organization. (p. 48)

Focus on implementation.

It is in the implementation phase that most of the learning about change occurs, and it is within this phase that my study is lodged. Therefore, I would like to focus the remainder of this section on unpacking this stage in the life of an initiative in an effort to more fully describe those factors that support successful implementation.

Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991) state,

> Implementation consists of the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change. . . . In a word, implementation is a variable, and if the change is a potentially good one, success . . . will depend on the degree and quality of change in actual practice . . . . The logic of the change process . . . is essentially straightforward: However changes get initiated, they proceed or not to some form of implementation and continuation, resulting in some intended and/or unintended outcomes (pp. 65-66).

Context and processes: What makes implementation work.

In the early 1970s, researchers began taking a serious look at the factors impacting educational change, and more specifically, policy implementation. McLaughlin (1987) in

tracing the history of implementation analyses discussed the impact of the work of Pressman and Wildavsky in 1973:

> They were first in the first generation of implementation analysts who showed that implementation dominates outcomes--that the consequences of even the best planned, best supported, and most promising policy initiatives depend finally on what happens as individuals throughout the policy system interpret and act on them (Bardach, 1977; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Elmore, 1977; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975, for example). This first generation of implementation analysis showed how local factors such as size, intra-organizational relations, commitment, capacity, and institutional complexity molded responses to policy. (p.172.)

It was the second generation of analysts who "began to unpack [the policy implementation problems] and to zero in on relations between policy and practice"(McLaughlin, 1987.p. 172). Fullan (1992) says that while the implementation process is "complex and dilemma ridden" (p. 24), that considerable knowledge and insight has been accumulated regarding the process of change.

- *Change requires some impetus to get it started.* There is no evidence that widespread involvement at the initiation stage is necessary or even effective. Rather, active initiation, starting small and thinking big, bias for action, and learning by doing are all aspects that make the change more manageable and gets it launched in the desirable direction. "While participation, initiative-taking and empowerment are important, sometimes these factors do not get activated until a change process has begun" (Fullan, 1992, p. 25).

- *Successful implementation generally requires a combination of pressure and support for success* (McLaughlin, 1987; Fullan, 1993a). Pressure alone may be sufficient when policy objectives contain their own implementation directions e.g., the 55 mph speed limit, or when policy implementation requires no additional resources or normative change. "But pressure alone cannot effect those changes in attitudes, beliefs and routine practices typically assumed by reform policies" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 173).

> Opportunities for cooptation, symbolic response, or non-compliance are multiple in the loosely structured, multi-layered world of schools and education policy. . . . Even an army of auditors would be unable to force compliance with the spirit of the law--which is what matters in the long run. (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 173)

Thus coupled with pressure is the need for support. Pressure is necessary in most situations to focus attention on the policy goal and to provide parameters and legitimacy; support is essential to enabling implementation.

- *Changes in behavior and beliefs-- An individual's involvement with and commitment to change is motivated largely by an individual's subjective understanding of the meaning of change.* Within this subjective reality, individuals have to decide "what's in it for them" and how they will deal with this new opportunity. It is the transformation of subjective realities, or the establishment of a new meaning or relationship to the change, that is the essence of any substantive change process (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

Sometimes subjective meaning can be mediated by dealing with the objective reality of the change (i.e., what the change really is, how it relates to current practice, and what its effects will be). On the one hand, there is the individual and his or her personal being; on

the other hand is his or her professional life and responsibilities. Somewhere within this framework, change lives or dies (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

- *While ownership is essential to real change, ownership is not easily acquired.* Motivation and will reflect the implementor's assessment of the value or worth of the policy goals and the appropriateness of the strategies. However, value of or belief in a policy often follows action (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 173). "Thus ownership in the sense of clarity, skill, and commitment is a progressive process" (Fullan, 1992, p. 26), and cannot be achieved in advance of learning something new (Fullan, 1993a, p. 30). For example, teachers will become more receptive to a new curriculum when they begin collecting evidence from their own students that the curriculum is producing competence.

  Yet, motivation is influenced by factors beyond the policy. "Environmental stability, competing centers of authority, contending priorities or pressures and other aspects of the social-political milieu can influence the implementor willingness profoundly (see Yin, 1981)" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 173).

- *Ongoing support is important.* Fullan cautions that while involvement in a significant change process can generate a sense of initial enthusiasm and commitment, high expectations without the capacity and ideas for ongoing fulfillment can cause burnout and a feeling of "inconsequentiality" that Fullan describes as "a sense on the part of professionals that their efforts to help others have been ineffective, that the task is endless, and that the personal payoffs for their work (in terms of accomplishment, recognition, advancement, or appreciation) have not been forthcoming (Farber, 1991, p. 25)" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 57).

People: The Most Important Element In Change

While the phases of the change process tend to focus on the stages in the life of a policy, it is important to recognize that policy does not create change; people do. *Change is ultimately the problem of the smallest units, the individuals actually implementing the policy.* A policy is transformed as individuals interpret and respond to it. "What actually is delivered or performed . . . depends finally on the individual at the end of the line, or the 'street level bureaucrat'" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 173). This understanding recognizes the fact that while organizations may set the policy goal, it is the energy and efforts, commitment and motivation of individuals that actually implement change.

People moving through a change process experience a series of events or elements, something like developmental stages, that have been described as the *tasks of transition* (Evans, 1996). Senge (1990) suggests a portrait of seven different degrees of support a person can have for an organization's vision for change: apathy or no interest; noncompliance and unwillingness to do what is expected; grudging or minimal compliance; formal compliance, does what is expected but no more; genuine compliance, does everything expected and more; enrollment; and commitment, will actively implement and create whatever structures are needed to support or carry out the change (pp. 219-220).

Transition begins with the task of *unfreezing*, the need to persuade people that the current state is not satisfactory and that a change is necessary. Causing disconfirmation inevitably creates anxiety and fear in people that will cause them to want to deny or ignore the evidence supporting the need for change.

Once the individual admits to the necessity for change there is a need to move from old competence to new competence. In order to implement a change a person needs to develop new

behaviors or skills, new beliefs, and new ways of thinking. Training that is coherent, continuous, and personal is essential to supporting this task. As the person realigns the structures, functions, and roles necessitated by the change, there is a movement from confusion and a feeling of incompetence to one of coherence and the confidence of mastery. (Evans, 1996; Lewin, 1952; Schein, 1987).

The final task is one of investment or commitment to the change which links back to the earlier statements regarding ownership and motivation. Commitment to, or ownership of change also projects forward to examining questions central to my study, "What is the impact of a top-down strategy on principals and teachers in the schoolhouse?" and "What is the relationship between top-down and bottom-up change strategies?"

Top Down Vs Bottom Up

In examining a number of small and large scale studies ranging from "voluntary" to "mandatory" top-down strategies, local implementation failed in the majority of the cases (e.g. Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). Sarason (1990) argues that significant resources have been devoted to top-down reform with little to show for it. He suggests that these initiatives have focused on rules and regulations with little attention given to those expected to implement the change.

> Change can come about by proclaiming new policies, or by legislation, or by new performance standards, or by creating shape-up-ship-out ambiance, or all of the preceding. It is a conception that in principle is similar to how you go about creating and improving an assembly line--that is, what it means to those who work on the assembly line is of secondary significance, if it has any

> significance at all. The workers (read: educational personnel) will change (Sarason, 1990, p.123).

As Goodlad (1992) observes, "top-down, politically driven education reform movements are addressed primarily to restructuring. They have little to say about educating" (p. 238)

The failure of centralized reform mandates caused a shift of support to decentralized reform measures. Site-based management has been one of the most prominent methods of prodding change from the bottom-up. While the premise that those closest to the schools are most knowledgeable of needed change and that site-based participation by key players should engender ownership for the changes, unfortunately, to date there is little evidence that altered governance procedures have significantly impacted the teaching-learning core of schools (Fullan, 1991, p. 201).

Not satisfied to merely provide evidence that neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies, by themselves, are effective, Fullan probes deeper to offer an explanation of *why* they do not work. He suggests that top-down strategies are problematic because you cannot control complex changes at a distance, from the top. Senge (1990) calls this "the illusion of being in control." "The perception that someone 'up there' is in control is based on illusion--the illusion that anyone could master the dynamics and complexity of an organization from the top (p. 290). Fullan elaborates on the concepts of "dynamics" and "complexity" by describing all the unplanned factors that are inevitable but perhaps invisible from "the top"--a change in key leaders, interpersonal conflicts, policies redefined or introduced from another source.

So what is the counter argument against local participation and a site-based managed change?

> First there is ample evidence that organizations in general are not likely to initiate change in the absence of external stimuli. . . . Second, when schools do have the opportunity to control the change process . . . they do not necessarily take productive action. They are likely to get bogged down and/or make superficial structural changes. Third, in decentralized systems it is difficult to discern, let alone maintain quality control (on the other hand, accountability fares no better in centralized systems). (Fullan, 1994a)

And fourth, Fullan speculates that it is impossible for a school to stay innovative despite the district–that district action or inaction would inevitably take their toll.

Beer et al. (1990) summarize the situation:

> The top-down approach possesses some allure. It holds the promise of producing rapid change toward an elegantly conceived end state that is symmetrical and complete. Thus, managers can lead their employees in the desired direction. But the unilaterally directive approach also has traps into which renewal can fall. Employee commitment to the newly aligned organization may be low, and employee knowledge of how things get done in the organization may not be considered in the solution.
>
> A bottom-up approach that allows, even demands, participation by employees seems to address many of the failings of unilateral top management direction. But it can suffer from a different set of problems. A participative approach to change may be too slow and ill defined to respond effectively to short-term business demands. It presents top managers with the problem of how to incorporate their perspective and knowledge into new solutions. It

> raises questions about the motivation and skill of employees to develop an ambitious solution that will "force" them, the employees to change their ways. Even worse, participative approaches to change can be derailed by resistant managers, unions, and workers. (p. 68-69)

Realizing that neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies, alone, have proven successful, and having studied examples of effective school reform where a blended model was employed, Fullan (1994a) suggests two "generic distinctions that pertain to division of labor (between the center and local), and the sequence of strategies" if an effort to provide clarity for how top-down and bottom-up can co-exist:

> Division of labor concerns the relative roles of the center and local entities. In overall terms, the center's role in bilateral systems is to stimulate and respond to local action, help formulate "general direction"; gather and feedback performance data, focus on selection, promotion and replacement; provide resources and opportunities for continuous staff development, and the like. The role of the local unit is to take action, work on shared vision, develop collaborative cultures, monitor and problem solve vis-à-vis desired directions, respond and be proactive with external agencies and events, and basically to develop the habits and skills of learning organizations (p. 193).

Fullan (1994a) admits that delineating the sequence of events and emphasis is more problematic.

> In dynamic systems there can be not step-by-step set of procedures. Recent research, however, shows that non-linear change does work in approximate

> patterns, which point clearly to the types of strategies that are more or less likely to be effective (Fullan, 1993a). (p. 193)

Beer et al.(1990) found that organizations that underwent successful revitalization followed a sequence in which the change began with an individual or small group (bottom-up), which then promoted the need for "formal changes" in structure, policy, practices in the organization (top-down). Thus while Fullan (1994a) contends that "both local and central levels can be active and influential at all phases, *what* is attended to and *when* is critical" (p. 194) (emphasis in original).

One example of the relationship between top-down and bottom-up was provided by the study conducted in British Columbia by LaRocque and Coleman (1989) in which they focused on the connection between the "district presence" in the schools and the performance of the schools on provincewide achievement tests. They found that in three districts having a strong district presence in the schools, that district administrators provided principals with a variety of school-specific performance data; that they discussed the data with the principals and set expectations for their use; that they used their time in the schools to engage principals on specific topics related to the data, the school's improvement plan, and the implementation of these plans. The nature of these discussions were collaborative rather than prescriptive; district administrators acknowledged good performance; and district administrators supported principals with information and advice where warranted. However, the ultimate responsibility for plans for improvement were left to the principal and the school. All of these districts had a high performance rating on achievement tests.

> At the other end of the continuum, three districts were characterized by an absence of press for accountability: Little or no data were provided to the

> schools, and no structures or processes were established to monitor or discuss progress. All three of these districts were found to be low on achievement results. (Fullan, 1994a, p. 196).

To summarize, studies (e.g. LaRocque & Coleman, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989; Fullan, 1993a, 1993b; Bennett & Green, 1993) indicate that the relationship between the district and the school appears to be a significant factor in supporting educational change.

> Initiatives occur at both district, and school levels, at first in an uncoordinated fashion. Action and variation at the school level is allowed and encouraged. As people gain clarity and skills through experience, and as training and new approaches to selection and promotion begin to accumulate, greater consistency is achieved, and pressure mounts to alter the organization which is now experienced as ill-fitted to the new emerging patterns. . . . Formal procedures and formal reorganization are changed later in the process, not at the beginning. (Fullan, 1994a, p. 198)

Fullan (1994a) concludes by conceding that:

> The [top-down, bottom-up] pattern of evolution being described is very complex, and contains great ambiguity about what is really best. We are still at the very early stages of rethinking the relationship between schools and districts. Many, many questions remain unanswered, and plague those working on school and district restructuring. (p. 198)

Leadership

> *There can be no question that the leader plays the most crucial role. He is the most visible and influential model of how one should think and talk, who one should talk about, how one deals with reality, and how one anticipates and deals with problems.* (Sarason, 1972, p. 206).

Change requires leaders--those who keep up the pressure and provide visible sanction for what is happening and those who support change in terms of policy and funding. As highlighted in the previous section, while there is still disagreement as to the most effective location for change to begin--top-down or bottom-up, the research makes it clear that district, board, and school administrators are the main determinants of whether or not change gets implemented.

In citing Fullan, Stiegelbauer (1994) contends,

> These leadership and support functions of change illustrate Fullan's (1985) concept of pressure and support as one necessary ingredient to an effective change process. Without a certain amount of pressure nothing happens, nor will anything happen without support to tailor change to the needs of individuals and individual contexts. (p.4)

The study of leadership, or more specifically, an examination of the decisions and actions of leaders; the motives, values or purpose that give rise to leaders' decisions; and the role of the leader as change agent and how the change agent frames his work within an organization form the core of my study. Leadership is the arena in which I place the key actors: the creator of the policy--the district superintendent, and the immediate recipients of the policy-

-the building principals. Close scrutiny of the relationship among these players is an important aspect of my research.

Much that has been written on the topic of leadership informed my thinking, however I borrowed heavily from James MacGregor Burns' (1978) seminal work, *Leadership*, in trying to understand the complex nature of both leaders and followers. Burns describes leadership as an aspect of power, but distinguishes power from leadership by whose *purposes* are being served. "Power over other persons . . . is exercised when potential power wielders, motivated to achieve certain goals of their own, marshal in their power base resources . . . that enable them to influence the behavior of respondents relevant to those resources and goals. This is done in order to realize the purposes of the *power wielders, whether or not these are also the goals of the respondents*" (p.18). Burns links leadership to the needs and goals of followers. He defines leadership as "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations--the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations--*of both leaders and followers*"(p. 19) (emphasis in original).

Burns further differentiates two forms of leadership as *transactional leadership* and *transformational leadership*. The factor that distinguishes the two forms of leadership is the duration of the relationship related to continuance of purpose. Burn's describes *transactional* leadership as occurring,

> When one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things. The exchange could be economic or political or psychological in nature . . . Each party to the bargain is conscious of the power resources and attitudes of the other. Each person recognizes the other as a *person*. Their purposes are related, at least to the extent that the purposes stand within the

> bargaining process and can be advanced by maintaining that process. But beyond this the relationship does not go. The bargainers have no enduring purpose that holds them together; hence they may go their separate ways. A leadership act took place, but it was not one that binds leader and follower together in a mutual and continuing pursuit of a higher purpose (Burns, 1978, pp. 19-20).

Burns (1978) contrasts transactional leadership with *transforming* leadership:

> Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. . . . Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. . . . But transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raised the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (p. 20).

School leaders as change agents.

Most new superintendents hope to be transformational leaders, to make significant, positive, and long lasting changes in their districts. Generally, they are chosen for their role because of their promise to enact educational change, to quell a conflict, or to enhance current district practice. Rarely are new superintendents directed to simply maintain the status quo. And typically, the school community anticipates that a new superintendent will want to make some changes. They may even be hoping for change. Yet influencing the attitudes and practices of teachers and principals from the office of superintendency is a formidable task. The loosely coupled organization common to American schools, the resistance to standardization, the

differences among schools, and the encouragement for variation from classroom to classroom are all factors that challenge change.

While principals and teachers may hope that a new superintendent will make a difference in their work, they do not count on (nor often wish for) a *significant transformation* in their school. Rather the expectations of the constituents are modest--that the superintendent will tend to work in the central office, ensure that the district gets appropriate funding, responsibly distribute funding to the schools to support good teaching, and fend off undue interference from parents and politicians. While principals and teachers may advocate the need for change when searching for a new school leader, once the superintendent is in place, there is almost a silent treaty the schools expect of the superintendent to support the status quo. Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992), who reviewed the literature on school change, reported that "current school-leaders most often see district administrators and the policies and procedures which they manage as hurdles in their efforts to be more effective" (p. 246).

Capacities of change agents.

What Fullan (1993) identifies as the capacities required for classroom teachers to become "agents of educational change and societal improvement" (p. 11), are needed by superintendents and principals as well. Fullan describes "four core capacities required as a generative foundation for building greater change capacity: personal vision-building, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration" (p.12). These requirements do not operate in isolation. Rather, the set of capacities are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

Vision-building links back to the concept of moral purpose or mission. Leaders need to grapple with questions such as, "What difference am I trying to make personally?"; "What do I stand for?"; "For me, what values or beliefs are nonnegotiable?" Block (1987) emphasizes that

"creating a vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future" (p. 102); it signifies a disappointment in the current state.

Inquiry is the second core capacity. The aptitude for inquiry; the ability to persistently question (and listen) is imperative to effectively carrying out the other requirements. Pascale (1990) describes inquiry as "'the engine of vitality and self-renewal' (p.14)" (Fullan, 1993a, p. 15). While inquiry has a personal reflective aspect fueled by information, ideas, dilemmas, and experiences, leaders must extend the habits of questions beyond themselves to challenge others to wrestle with traditional thinking, current practice, and contentions within the environment in relation to their own vision. Fullan (1993a) claims that the relationship between vision and inquiry "involves the ability to simultaneously *express and extend*" (p. 15) what one beliefs and values. He contends that "the genesis of change arises from this dynamic tension"(p. 15).

The capacity of mastery links behavior and learning. People must "behave their way into new ideas and skills, not just think their way into them" (Fullan, 1993a, p. 15). However, Senge (1990) takes the concept of mastery beyond acquiring new skills:

> Personal mastery goes beyond competence and skills, though it is grounded in competence and skills. . . . It means approaching one's life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to reactive viewpoint . . . .
>
> When personal mastery becomes a discipline . . . it embodies to underlying movements. The first is continually clarifying what is important to us (purpose and vision). . . . The second is continually learning how to see current reality more clearly . . . The juxtaposition of vision (what we want) and a clear picture of current reality (where we are relative to what we want) generate . . . 'creative tension'. 'Learning' in this context does not mean

> acquiring more information, but expanding the ability to produced results we truly want in life. It is lifelong generative learning. (p. 142). (Fullan, 1993a, p. 16)

Collaboration is the fourth capacity required of effective change agents. Within the arena of collaboration are found the concepts of "meaning making," and ownership. According to Drath and Palus (1994), shared leadership is a process of "meaning making" through which members of the organization develop and endorse approaches to action that are consonant with their organization's culture. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) explain that "leadership flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. The medium of leadership and the currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people. And, leadership shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organizational patterns. (p. 225)" (Johnson, 1996, p. 12).

Challenges to change agents.

If transformational leadership, engaging "with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns, 1978, p. 20), is the goal of school leaders, what stands in the way? Cuban (1989) identifies conflict as a primary impediment. He contends that "conflict is the DNA of the superintendency" (p. 251). He argues that conflict is inevitable given the origins of the position and the responsibilities and setting of the role. As a result of this conflict, most superintendents find themselves focused on the managerial imperative to keep the organization stable. To avoid exacerbating conflict, they tend to favor constancy over change. When superintendents do initiate changes, they tend to tinker with structural changes, changes that improve efficiency and effectiveness

rather than those that "rearrange or alter the fundamental organizational structures of schooling" (Cuban, 1989, p. 252).

Related to the challenge of managing conflict is the challenge of managing time. Studies, (e.g. Mintzberg, 1973; LWSD, 1980; Krajewski, 1978; Wolcott, 1973) documenting the manner both superintendents and principals spend time during their workday, report that most of their time is spent in administration with limited time spent on instructional supervision. Several studies show that principals regard instruction and program improvement as the most important part of their job. However, they spend the greatest amount of their time on school management and operations, the dimensions they value least (Smith & Andrews, 1989, p. 27). And when the Educational Research Service (1985) surveyed nearly a thousand school principals, insufficient time was a concern for the vast majority of them. More than one in three cited lack of time for classroom observations and conferences with teachers were "major" problems. The image of superintendents and principals trying to institute change in an effort to improve classroom teaching and curriculum for the purpose of making "a difference in the lives of students regardless of background, and to help produce citizens who can live and work productively in increasingly dynamically complex societies" (Fullan, 1993a, p. 4), seems to hold little credibility in these studies, given the little time that most school administrators spend in classrooms.

That most superintendents spend little time in schools creates yet another problem for them in promoting change. Not only do teachers feel distant from the superintendent, they also believe that it is the principal, rather than the superintendent that has the greatest leverage on their work. Research over at least two decades supports this view, beginning with studies of

effective schools and continuing through investigations of school-based management (e.g. Berman and McLaughlin (1977); Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991).

Goodlad (1984) and Sirotnik (1989) promote the school as "the unit or center of change" and the main agents (or blockers) of change in the school house are principals and teachers. The major research on innovation and school effectiveness reports that the principal strongly influences the likelihood of change. Studies by Berman and McLaughlin (1977) found that "projects having the *active* support of the principal were the most likely to fare well" (p. 124). "The principal is the person most likely to be in a position to shape the organizational conditions necessary for success, such as the development of shared goals, collaborative work structures and climates, and procedures for monitoring results" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 76). Thus, if superintendents are going to make a significant impact on schooling, they need to find ways to take charge of their time and responsibilities in order to manage the conflict that comes with the role while making time to work in collaboration with school principals and teachers.

Organization

The relationship of leadership and purpose are two areas I examine in my study of a top-down change. The third relationship I explore is the nature of the organization--its structure, dynamics and culture. Returning to the recommendations made by McLaughlin (1987) it is essential when analyzing policy implementation to acknowledge that policy is played out within a system and that the supports, incentives, and constraints that influence implementor capacity and implementor motivation reside in this broader system. To assess the impact of a policy in isolation from its organizational context ignores the effect of the

individual on the policy; the fact the policy is transformed through various individual interpretations and choices.

Thus policy needs to be examined at both the macro and micro levels of analysis. "Macro analyses operate at the level of the system or organization. They stress regularities of process and organizational structures as stable outlines of the policy process and frame individual action in terms of position in a relational network" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 177). Micro analyses operate at the level of the individual. At this level, analysis interprets the actions of the organization as the "problematic and often unpredictable outcome of autonomous actors, motivated by self-interest" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 177).

Coupled with this is the need for recognition of the dynamic character of the organizational settings in which implementation takes place. Thus summative statements regarding policy implementation are inherently conditional and time-bound. In acknowledging this reality, if the outcome of policy analysis is to prove useful to the next generation of policy developers, analysis must move beyond the *what* and *how much* of policy examination to instead emphasize the *why* and *how* of policy implementation (McLaughlin, 1987).

Organizational theory--A four-frame perspective.

A useful lens for studying the relationship between leadership and organizational theory is presented by Bolman and Deal (1991). They employ a multiple perspective approach to examine what is going on in organizations and how leaders work within each of the frames to become effective change agents.

In introducing their framework for examining organizations, they initially describe several major schools of thought and each school's theories regarding how organizations work and what might make them work better.

Rational system theorists emphasize organizational goals, roles, and technology, and they look for ways to develop structures that best fit organizational purposes and environmental demands.

Human resource theorists emphasize the interdependence between people and organizations. They focus on ways to develop a better fit between people's needs, skills, and values, on the one hand, and their formal roles and relationships, on the other.

Political theorists see power, conflict, and the distribution of scarce resources as the central issues. They argue that organizations are like jungles in which cooperation is achieved by managers who understand the uses of power, coalitions, bargaining, and conflict.

Symbolic theorists focus on problems of meaning. They are more likely than other theorists to find virtue in organizational misbehavior and to emphasize the limited ability of managers to create organizational cohesion through power to rational design. In this view, managers must rely on images, drama, magic, and sometimes even luck or the supernatural to bring some semblance of order to organizations (Bolman & Deal, 1991, pp. 9-10).

Bolman and Deal consolidate these major schools of organizational thought into four perspectives which they label *frames*, to characterize each of the different vantage points. "Frames are both windows on the world and lenses that bring the world into focus. Frames filter out some things while allowing other to pass through easily. Frames help us to order experience and decide what action to take" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 11).

Several fields within the social sciences contributed to the formation of the "four major ways in which both academics and practitioners make sense of organizations" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 15). Following is a summary of each of the four frames:

The *structural frame* draws from the discipline of sociology. This frame emphasizes the importance of formal roles and relationships. While the structural frame looks how roles and responsibilities are organized, this frame also examines the desired pattern of activities, expectations, and exchanges among the workers. Within this frame,

> the major responsibility of managers and leaders is to clarify organizational goals, attend to the relationship between structure and environment, a develop a structure that is clear and appropriate to the goals, the task, and the environment. . . . The job of the leader is to focus on task, facts and logic, not personality and emotions (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 355).

The structural frame is contrasted by the *human resource frame*. The human resource frame, based particularly on the ideas of organizational social psychologists, focuses on the needs, feelings and prejudices of the individuals inhabiting the organization. This frame highlights the need for effective communication. Fullan emphasizes this need when implementing change,

> A cardinal fact of social change is that people will always misinterpret and misunderstand some aspect of the purpose or practice of something that is new to them. . . Even the administrator who thinks of "everything" will still face the problem of communication. The effective district administrator is one who constantly works at communication, not because he or she thinks that people are resistant or dense, but because he or she realizes that difficulties of

> communication are natural and inevitable. The administrator's theory of change will have told him or her that frequent, personal interaction is the key to implementation, and his or her interpersonal skills as a communicator . . . will determine the effectiveness of confronting this perennial problem. (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 190)

Beyond the need for effective communication, support and empowerment is the job of the leader within the human resource frame. Support comes in the form of empathy, listening, personal warmth, and openness. Empowerment occurs through participation and ensuring sufficient autonomy and resources so that people can do their jobs well (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Schlechty (1990) advocates that to improve the performance of a "knowledge-work enterprise," such as a school, "one must invest in people, support people, and develop people" (p. 139). He further contends that "human resource development is the linchpin upon which all improvement efforts are based"(p. 139).

"The *political frame*, invented and developed primarily by political scientists, views organizations as arenas in which different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is everywhere because of the differences in needs, perspectives, and life-styles among various individuals and groups. . . . Solutions are developed through political skill and acumen"(Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 15). Within this frame, the leader's responsibility is to recognize the major constituencies, connect with their leadership, and carefully manage conflict. The need to build power bases and use power carefully is essential. Bartering, bargaining, negotiating, and compromising are strategies common to this frame.

The *symbolic frame* borrows from the fields of social and cultural anthropology. This frame abandons the assumptions of rationality that appear in the other frames and instead treats organizations as tribes, theater, or carnivals. In this view, "organizations are cultures that are propelled more by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths than by rules, policies, and managerial authority" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 16). Symbolic leaders believe that an important part of their job is to provide inspiration; to give people something to believe in. They typically use strategies such as stories and slogans to encourage commitment and a sense of organizational mission.

The frames provided by Bolman and Deal are useful heuristics for studying organizations, and it may be true that some organizations approximate a given "frame" more than others. Yet all organizations, especially complex ones like school districts and schools, exhibit features of all four frames, more or less, at various times in their histories. Good leaders know how to use all four frames to their advantage.

If educational leaders therefore, are to construct a seawall that both promotes and supports change, they need to seek new patterns and possibilities in the everyday activities of the school community. They need to combine core values with flexible leadership. While they need to stay focused on what they believe in, they need to contend with being battered by the numerous forces that try to pull an organization off course. Leadership is always an interactive process between leaders and those they lead. Leaders need a repertoire of skills to both inspire and calm the crew, and to sail in uncharted waters and stay the course. Multiple frames or perspectives provide leaders with a more comprehensive view of the landscape. They serve as tools for assisting leaders to analyze and understand the interplay between their own actions

and the behaviors of the crew. They provide them with a collection of options for shaping their own decision and behavior.

The stories that emerge from this study illustrate the complex interweaving of leadership, commitment to core beliefs, and multiframed actions that in combination influenced change in the relationship, attitudes and actions of both the leader and the led.

Chapter III

Introduction to the New Superintendent

An Autocrat, Garbage Collector or Socratic Gadfly?

"It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things."

Machiavelli (1976)

On April 15, 1996, school board members voted 5-0 to approve Dr. Michael N. Riley as Bellevue School District's superintendent. The board president concluded the meeting by saying, "The public asked for leadership, accountability, trust and the highest expectations for a diverse student population. I think we made a perfect match with Mike Riley" (*Highlights*,1996).

This event formally signaled the beginning of Riley's first superintendency. This chapter takes up the story at that moment and continues through his first two years as superintendent. Peering through the theoretical lenses of leadership and organizational dynamics, snapshots are taken of a series of actions and initiatives undertaken by the new superintendent. These vignettes are examined in an effort to illuminate the thinking and reasoning of a school leader charged with promoting change. For while the emphasis of this study is focused on a single policy--teacher supervision and evaluation--and the impact of this policy on a single group of actors, building principals, it is important and necessary to provide the context within which the policy implementation occurred.

A School District In Transition

My study took place in a school district in the midst of significant change. Through the last several decades, the community served by the district changed significantly from a semi-rural locale to an upper-class suburb and on to becoming the state's fifth most populous city. As the community grew, so did the complexity and diversity of its population, a diversity mirrored by the district's student population. They are children of well-educated professionals; of families who have lived in the community for several generations; of new recruits to the rapidly expanding high-tech industry; of new immigrants who fled the former Soviet Union; of former migrant workers seeking year-round, stable employment; of two employed parents who barely earn enough to exceed poverty level and struggle to find affordable housing in the community. The percentage of students of color within the school-age population increased every year since the early 1980s, reaching a high of nearly 30% in 1997-98. As the community experienced changing demographics, Bellevue's school district has been challenged with new responsibilities to educate an increasingly diverse student population (Oxrieder, 1998).

An account of recent changes in the district's leadership gives added context to the present story. It chronicles the rift between the school board and the prior school chief. While the board valued the former superintendent's humanistic style and his success in promoting partnerships between the district and the business community, the board felt that the district operated too loosely and they lacked confidence that the superintendent had a firm hold of the tiller.

A significant contributor to the board's doubts and skepticism was the fact that Bellevue was struggling to make school-centered decision making work. While over the years, the district had developed a cultural expectation for employee and even parent and student

involvement in decision making, until 1986 the administrator's responsibility was to *listen* to advice but not necessarily *heed* the advice. However, in 1986, specific provisions regarding decision making were bargained into the agreement between the Bellevue Education Association (B.E.A.) and the district. These provisions created a representative decision making body called a Program Delivery Council (PDC) at each school that included teacher, parent, and principal members with students and classified membership optional. The contractual agreement called for a decision-making process based on consensus rather than just input into decisions, thus shifting authority and governance to the stakeholders.

Ironically, the school-centered decision making initiative, forged for the purpose of promoting collaboration and consensus among stakeholders, was crafted by two leaders, Dick Clark, Deputy Superintendent, and Mike Schoeppach, B.E.A. Executive Director, with little or no input from the schoolhouse or from those who would be most directly impacted. Teachers and district administrators alike were caught by surprise. While there was support for the spirit of the proposal, there also was considerable discontent. People didn't like being caught unaware and off guard. "Informants from all perspectives reported that the proposal was 'sprung on us.' While top district administrators were, informants added, 'surprised that we were surprised . . . we were surprised'." (Malen, 1994, p. 254). Moreover, there was uncertainty as to what the provisions really meant. "Was the contract a watershed agreement that altered power relationships or a minor modification of previous arrangements? Did a consensus model really put principals, teachers, and parents on an equal formal power plane?" (Malen, 1994, p. 254). These questions were still being asked by many stakeholders seven years later.

In June, 1989, Bellevue's Board of Directors adopted Policy 6510: Renewal and School-Centered Decision Making. The intent was to link contract language with board policy. The purpose of the policy and related procedures was to provide direction to schools and other district units as they engaged in school-centered decision making. During the 1989-90 school year, the district initiated the first Bellevue Evaluation Study, conducted by University of Washington researcher, Jan DeLacy. The study focused on the earliest implementation efforts of the district's five reform initiatives, one being School-Centered Decision Making (SCDM). DeLacy described the initial reaction to SCDM at that time:

> Many say that SCDM, as spelled out in the current negotiated agreement, had an abrupt beginning in Bellevue and that it was not accepted with open arms. Yet, despite these rough beginnings, signs of progress were apparent as individuals spoke of improved screening of PDC items, greater acceptance of diverse viewpoints, less complaining behind the scenes, more ownership of decisions, better acceptance of the parent voice, willingness to farm out agenda items, the emergence of leaders, consistent modeling by superintendent level administrators/central office, more thoughtfulness in decision making, and fewer emotional outbursts. (DeLacy, 1991, p. 6)

Yet by 1995, of the sixteen elementary schools, only two had managed to do any significant restructuring. One school restructured the school week--dismissing students for a half day each week in order to ensure uninterrupted time for teachers to talk, plan, and learn together. A second school reorganized their use of staff resources to considerably lower class size *and* moved to the 4 1/2-day schedule. However, several years into the change, while teachers in these schools talked about tacit changes--a sense of collaboration, team spirit, and

common focus, there were no traditional markers, such as improved test scores, to assure the public or school board that restructuring was actually improving student learning.

Like other early generations of participative groups (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994), many Bellevue PDCs found it difficult to focus on significant issues, but instead found themselves mired in issues at a trivial or management minutia level. And when PDCs entered into issues that more directly impacted students such as curriculum and instruction, conflict increased. Friction was particularly apparent among parents who were not as directly or closely involved with the changes. One teacher described it this way:

> What is difficult is that as we have been learning our 'lessons of change' in the building and in our classrooms, the same learning and growing has not been entirely true for the broader community. Thus, when faced with not just a small change, but something that could reshape a large physical change of their daily lives, many in the community grabbed onto the railing and refused to let go. (Ringo, 1994, p. 292)

With the inception of SCDM and the belief that schools would decide their curriculum, the central office curriculum department was dramatically downsized and the curriculum budget, traditionally held centrally, was allocated to the schools. As PDCs struggled to learn to work together, teachers were left to their own devices to decide what and how to teach. One elementary teacher made this comment about her building:

> The impression should not be left, however, that we are all at the same point, teaching precisely the same way. Some teachers are more immersed in whole language than others; some like to teach math more traditionally; some are ready for technology while others want no more than two computers in their

> rooms for now . . . . It's a continuum of experience and as many different teaching styles as we have teachers. (Ringo, 1994, p. 311)

While some building principals enthusiastically embraced SCDM, others were frustrated. They believed that most staff and parents continued to see them as the chief authority figure in the school and they felt they were being personally held accountable for decisions made by a committee. There was confusion about what decisions required consensus by the PDC, what decisions required only input to the principal, and what decisions were solely the principals to make. Parents, too, were confused and frustrated by the role of the principal in this new environment. One parent commented,

> I feel the principal should have more power in the buildings . . . . Their answer to most questions is, "I can't make anyone do anything because this a building based management." I think this PDC is a cop-out for the district Superintendent and for some principals. There is no authority anymore. (DeLacy, 1991, p. 7)

Policy 6510 caused confusion regarding the role of the school board, as well. Over the years, Bellevue's school board had a reputation of being supportive and knowledgeable of change efforts. But, after nearly 30 years of little change, there was a major turnover of board membership in 1991. Both central office administrators and those in the school house were uncertain about the role of this new board. "It appears the board vacillates between micro-management and policy-making. A principal indicated he believes their role changes 'when the players change.' And another interviewee said, 'They are having difficulty changing their role.'" (Ringo, 1994, p.297). An interviewee in the 1992 Bellevue Evaluation Study, in describing the varying forces of national and state level education initiatives and directives and

the involvement of the PDC on the board's role, concluded, "So what does the board do?" (Ringo, 1994, p. 297).

In the summer of 1994 the board knew they had to do something. A noisy and upset citizens group complained to the board about a PDC decision to reorganize the school week in one elementary school. Other parents and teachers came forward with their own concerns about councils, raising questions about how members were selected, whether meetings must be open, what kinds of issues the councils could tackle and how those who disagree with a council decision should appeal. These complaints helped spur the school board's decision to organize a committee to review and revamp Policy 6510. For nearly two years the panel reworked the policy and procedures. However, to the board and even to some members of the panel, their efforts seemed superficial. When the man often credited as the visionary for SBDM, former Deputy Superintendent Dick Clark, was asked to reviewed the committee's attempts, he wrote:

> It seems to me that the group has looked at the trees and missed the forest. It has tried to fine tune small problems without searching out whether there are large problems. . . . The big issues which seem not to have been as clearly addressed are the fundamental error in replacing an individual administrator's role with a committee which has crept into the implementation of school centered decision making and the continuing failure of the decision making processes to produce significant renewal of schools.
>
> How to make the PDC work has become the focus of the effort rather than how decisions about facilitating student learning are made. If we shift back to the latter question we recognize that originally the PDC was viewed as

a part of the decision making process and not THE decision maker. (Richard Clark, personal communication, October 4, 1995)

The board agreed. They were in the process of hiring a new superintendent and they did not want policy language that would hamper a new leader's efforts to bring about the changes the board believed necessary. While, after numerous revisions, the board approved the new policy and procedures crafted by the 6510 Study Committee, they inserted their own language into the final draft that, for the first time, defined the role of the superintendent in relation to site-based decision making:

> The Superintendent of the Bellevue School District is charged with the overall responsibilities of assuring district-wide adherence to the policies, goals, and directives of the Board of Directors. This responsibility is to be accomplished within and through the framework of collaboration and trust in order to achieve renewal and school-centered decision making. In this model, the Superintendent is responsible for implementing this policy which will yield decisions that ultimately improve student learning. (Policy 6510, 1996, p. 5)

Stimulus to Change

Both organizational theorists and administrators are aware that environmental demands are a prime stimulus to change and demographic patterns, public funding patterns, court decisions, and curricular changes are commonly cited examples (Baldridge & Deal,1983). Add to this the presence of an "underbounded system" in which "power is diffuse, and the system is very loosely controlled," and one has "an open invitation to conflict and power games" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p.188).

Environmentally stimulated changes are usually implemented through a political dynamic. Unlike the "rational" approach to change that suggests that all options are open within reach of the decision maker, the political approach views organizations as arenas in which different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources.

> Conflict is everywhere because of differences in needs [and] perspectives. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are all part of everyday organizational life. Coalitions form around specific interests and change as issues come and go. Problems arise because power is concentrated in the wrong places or because it is so broadly dispersed that nothing gets done. Solutions are developed through political skill and acumen" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p.15).

It was within such an environment that the former superintendent departed, an interim superintendent was appointed, and the search for a new superintendent began. Susan Johnson Moore (1996), in her study of newly appointed superintendents, found that "unlike matchmaking for marriage, the search for a new superintendent is rarely expected to lead to a permanent relationship, one that will last until the superintendent retires" (p.33). Rather, search committees seek a match not only between a superintendent and a particular place, but between a superintendent and a particular time. As reported in the *Seattle Times* (March 1996), the community found itself in a time in which,

> [Their school district] had a good many things going for it--and a large degree of change to contend with. Parents in the district have a strong sense of where they want schools to go--so strong, in fact, that education leaders often find

themselves pulled in several directions by competing factions who think they know what's best.

Bellevue set out in their superintendent search with a long list of attributes they sought in their next leader. The school board president described the profile of the choice individual as one who could provide, "leadership with a shared vision and clear direction; clear accountability and focus in a decentralized system; commitment to high academic standards for all students; demonstrates ability to inspire talented people; and a mission to serve successfully an increasingly diverse community" (Miller, 1996, p. A15).

"In this district, you need to be tough," said a former School Board member (Long, 1996a. p. B2).

One parent said, "We need somebody who can be a cohesive factor, someone who has charisma, but not a phony" (Long, 1996a. p. B1).

The opinions of many administrators and teachers paralleled those of the board and parents. They recognized a lack of common vision or focus. And yet they did not want to lose the efforts of many years dedicated to curriculum and staff development. A central office administrator's wish list, contained in a letter to the school board, not only cited criteria for a new leader but suggested a course of immediate action to maintain "years of effective work" and to right what she described as a "rudderless ship."

> The superintendent is going to need to quickly absorb the nature and substance of many projects as he/she tries to set the ship on course. Some oars will need to be pulled out of the water and some oars will need to bite through the water even more effectively. Pulling the wrong oar out of the water could be disastrous because of the message it would send. The crew could lose

> confidence in the superintendent very quickly if years of effective work are reversed or cast aside. On the other hand, if no course correction is apparent and the status quo is the operating mentality, disaster is equally eminent. . . . If the ship continues to bob about, the new superintendent will soon have a reputation of being ineffective and the crew will continue to row at random, going in circles. (J. DeLacy, personal communication, January 28,1996).

But this was precisely the challenge Mike Riley wanted. "'I wouldn't be here if you told me your system was absolutely perfect.' The plain-talking Riley said he would try to do away with bureaucracy, take a common-sense approach and avoid embracing the 'in' thing in education reform. He described himself as being 'real problem-solution oriented'" (Long, 1996a, p. B3). Though Riley did not "officially" assume the superintendent role until July 1,1996, he started proposing changes in the district even before the signature on his new contract had dried.

Riley Restructures Roles And Responsibilities

While Mike Riley entered a fragmented, dynamic environment in which civil but concerted conflict was common, an environment with all the elements of a political dynamic, his initial efforts to bring about order resided within the structural frame. Bolman and Deal (1991) characterize effective structural leaders as those who do their homework by studying data and analyzing their organization's structural problems; develop a new model of the relationship of structure, strategy, and environment of their organization; focus on implementation; and continually experiment, evaluate and adapt.

One of Riley's first actions was to restructure the membership and roles of his Cabinet. Clearly he recognized that "a structure itself is more than boxes and lines arranged

hierarchically on an official organizational chart. It is an outline of the desired pattern of activities, expectations, and exchanges among executives, managers, employees, and customers or clients" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 46).

Though he seriously considered the input of his initial, inherited Cabinet--the Elementary and Secondary Executive Directors, the Executive Director of Human Resources, and the Deputy Superintendent of Business and Operations, Riley was a man with a vision and the agenda to promote it. With the goal of increasing the articulation of service delivery and curriculum, grades K-12, Riley created two new Cabinet positions, Executive Directors of Student Services and of Curriculum Development. Based on the recommendations of his current Cabinet, he filled these new positions by appointment. He reorganized the responsibilities of the Elementary and Secondary Executive Directors in a K-12 configuration. He added the district's Legal Counsel, and Public Information Officer to the Cabinet.

Riley worked at a rapid pace to become acquainted with every facet of his new district. By the middle of June, Riley had completed two-hour visits with every building principal. He met with several special interest parent groups and had lengthy discussions with the interim superintendent and Cabinet members. He poured through school profiles, student assessment data, and other assorted district documents.

Based on all that he learned in his swiftly conducted investigation, wielding positional power, Riley took action to strengthen the structure of his organization. During the summer, Riley reassigned two principals to temporary one-year central office positions. He transferred an elementary principal to fill the elementary vacancy and appointed a former staff developer as acting elementary principal to take the newly vacated elementary spot. An administrative

colleague from Baltimore was recruited to take over the high school principal opening. By August, Riley had his 1996-97 administrative team in place.

An Introduction to the Symbolic and Human Resource Sides of the Superintendent

One aspect of the structural perspective is that coordination and control are essential to effectiveness. Coordination may be achieved in varied ways including authority, rules, and policies. In contrast, the symbolic frame departs significantly from the tradition of organizational theories of rationality, certainty, and linearity. Instead, the symbolic frame is more focused on not *what happened*, but rather *what it means*.

Riley linked these two perspectives in his first district meeting in early spring to which only building principals--not assistant principals--and his new Cabinet were invited. Riley introduced himself by briefly telling his own life story. In so doing, he clearly shared his values and beliefs. He went on to clarify his expectation for building principals.

He began by sharing that he was a Chicago native and a product of a parochial education. At age 16, inspired by his high school English teacher, Riley decided to devote his life to teaching. Upon graduating from college, he returned to his own high school in the middle of the school year to begin his career. His first teaching experience was difficult and he seriously doubted his competency as a teacher. Bolstered by family and colleagues, he gave teaching one more chance. Not only did he enjoy success but he was able to promote success in a population of students seriously at risk for learning. He went on to say,

> When I was a teacher I was perfectly content being a teacher until we had a change in principal and the principal had such a dramatic and negative effect on the whole building that I felt like teaching was much more difficult than it had been. . . And so I thought, well if a principal can have that much effect on

> a whole school then I can spend the rest of my career having somebody else getting in the way of what I'm trying to accomplish with kids or I could try to be a principal. So I became a principal. (M. Riley, interview, February 17, 1999)

Riley explained that he was satisfied being a high school principal until he met up with a superintendent who he thought " did a lot of things that were . . . intellectually dishonest and turned our system into a public relations vehicle as opposed to a kid-centered place." So again he thought "maybe I can protect the work I'm trying to do with kids by having that kind of authority myself."

And after serving as principal in two high schools, Riley recognized the importance of beginning to address the needs of learners as early as possible. He talked about the frustration of trying to reach struggling high school students after they had suffered years without success,

> I was still frustrated that by the time we got kids at 14 or 15 that whatever damage was going to be done was done. And so it was really hard. I mean kids are at risk from the time they are five, but they're *really* at risk if you haven't addressed it from the time they're five to they're fifteen. So there's a part of me that's real interested now in K-12 education, especially for disadvantaged kids. And trying to prove that you can provide the same kind of education for them as advantaged kids typically get. (M. Riley, interview, February 17, 1999).

Principals As the Primary Instructional Leaders

As Riley threaded his life story into his address to the administrator group, he emphasized his belief that principals should be the significant school leader. He challenged principals to take charge. He assured them that they would be held responsible for making appropriate decisions that effected students and their learning. He accented the importance of quality teaching and made it clear that he had no patience with ineffective teachers who were unwilling to work toward improvement. He told principals that they would be supported in removing incompetent teachers, but that principals would be removed from their own positions if they could not properly follow contract procedures.

While some of the audience was silent, there were murmured comments--"Right on."; "Yes!"; and "Way to go!"--among many of the participants that indicated their level of readiness for this sort of direction. Riley closed on a somewhat humorous note that demonstrated his attention to his audience and a commitment to balance confronting with caring. He stated, "I am worried by the look in your eyes." He cautioned the principals that his directives did not grant them permission to become dictatorial. His reminded them that his goals focused on teachers working in a collegial atmosphere to maximize students' success.

An Autocratic Change-Oriented Machiavellian?

In all his conversations, it was absolutely clear that Riley put the interest of students at the forefront. In his discussions with teachers and administrators and in his talks to parents he continually challenged, "Is this good for kids?"; "What's best for kids?" And he found himself in a culture that squirmed at his challenge. As one example, the elementary principals often described their discomfort knowing that the benefits of the popular tuitioned full-day kindergarten program was out of reach of their low income families whose children would most

benefit from more time in an enriched learning environment. In similar fashion, middle school principals admitted there was a lack of equity in admitting students to their Humanities program. A strong parent advocate had as much impact as a high IQ for gaining a student a place in the program.

Baldridge (1983) describes the problem of entrenched professionals more interested in serving themselves than their clients. As Riley learned the history and culture of his new district, he unearthed evidence to indicate that this might be true in Bellevue--that Bellevue had come to accept informal policies and behaviors that benefited teachers but disadvantaged students and discouraged an optimal learning environment. High school students were shut out from advanced courses because teachers chose not to teach them. The teachers' bargaining agreement permitted formal evaluations of most teachers only every three years. Teachers stalled decision-making in their schools that might have the potential to alter their own schedule or responsibilities. Some of these practices were tradition-bound and enjoyed a long history. Others were products of school-centered decision making and, unfortunately, were not unique to Bellevue.

> David (1990) studied eight of the most advanced School Based Management (SBM) districts in the nation and found that their efforts typically are intended to make differences in four aspects: curriculum and instruction, site decision making, new staff roles, and student assessment/school accountability. To date, she reports, only changes in the lives of adults were achieved. This conclusion confirms patterns found in Berman and Gjelten (1984), Levine and Eubanks (in press), and Fullan (1991). (Marsh, 1994, pp. 227-228)

Riley found himself in a district where the adults in the school were in conflict. Reflecting on his early impressions of the district, Riley said,

> I mean one of the greatest ironies for me is that this is supposed to be a place where collaboration was *writ large* and I didn't find this to be a place where people collaborated very well. I found it to be a place where there were lots of power struggles and people stacking out their own turf and not trusting each other. There are a lot of stories in this district about how faculties were mean to each other. So, you know, I think some of the we-they is administrator versus teacher, but I think a lot of it is also . . . because there wasn't a real clear line where the authority is . . . I think when that happens you get people jockeying for power more than you would when there is a clearer structure. . . . People talk about the secondary schools here, the high schools in particular, as if they were always difficult places to work. Like there are stories 20 years old about how people were mean or bad or power struggles, nasty stuff, people not speaking to each other . . . . And I think that's kind of unusual. As a secondary person, as a high school teacher, a high school principal, I never had that sense.

Baldridge (1983) submits that most professional organizations act like "organized anarchies" with high environmental input, unclear technologies, high professionalism, and fluid participation. He suggests that an organized anarchy is "an ugly monster to alter" and may require Machiavellian tactics to "tackle the dragon." Such strategies include concentrating efforts on only the important issues; choosing and supporting issues with high payoff that you can win; searching for the history of issues; building a coalition; and using the formal system.

Baldridge suggests a number of strategies to ensure that decisions are followed through to execution--set deadlines, shelter the change in its infancy, and place your allies "in the vanguard of people responsible for executing the decision"(p. 217-218).

In his mission to make a positive difference for students and their learning, Riley was not willing to support common practice or long-held traditions that he believed stood as obstacles to this goal. In his first year, he employed a number of the Baldridge-like tactics as he settled down to work with his Cabinet to revamp the district's budget.

The Problem--A Lack of Equity and Excellence

After six months of foraging throughout the district gathering up data, history, and stories, Riley emerged with serious concerns about the condition of equity and excellence. He was alarmed at student drop-out and low graduation rates. He was dismayed that full day kindergartens were tuition funded and not available to poor children, and distressed that large ESL and special education populations were without sufficient support.

In contrast, he was troubled by parent and student complaints regarding lack of academic challenge and the inconsistencies in entry requirements for Humanities programs, and was concerned with the large number of students taking fewer than six high school credits. These problems were shadowed by the need to reduce the district's overall budget by approximately $2.5 million over the next three years.

Sitting "on the inside" in hours and days of budget meetings, one observed Riley using the formal activity of budget reduction as an opportunity to make significant changes in the district. Rather than starting the conversation by listing possible budget cuts, the Cabinet discussion began by designing possible solutions for addressing the equity and excellence issues. Examples included tuition-free full day kindergarten for poor children, a 7-period day at

the high school, and sufficient Advanced Placement offerings to accommodate all interested students. Once these costs were established, the Cabinet dissected the budget to find cuts and savings to support these initiatives. Proposals were discussed with principals, with teacher groups, and with the school board. Listening to input, some proposed program reductions were reinstated in the budget, with the mandate that they would be restructured in an effort to yield a greater positive impact on students.

While the superintendent communicated his budget plan under the banner of equity and excellence, to an "outside observer," he could well look like a garbage collector throwing "an assortment of loosely connected problems, solutions, and participants" onto the trash pile. Johan Olsen (1983) writes "A reorganization sometimes may be most adequately described as a process through which an organization arrives at an interpretation of what it has become or what it has been doing, what it is becoming or what it is doing, what it is going to become or what it is going to be doing. Such a perspective emphasizes the expressive, symbolic, and image-exercising aspect of a reorganization"(p. 254). Thus a stranger might look at this process and conclude that the district is throwing ineffective programs and top heavy departments along with a depleted district budget into the reorganization garbage can. The resulting outcomes are new programs that only symbolize the district's commitment to equity and excellence. What the outsider could fail to notice is the contents of the trash can. All the significant budget adjustments such as reductions in the departments of maintenance and operations, and instructional materials, and cost savings resulting from a restructuring of bus routes were distanced from the classroom and from student learning.

However, from "the inside" one sees Mike Riley acting like Starratt's (1993) postmodern leader--the Socratic gadfly, "bothering people enough until they begin to think

things through more thoroughly, discuss them together, take the time to appreciate the significance of what they are doing." One sees him hard at work orchestrating "a more intense and thorough-going group think." In conversations with principals, his Cabinet, and the school board he challenges, questions, encourages, and probes "members to fashion a collective vision of where they should be going. This means spending a large portion of every day engaging the minds and hearts of his . . . constituents in examining how they are reproducing the *status quo* every day and how they might alter it in small ways to make the drama of their institution work better for the people it serves and who serve it" (pp. 148-149).

Buckle Up For A Top-Down Directive

During his first year as superintendent, the actions taken by Mike Riley received mixed reviews from observers both outside and inside Bellevue School District. While some fans of the new superintendent were energized by the rapid changes taking place, his critics were saying, "Looks top down, heavy handed." "Aren't we doing anything right?" However, no single initiative or activity received more attention or caused more controversy among principals and teachers in Bellevue School District than Riley's teacher supervision and evaluation policy.

Chapter Four describes the introduction of the evaluation policy to building principals and teachers and their reactions to both the elements of the policy, the manner in which it was presented, and to the author of the policy. The findings documented in Chapter Four describe the influence the policy had on principals' conception of their leadership role, how it altered their responsibilities, and the impact it had on the manner in which they worked with teachers.

Chapter IV

What Did The Students Learn?--The Story Of The Policy And The Principals

The idea is we are going to be totally focused on the quality of instruction that a kid gets, and that means the quality of life a kid has within our school system. . . . I had to keep looking at strategies, but the goal never changed. So it wasn't like this is a new goal that I have as the superintendent in Bellevue. This was the same goal that I had as a classroom teacher. "How do you produce the maximum amount of learning for every kid you get?" Because I think that education empowers people.

Interview with Bellevue superintendent

Policy Introduction

"What did the students learn?" This question would soon promote and provoke focused discussion among Bellevue's principals and teachers as they searched for indicators of student learning in the classroom. However on August 14, 1996, the students were Bellevue's principals; the classroom was a middle school library; and, the teacher was the new superintendent.

At the August 1996 Principal Workshop, Mike Riley presented the evaluation policy to principals, modeling strategies he invited them to consider using with their own staffs. Riley set the stage by showing a video of an elementary classroom teacher presenting a science lesson to a classroom of children. The lesson focused on the concept of density and was introduced with the question, "Why do some things float and some things sink?" A cube of butter was used to demonstrate the notion of buoyancy and the tape soon was tagged the "Mrs.

Butter tape." Mrs. Butter was energetic and enthusiastic, her students were actively engaged and working in cooperative groups, and the lesson was filled with demonstrations and hands-on activities.

Immediately following viewing the video, Dr. Riley asked the principals to rate the tape from 1 to 5 with a "5" indicating successful learning and a "1" denoting no significant learning on the part of students. Most principals gave Mrs. Butter 3's, 4's, and 5's. It was only after a lengthy and somewhat emotional discussion that most principals agreed that the lesson missed the mark and that Mrs. Butter's students could not knowledgeably answer the question, "Why do some things float and some things sink?" The superintendent had made his point. The principals recognized that they lacked a common standard for assessing effective teaching.

Dr. Riley then provided principals with a mock observation summary directed to the teacher in the tape. It began:

> What Did the Students Learn?
>
> At the beginning of the lesson, you said that you wanted your students to address the question, "Why do some things float and some things sink?" and you later focused on the words "buoyancy" and "density." I assume, then, that you wanted the students to understand these two concepts. However, since most of the lesson was spent on demonstrating to students that size and weight are not relevant to why things float or sink, I thought that perhaps the point of your lesson was to make this point first as a prelude to discussing buoyancy and density in more specific terms.

> If this is the case, then we should ask ourselves, "Did the students come to a clear understanding that buoyancy and density are not related to size and weight?" I believe the answer is no.
>
> If, on the other hand, your purpose was to help students purge themselves of the natural and naive 'understanding' that heavy and/or big objects are dense, you might have made the point faster and more effectively by making that purging the entire objective of your lesson. (Handout at Principal Workshop, August, 1996)

On the second day of the Workshop, the principals viewed another demonstration video, a tape produced by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). This lesson, taught by a white teacher teaching a third-grade class of mostly non-white children, like the Mrs. Butter tape, was laden with all the trappings that typically indicate progressive, constructivist teaching. But this time the principals were able to quickly identify that while students were occupied, no significant student learning occurred. Moreover, the principals were unsettled by the condescending attitude the teacher demonstrated toward her students. In recalling the tape, one principal said, "I was enraged that ASCD would let that tape out. . . .I was really disturbed by it."

Setting The Expectations For Building Administrators

When asked, "What were your goals as you began your superintendency in Bellevue?" Riley responded,

> My goal first and foremost, [was] to get principals identified as instructional leaders. I come from the point of view that there is nothing that a superintendent can really do to change what goes on in an elementary

> classroom. And so the person that can do something about that is the principal. . . . So I think first and foremost, it was to make the principals the chief leaders of the school system, more powerful than anybody else in the system. And to get them to use that power to improve the quality of teaching in classrooms.

Over the course of the two-day workshop, Riley converted this goal into expectations that he clearly described to building principals:

- The management responsibilities (maintaining student behavior standards, communicating with all constituencies, securing and using resources appropriately) are the base line or minimum expectations of the role.
- Bellevue principals are expected to be first and foremost instructional leaders. They are expected to spend the bulk of their time, energy, and talents focused on the quality of education being offered in their schools.

Riley clarified what he meant by instructional leadership:

> An instructional leader is one who thinks about the tremendous complexity of teaching and learning in deep and profound ways, who talks about teaching and learning in a language that is simple and easy to understand but which at the same time does justice to the complexity of the subject, who spends the majority of the professional day devising ways to improve the quality of instruction at all levels of the school, who observes instruction regularly, who provides feedback that is frank and powerful, and who designs staff development programs that meet the real needs of teachers.

He went on to say,

> Instructional leadership--the ability to improve classroom teaching and learning--is not what separates the great from the near-great; it is instead what separates the satisfactory from the less-than-satisfactory.

Riley further defined what he meant by "observes instruction regularly." He expected principals to spend a significant portion of the school day in classrooms observing entire lessons from introduction through closure. Following the lesson, a conversation was to occur with the teacher regarding the instructional effectiveness of the lesson. The focus of the communication was not to be solely on what worked and what did not work in a particular lesson, but also on *how* one should assess instructional effectiveness. In order for principals to competently carry out this task, they needed to become practiced at focusing narrowly, almost exclusively, on observable changes in student knowledge or skill. They needed then to link their knowledge of effective instructional practice to the change or lack of change they observed in students. The intentional focus on evidence of student learning was a shift for many Bellevue administrators steeped in a supervision model that focused primarily on teacher action and behavior.

Riley admitted that being new to the district, he was not knowledgeable of the normal demands on a Bellevue principal. So he sought input from the principals as to what they deemed to be a realistic number of classroom observations cycles (observation, conference, and write-up) per week. Based on their input, it was agreed that the expectation for all principals and assistant principals would be to complete 90 observations during the school year. However, principals were to be judged not only on the *quantity* of their instructional feedback, but on the *quality* of the feedback, as well. Principals were directed to a send a copy of all observation write-ups to their respective executive director. It was the responsibility of the

executive directors to track principals' progress in completing their observations, to provide feedback to principals on the quality of their write-ups, and to make recommendations where warranted.

Principals left the Workshop with their own performance expectations and an assignment. At the beginning of the school year, they were to inservice the teachers in their building on the new teacher evaluation model, clearly emphasizing that the effectiveness of teachers' instruction would be judged solely on the basis of what students learned and how students changed as a result of that instruction.

The Principals Introduce The Policy In The Schoolhouse

Most principals left the Workshop in a quandary. They were clear about the directive for them to "train their staffs to determine lesson effectiveness *solely* on the amount and quality of student learning" but they seriously questioned the superintendent's examples and blunt approach. Some principals described his style as "top-down and punitive," and "in-your-face." They believed the policy was a "deficit model," and that his teacher tapes were "negative instructional examples." One principal, summing up their predicament, said, "I think principals that I knew, when they went through the training, were spending more time thinking how they were going to introduce this to the staff than actually paying attention to the lesson." Therefore, most principals modified the superintendent's presentation to acquaint their own staffs with the new teacher evaluation. But by mid-September every principal had completed the assignment.

> Later reflecting on this first workshop with the principals, the superintendent stated, I think I've learned some stuff from being the superintendent here that would affect my next superintendency. And that's partly to pay more attention to the

clarity of the communication. You know how I've been starting to say to people, "I took if for granted that we were all working for the same thing." . . . But I think I learned here that we're not necessarily all in it for the same reason. So there does need to be more clarity from the top . . . I would go into my next district, I think, and spend more time trying to explain who I was and what I was trying to accomplish then I did [here]. . . . I walked in kind of assuming we're all on the same team, so I don't need to spend a whole hell of a lot of time explaining who I am. That felt very egotistical to me . . . like I'm nothing special . . . But that's what I really believe, like so this isn't about [me]. This is about all of us just doing our educational thing. Well, now I've changed that. I think after my experiences here, the next time I would say, "Let me start with my first meeting in the district by explaining what I'm trying to accomplish--who I am and what I think I'm trying to accomplish."

When questioned about his "ready-fire-aim" approach to change, Riley responded,

I think that I am collaborative and that I thrive on getting lots of input on ideas and like to work in an environment where people feel that they can be creative and that they'll get support for their ideas. But on the other hand, I think that education in particular, maybe lots of government agencies, but education in particular, has a propensity to get lost in the discussions and not accomplish anything. And so a long time ago . . . I took the position that it's better to try something, monitor it, adjust it, or even throw it out, than it is to just get caught in a loop of discussing it until you find what you think is going to be a perfect solution--because it's not going to be perfect anyway.

The Superintendent's visits--# 1 and # 2

The second day of the school year, the superintendent, joined by one of the two K/12 executive directors, headed into the schools. Over the next six weeks, the superintendent would devote a full day to classroom observations in each school in the district. While his goal was to spend time in as many classrooms as possible, he paused long enough in each class to draft a short letter to the teacher highlighting the strengths of her lesson. His letters modeled the focus that he required of principals, first on the learning of students and then on the action of the teacher. A primary teacher received the following letter from the new superintendent:

Dear Sally:

I was glad I had a chance to observe your math class. It was apparent that you were trying to help the kids develop a strategy for determining your number by using their reasoning skills, and it was clear from their original guesses that they didn't have this ability before the lesson began.

I was pleased to see the students working together so well after you assigned them to pairs. While there was some confusion when they tried to work together about what exactly they were to accomplish, your checking and assistance seemed to help.

I enjoyed meeting you and seeing you in action. I hope the new school year is both productive and enjoyable for you and your students.

By the end of October, hundreds of teachers had received a personal letter from the new superintendent validating their efforts. Occasionally the superintendent visited a classroom where clearly the lesson was without purpose or the students were poorly behaved. In these cases, no letter was written.

Riley explained the several intentions he had for spending so much time in classrooms during the first months in the superintendency:

> I wanted to make it impossible for a principal to say "I don't have time to be in the classroom." And I figured that if the superintendent could say after the first three months on the job, "I've been in 350 classes . . . that it would be very hard for a principal to say, "Well he talks a good game but he doesn't do the work himself." And that was also part of the reason for writing all those letters to teachers. . . . You model something you think is important. So I don't want to make it sound like it was a stage act; I mean it was doing what I think is right. And then saying, "Now that's got to be a model for you. How can you avoid going into classrooms if I've been going into them?"
>
> Plus, I really wanted to get a sense that first year of the general quality of teaching in Bellevue. I mean I didn't have any clue whether I was going to find kids that didn't behave well in class or teachers that didn't know what an objective was . . . I mean I didn't have a clue what I was going to get.

The Principals Are A Quick Study

In mid-October, after reading a sampling of principals' observation summaries, the superintendent sent a note to one K/12 executive director remarking on the speed at which principals had grasped the concept of the evaluation policy. He wrote,

> The sample reports you used are superb. I'm amazed that our principals have so quickly honed in on this whole process and can analyze with such insight and write with such power. I'm going to have to compliment them on the 29th.

> I'm not just being 'nice' . . . when I say the level of their work far exceeds my expectations for where we'd be at this point.

Riley contrasts the principals' response with his work with building administrators in his prior district:

> So what surprised me in Bellevue was how fast people seemed to get the idea. And I think that was a combination of two things. I think I was better as a teacher having taught the lesson before. . . . I think I knew how to package the lesson better by the time I got to Bellevue. And the other thing . . . and it took me longer to realize this, was that I don't think that Bellevue, despite all the emphasis that apparently occurred here over staff development, was as focused as [my former district was] on teaching methodology. And frankly, I think, that there wasn't as much observation going on here either. So when I said to principals, "Go into the classroom and just observe the kids and try to focus what kids are taking away from the lesson, it was easier for Bellevue principals because they weren't going in with all their previous observation experience, all their . . . you know having gone through cooperative learning inservices with their staff, their jargon about graphic organizers, and you know, all that kind of jazz. They were "purer," if that makes sense.

The Superintendent And The Principals Disagree

On October 29, following his first round of school visits, the superintendent brought all the principals and assistant principals back together for another day of staff development. An e-mail he sent out the prior week provided principals with an overview of what to expect:

We'll spend the whole day on instruction. I have at least two tapes to show you, one high school and one elementary, both of which allow for a more positive observation report than Mrs. Butter received. I'll also give you my observation report on both with lots of caveats about these teaching episodes NOT becoming our 'model' for instruction.

I'll share samples of observation reports that miss the mark and ones that hit it. Since all of yours have been so well done, I'll have to create bad ones.

I'll share the number of observation reports each of you has submitted as of today --no names, of course--so that we can determine whether our original goal of three per five-day week was realistic and achievable.

And I'll share a number of things I think I've learned from my conversations with you, the faculty groups I've met and my classroom observations. I also want to allow for plenty of time to deal with your questions and concerns.

The superintendent again reminded the principals of the purpose for the extended time in classrooms by challenging them to continually ask themselves the question, "Is the quality and quantity of student learning increasing in my school?; in this district?" followed by the statement: "If we don't believe that we're really changing things for kids, then this just feels like a lot of work." He then showed two videos for the administrators to critique that he believed represented effective teaching and learning. He framed the discussion of each video with questions: "What did the students learn?; Is there evidence of progress?; Can they do

something different?" He soon found that his audience was far more critical than he as they confidently dissected each lesson and challenged his positive observations.

Later reflecting on this experience, the superintendent admitted that the lack of agreement was puzzling to him:

> My whole approach is there isn't a right way to teach, and what you need to look for is the change in kids over the course of time. And what really concerned me, the reason that was a real hard workshop for me, was that I thought it was a good way to do an assessment of whether or not we were really on the same page together. And so when their picture of good instruction or their evaluation of the lessons that I showed wasn't the same as mine, that really bothered me. Like on an intellectual level, not like I was ticked off that they didn't agree with me. It was more like, "Where is this going off the tracks?" And I couldn't get a handle on it. That was the most frustrating thing. So I'd say that was probably the worst session I had with principals. Not in the sense that I walked away from the thing depressed, but I walked away from it really puzzled about my whole approach, why there'd still be room for disagreement, that kind of thing.

Another Round of Classroom Visits

In November, the superintendent began another series of school visits. This round, he asked each principal to identify one teacher that he, the principal, and the K/12 executive director could jointly observe teach an entire lesson. Following the observation, this team would collectively share their insights. Unless the principal asked to begin the discussion, the superintendent would typically initiate the conversation by saying, "Do you want me to lead

off?" and then offer his observations and reflections. Sometimes principals would take the lead in the conversation. Always there was an exchange of data, ideas, and insights among the administrative team.

This activity served several purposes for both the superintendent and the principals. It gave the superintendent an opportunity to reinforce the elements of his curriculum within a meaningful context--the schoolhouse--for the principal. It enabled the superintendent to assess the thinking and learning of his student--the principal.

The observation and dialogue provided principals with another opportunity to further their understanding of what the superintendent expected of them. Two principals who left the August Workshop wary of the new superintendent's motives, selected inexperienced teachers for the observation. Initially, the principals were concerned how the superintendent would react to the lack of expertise demonstrated by these new educators. One of the principals described the outcome of the observation:

> When Mike came out and did a joint observation with a new teacher doing a lesson, the lesson had some pieces around management that needed to be looked at. And, I recognized that right away and attributed that to [her] newness and not having that bag of tricks that some vets might have. And Mike totally agreed with me and reassured me that "You're right on with this"; and "This is a fine teacher--there are just some pieces. . . ." And he was very comfortable with all of that.

She went on to describe her new insights regarding the superintendent:

> And I took him into a lot of classrooms when we had our initial school visit. He went into classrooms that were very diverse, and very different in their

style. And he was looking for the good and saw the good in them. And that let me know that he wasn't there to be punitive, I guess.

The superintendent stated his own purpose for observing lessons with principals and described what he learned from that experience:

> The first round was just to get a broad stroke of impressions about the teaching quality. The second time around it was really more to focus in on the principal's ability to observe and analyze a lesson. And again, I found that much easier than [in my former district]. . . . Where again Bellevue just kind of threw me off was that principals were able to analyze the lesson pretty well and stayed focused. What I mean by that is not that they agreed with me, but "pretty well" in the sense that they were really able to hunker down on "What was the overall purpose of this lesson?"; "What did the teacher want the kids to learn?"; and, "Did I see evidence that they've learned it?" And I found myself in a lot less disagreement with principals here than I did in [my other district] in the second round.

First Principal Evaluation And The Teacher Survey

During the August Workshop, the superintendent made it clear to principals that both the quantity of their observations and the quality of their written summaries would be considered as a part of their annual evaluation. Another piece of data that would be considered in their evaluation would be the results from a teacher survey on the performance of principals. The purpose of the survey was to gather information regarding teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their principals as instructional leaders. The survey was developed in collaboration with the principals.

In late January, the entire Cabinet reviewed this information as well as other data gathered by the Area executive directors. At that time, the members of Cabinet provided other relevant feedback to the executive directors and superintendent regarding their work and interactions with each principal in their own respective areas (i.e. areas pertaining to personnel, special education, legal matters, public relations, finance). This information was communicated to each principal by his or her executive director.

In the course of the January principal performance evaluations, several principals were identified for transfer to another building or for dismissal from their principal role. When this information was shared with affected individuals, the news quickly rippled out into the principal community. As principals learned that transferring to another school was a possibility, more principals asked to be considered for a move. The primary reason they gave for this request was their need for a "clean slate" as they instituted the new evaluation policy and developed their role as an instructional leader. They were struggling to refocus their emphasis on student learning, rather than solely on teacher behaviors. They believed that they had support for being more direct and intentional in giving feedback to teachers than in the past. They were finding that some teachers were resenting their new behavior. So they wanted a fresh start in a new setting. Their requests were honored. The beginning of the next school year would find sixteen of the twenty-eight schools with new principals--twelve transferred and four new hires. Four new assistant principals were hired at the secondary level, as well.

In addition to feedback from the January principal evaluation, on April 1, 1997, all principals received a letter from the superintendent reminding them that "according to the negotiated agreement between the Principals Association and the School District, principals and assistant principals are entitled to a 2.1% increase in base pay if the number and quality of

their classroom observations meet established standards." Each principal was informed of the number of observations recorded at that time, and a projection, assuming three observations per week, that it was expected could be completed by mid-May.

On June 1, 1997, *every* principal and assistant principal had completed a minimum of 90 observations documented by the requisite written summaries.

Year Two

In mid-August, 1997, the superintendent headed into the second two-day Principals Workshop with a long list of objectives that he wanted to communicate and discuss with building administrators. At the top of his "lesson plan" he wrote, "I want them to understand that our commitment to instructional leadership remains firm," followed by, "I want them to understand how to reinforce the focus on classroom instruction and student learning by expanding their bag of tricks."

Under the second objective, he explained that as a result of renegotiating the teachers' contract, all teachers would now be on the same performance plan, and that the principals would be required to write a year-end evaluation of all the teachers they supervised.

He introduced the concept of Consulting Peer Evaluators (CPE). CPEs are exemplary teachers who would come out of the classroom for a two-year assignment to focus on the needs of new teachers and to provide remedial support to veteran teachers identified by their principal as needing support. The CPE model had a direct impact on the supervision responsibilities of principals. Once a principal identified a teacher with serious performance issues, the principal could seek the assistance of a CPE, step out of the picture, and focus his or her time and energy on supporting those teachers requiring reinforcement and moderate assistance.

However, the central event of the second Principal Workshop focused on viewing a videotape of a Bellevue teacher who demonstrated exemplary skill in effectively addressing the diverse student needs present in his classroom. Following the videotape, principals were invited to discuss the impact of this teacher's work among themselves and with the teacher. When questioned about the purpose of this activity, the superintendent responded,

> Well, there were lots of parts to that one. . . . One part was to try to make the bridge for principals between what real professional evaluation and supervision means--and that's one where you have this frank relationship with the teacher. . . . and that this is a way to help you improve for 95% of the people that we work with. And I thought that [this teacher] could really help model that very well. That he could stand up in front of 40 principals and say what he was trying to do in his lesson, almost like a conference. So that was one of the things.
>
> The second thing was to try to push the principals a little bit to a higher expectation for what kids should be learning. So that was a real clear second outcome. And that had a lot to do with showing who [a particular student] was and how [the teacher's] expectation for [the student], even though [the student] really, really struggled, was to stay just absolutely tenacious about getting that kid to demonstrate that he had learned something.
>
> And the idea of high expectations in general, for all kids, was another important part. I think it was further practice for us in a lesson that had lots of different components and wasn't necessarily real easy to say "the kids learned 'x'". I think you had to do a richer analysis of that lesson to say, "Yeah, I

think that kids really learned at high levels and here's the evidence." So I'd say that those were the three major components.

The superintendent's list of objectives ended with: "I want them to understand their role in creating a district-wide culture that is student centered, not adult centered. Adults are responsible and accountable for student success and failure."

K-12 Articulation

In his second year, the superintendent began focusing on curriculum development as the next logical step in achieving the clarity needed to assist all students to meet lofty expectations. In order for principals to examine the implementation of curriculum and instruction beyond their individual schools, and to reinforce the concept of a continuous and articulated curriculum, grades K-12, all the building administrators whose students fed into a common high school and their K/12 executive director, were directed to meet together for a full day once a month. The administrator team used this time as an opportunity to observe in classrooms in each of the schools in the attendance area. Information gathered from these observations provided material for lengthy collegial discussions. Principals would compare and contrast the curriculum, looking for evidence of continuity among the grades. But invariably, the conversation focused on the quality of teaching observed in the classrooms. The principals were usually candid in offering advice and suggestions to the host principal. To acknowledge the time out of their buildings to complete this activity, the number of classroom observations required of principals was reduced from 90 to 70.

Beyond the addition of CPEs, the monthly area meetings of principals, and regular visits and feedback by their executive director, in the second year of policy implementation there was no additional staff development support provided principals in carrying out their role

as teacher evaluators. The second year there was no prod to principals to keep up the pace of completing observations and written summaries. No scoreboard was posted, as in the previous fall, to inform principals where they stood in comparison with their colleagues. No letter was sent in the spring alerting them to the current status of their completed observations and summaries. When questioned as to why his approach was lower key the second year, Riley replied,

> And why is that? I think it was just because it was institutionalized. I think that it was when nobody lost their job the first year because they came in short on the observations, and people freaking over . . . the first year it was 90 remember? That once everybody knew they could do 90, it didn't seem necessary to hold their hands through it the second year. . . . I just take it for granted that they'll make it now.

And, for the second year, on June 1, 1998, all building administrators again completed a minimum of 70 observations and written summaries.

Organization of the Findings

What was the impact of a top-down policy, initiated by a new superintendent, on the most immediate recipients of the policy, school principals? This study examines the influence the policy had on principals' conception of their leadership role, how it altered their responsibilities, and the impact it had on the manner in which they worked with teachers. However, the relationship between *the policy* and *the policy's author* and *the principals* was tightly entwined. One cannot separate the impact of the policy from the impact of the new superintendent on the principals. Therefore, this study also undertakes a close look at the actions of the new superintendent as they relate to the implementation of his policy and to the

effect of these actions on principals. The preceding synopsis of events, highlighting the introduction and first two years of policy implementation, provides a context for examining the findings that follow. The findings are organized into four sections: each section addresses one of four questions:

- What is the *purpose* of the policy?
- What *changed* as a result of the policy?
- What factors *impeded* implementation of the policy?
- What factors *supported* implementation of the policy?

What is the Purpose of the Policy?

> The idea is that we are going to be totally focused on the quality of instruction that a kid gets, and that means the quality of life a kid has within our school system. . . .This was the same goal that I had as a classroom teacher. "How do you produce the maximum amount of learning for every kid you get?" Because I think that education empowers people. (Bellevue superintendent, Interview, February 17, 1999)

One principal expressed both her initial impression of the new superintendent and his policy following the August, 1996, Principal Workshop:

> Here's this new kid on the block who came in, I mean he's like a freight train, ready to just take it on. I think that was the problem all along. I'm not sure. . . . I think [his introduction of the teacher evaluation policy] was a rude act. You know, . . . so it wasn't selfish. It's not like I have something and you're taking it away. It's like rude. You're not asking me. You're telling me. It was like top-down from the word go.

This was a opinion shared by many Bellevue principals as they headed into the 1996-97 school year. After more than a decade of school-centered decision making with few district directives, principals were trying to sort out the impact of the new superintendent's mission and mandates on their own leadership. Just six weeks after officially assuming his new role, the superintendent was requiring principals to rethink the focus of their efforts and the manner in which they carried out their responsibilities. This drastic change occurred with minimal input from the principals and without the formation of committees and the lengthy processing common to even minor initiatives in the district.

Mike Riley defended his approach:

> It's an attempt to find balance between the getting lost in discussions forever and nothing ever changes in the professions, and snap decisions. And right now I think I stand on the side of the scale that says I'd rather--I don't want to call it a "snap decision," but I will--that I'd rather make a snap decision if I had to choose between that or being lost in the process. Because I think the process is cowardly a lot of the times. I think it doesn't come to a decision just because people are afraid to push forward. It's safer to say that you are still working on something than it is to actually get out on the plank and say, "It's time to make a run at this thing."

When questioned as to whether he viewed his decision top-down, he replied:

> I think it's top-down--[but] the number [of observations required of the principals] wasn't top-down. The number was actually decided by the principals themselves. Because I remember saying to them in the first August Workshop, "I don't have a clue what you go through as Bellevue principals

and I won't know that for the first couple of months on the job. So help me get close on a number." And they established the number which I was real pleased with. 'Cause I think they did pick a challenging number.

And I guess that the other thing that I'd say about the top-down part of this thing . . . when you use common sense it, it feels like a whole lot less top-down to me. Like what top-down means to me in its negative connotation is somebody asks you to do something that either you don't get, or it's a package, or it's somehow artificial and it's just imposed on you. . . . So when I say to the principal, "Here's a top-down mandate. You'll be in classrooms a lot. You'll be observing instruction a lot. Your main job is to improve the quality of instruction." It's true that's an order. But I'd be really shocked if I ever had a principal say "No thanks. I'd rather work on my budget all day." Does that make sense?

So, yeah, top-down in the sense that I know exactly what I want and I'm very forceful about it, but I'd be really saddened if I thought it wasn't what everybody in the profession wanted. I think if I said, "You will go in and use the following checklist"; now that I would say is one of those artificial, top-down things. (Riley, Interview, February, 17, 1999)

<u>The purpose of the policy is to maximize learning for students.</u>

The superintendent stated that his "top-down mandate" directing principals to "be in classrooms a lot," and "observing instruction a lot," was for the purpose of improving the quality of instruction for students. When questioned about what they understood to be the

purpose of the policy, all principals' responses matched the purpose set out by the superintendent.

One principal captured the thinking of his colleagues when he stated, "I think the overall purpose of this [policy] is to make learning more effective for kids in the classroom. That's the overall purpose.

> This understanding was echoed by a fellow principal who said,
>
> Initially, I recognized that he was doing this out of a genuine concern for student learning. Well, I do believe that . . . it is focused on kids and what they are learning. . . . I say that from the observations that I've made [of the superintendent] and the talk he had with staff and principals over time. . . . He's been real consistent about "this is meant to be for kids, and if it wasn't meant for kids I'd tell you that it wasn't meant for kids; it was for this purpose."

Yet another principal summed it up in his statement: "All of us, when we are walking in classrooms now, are asking ourselves, 'What is it that the students are learning?' and that has sort of become the fabric of our thinking as we're going into classrooms."

Teachers' impression of the policy's intent matched that of principals'. A second-year teacher said the purpose of the policy was to ". . . focus on student learning. 'And how do you know?' The measuring of that is 'What's the evidence of the student learning'?"

> A veteran teacher in describing the policy's purpose responded,
>
> I think to get the most out of instruction and get the most out of students. Ah, just to focus the instruction on certain . . . state EALRS, working with the

district SLOs. Ah, just having the specificity is going to [produce more] valid instruction. More focused, more focused.

However, principals and teachers, in describing the purpose of the policy, elaborated on what they believed to be a number of supporting assumptions that provided the framework or foundation to the policy. The following sections illustrate these assumptions using principals' and teachers' own statements.

The policy emphasizes the expectation that principals serve as the foremost instructional leaders in their schools and that the promotion of student learning be their highest priority.

All principals clearly recognized the role they were to play in implementing the policy. Reflecting on the superintendent's policy introduction, one principal described his understanding of the principal's responsibilities:

> The main message is that the principal, he saw, as the lead in a school. We ought to be instructional leadership or just generally "the lead." He wanted principals to be right out there in front, real apparent, real obvious. And what he wanted us to be sending is a message that's not only "We are here, but we think that student learning is the most important thing that is happening here. And so don't bother me with the other things. I'm busy with student learning issues. And I will be busy with student learning issues. And one way I'm being busy with student learning issues is that I'm in the classrooms a lot more than previously." And so I think that was the key message that he started with.

Another principal emphasized the clear focus of her role:

> [The policy provides] a focus on what our responsibilities need to be within the school setting. Particularly on "what are kids learning." Not, "How are kids feeling?; not, "Are the kids nice?"; not "Are they socialized creatures?"; but rather "Are children learning the academic skills they need to learn to become competent human beings?" And so his goal was very focused.

A principal with a lengthy tenure in the district, contrasted previous expectations and actions with the intent of the new policy and its relationship with his role:

> I think that the purpose of the goal or the policy is the same as it's always been. But before I think it was a cliché and that is "to improve instruction." We used to almost jokingly say that some of the things we did as instructional leaders were to improve instruction, and we couldn't figure out why redesigning the parking lot was really improving instruction--but as instructional leaders we were doing it. This [policy] finally hit the nail right on the head. . . . Something we could do that would directly improve instruction is to help teachers understand what they are doing and whether it has a cause/effect relationship on what their kids are doing as far as learning.

Teachers described how they saw the role of instructional leader playing out in the classroom and the congruence of the principal's role with their own. One primary teacher said,

> I knew his role was to see how I was implementing what he and I had talked about earlier [in the preconference], and also that he would be spending time interacting with the students to discover what they were learning. And I really liked that piece. That piece felt like it was very complementary to the

> expectations that I had of my students because I ask them to constantly question each other, "why are we doing this?" and "what are we learning from doing this experience?"

Another teacher saw the role of the principal as one who keeps the student learning lens focused:

> [The role of the principal is] to see that we effectively know how to teach the children, and how we present a concept to children. . . . We have a real strong emphasis to support children in wanting to learn, to take responsibility, to go beyond the information that we are giving them. So I feel that that is the lens, what . . . the administrator [is] looking for. Is that happening? And if not, what could we do differently to bring it into more focus?

Principals and teachers further sharpened the focus and added specificity to the instructional role of the principal. In discussing the relationship of the policy to principals' responsibilities, three aspects were frequently identified.

> The policy is intended to direct principals' time more in classrooms focused on teaching and student learning.

Principals emphasized that they were expected to "help teachers understand what they are doing" and to communicate to the teacher the relationship between the teacher's decisions and actions and student learning.

One principal commented, "I think that the purpose that was stated was that if student learning is our overall goal, then we're looking at the relationship between teacher and student as the key part of the educational system in the school."

A second principal concurred,

> Well, I think that the superintendent made it pretty clear that the foundation of our educational system is in kids' learning. And that the reason that he is implementing this policy of spending a lot of time in classrooms, and written observations, and feedback to teachers was to nourish the conversation, to nourish the wealth of knowledge that teachers and principals should be sharing about kids' learning and about development of curriculum and how that affects kids' learning. In other words, he wanted a very direct tie to how . . . how we're behaving and what we're doing to tie in with what kids are learning. And that's the bottom line.

The policy provides principals with an instructional model.

While principals recognized that the primary intent of the policy focused on improved learning for students, they also saw this policy as a *strategy* for both *educating* the principal and *ensuring that they appropriately prioritize their time*. As one principal explained the policy:

> Going into a classroom and seeing what the kids are learning puts it right into focus--that is "What is instruction supposed to yield"; that is--"What are the kids learning?" So the policy has helped clarify and we've got a perfect example from [the central office] of how to be an instructional leader.

Another principal further elaborated,

> I think the overall purpose of this [policy] is to make learning more effective for kids in the classroom. That's the overall purpose. But I think the initial one was to get principals into the classrooms in the first place so that they could

> view teaching and also bring the question back to us of "What is effective teaching?" So it was a learning process not only for the staff, but I think it was a great learning experience for the principals, as well. And to prioritize their time so this could happen.
>
> The purpose of the policy is to encourage communication between principals and teachers that focuses not only on the effectiveness of instructional strategies, but on how to assess instructional effectiveness; furthermore, the policy's intent is to promote dialogue that fosters teachers to think about their instruction and its impact on student learning.

Principals were mindful of the superintendent's direction that their dialogue with teachers should be structured to support the teachers in becoming more flexible and precise in their instruction, and in becoming more conscious of the relationship between their instructional practice and students' learning. The superintendent had declared that the objective for principals was to "help teachers become practiced at analyzing their own instructional effectiveness [in order to create] independent learners who can foster their own professional growth." One principal acknowledged this directive and linked it with the ultimate impact principals have on students:

> I think that the purpose that was stated was that if student learning is our overall goal, then we're looking at the relationship between teacher and student as the key part of the educational system in the school. And if that is the key part, then the role of the principal is to work with teachers to evaluate that--teacher to student relationship and the learning process. And the principal is

the key person in the building to affect change, positive changes. Principals can make a difference for students.

Many principals, in describing "frank and powerful feedback" to teachers as an essential subgoal of the policy, emphasized the importance of "teacher thinking" as an outcome of their dialogue:

> I think the primary purpose is for me to get teachers to be more purposeful in their thinking about what they're doing. Teaching is a thinking process and I'm in there to be a constant catalyst so that they keep thinking about what they are doing. I think that that's my primary purpose. Sometimes I help them think by asking them questions. Sometimes it's just by my presence or knowing that I'm going to be asking questions, they start thinking themselves and that's kind of the goal. And so, that's the primary purpose.

Teachers consistently identified feedback from their principals as a key element of the policy. Like principals, their descriptions frequently mentioned the importance of "thinking."

Teachers with less than five years of teaching experience focused on the importance of thinking through the steps of a lesson. A first-year teacher described the principal's role in promoting her thinking as keeping her attentive to the necessary components of a lesson:

> And then also, again [the role of the principal is] to keep the teacher thinking. You do that anyway. But I'm noticing that in teaching, actual teaching--as opposed to student teaching--you have a tendency to just, I do, I'm noticing, I have a tendency to do the "OK, what am I going to do today?" kind of thing, as opposed to that real formalized lesson plan where you're writing the set, and the communication of purpose, and all that.

A second-year teacher said, "I think more than anything . . . to make sure that teachers are really thinking through the objective. . . . Are they thinking through each step?" And a third-year teacher connected his own thinking with being purposeful in his instruction:

> I think it's to give me a new perspective, a better perspective. It makes me think. Not just thinking of being observed, [but] "What's the real purpose of the kids learning?" So things going through my head . . . I know I'm being observed . . . [but] it got me thinking on a different level I think in terms of educating for kids. And then [the principal], she'll tell me "I don't think it worked." She is being very frank, and I appreciate that for the next time . . . for that [next] lesson.

Teachers with more than ten years of classroom experience did not discuss the teacher principal dialogue in relationship to the technical aspects of the lesson, but rather focused more on the benefits to them of collegial discussion and its effect on their own learning. One veteran teacher remarked,

> Ultimately, it is to have the teacher reflect on their teaching. So that it's, . . . I guess the closest parallel that I can think of is peer coaching situation. I don't see, I personally don't see it as, "This is me coming in to tell you what is the right way to so something" in terms of the instructional techniques. It's "Let me come in and share my observations, because, you know, I'm somebody who's outside it and was able to observe what you were doing. And then let's discuss it." So, ultimately, I guess there is this "evaluation" which is fine--I mean that has to occur legally, so to me that's just part of it. But the more crucial part was a peer coaching model.

Another experienced teacher commented, "But you know, I think it's in the talking back and forth . . . that we can have a leading question, a probing question. That's where I think you learn."

The policy is intended to mend a "broken" district. The policy is a method for eliminating poor teachers and principals.

Some principals and teachers, at the outset of the policy implementation, believed that there were additional unstated objectives lurking behind this directive. While every principal stated that improved instruction for the purpose of increased and improved student learning was one goal of the teacher evaluation policy, several principals' first impression of the policy was directed less on improved student learning and more on what they believed to be unwritten or understated objectives. They interpreted the superintendent's emphasis on principals spending much of their workday in classrooms and in conversation with teachers, the establishment of a specific quota of observations to be completed, and the fact that observation write-ups were to be submitted to the executive directors, not as means for establishing consistent practice or as an indicator of "best practice" among principals. They did not accept the new policy as a support intended to assist their efforts in promoting a purposeful learning environment in their schools. Instead, they viewed the directive's primary mission as a method designed to ensure their accountability. They believed that the new superintendent had identified problems in the system, and more specifically, in their performance, and this policy was a cloaked effort to address those problems.

One principal discussed her distress caused by her first interaction with the new superintendent the previous spring. She ended that first conversation with the feeling that he believed "we needed to be fixed" and she described her impression of him as "disconcerting."

This impression continued to inform her perception that the main intent of the policy was to hold principals accountable for being in classrooms. In responding to the question "What did you believe was the purpose of the policy?" she said, "To assure the new superintendent that we were in the classrooms. That was the purpose. . . . There was some information . . . he had that the principals were never in the classroom, and this was an attempt to make--top-down--to make that happen."

A number of principals viewed the policy as a method for identifying and removing weak teachers--and weak principals. One principal stated the feelings of many of his colleagues:

> I felt that there was a political agenda that was being addressed in that, as a new superintendent, he was going to find out where we had weak teachers, strong teachers, also weak principals, strong principals, and then he would be able to make some decisions about staffing. So this is a political piece about accountability to the community. He wanted to make a strong statement that he was going to be the person that could be accountable to the community and he would have enough information to make sure that would happen and be able to make decisions accordingly.

Initially, many teachers also were not convinced that the primary focus of the policy was directed at students and their learning. A teacher with more than 25 years of classroom experience echoed the sentiments of some of his peers in his belief that while the new superintendent espoused the importance of student learning, the actual focus of the policy was directed on teacher evaluation--a process he described as intimidating and unimportant:

> Well, I thought it was fairly clear from [the superintendent's] statement that he wanted emphasis on student learning and that was the key word. And I feel like it almost got itself billed to death. When he talked in conferences or informal situations, then the key phrase was "what did the kids learn?" But I do think, and I still think, that it's a teacher performance versus a student evaluation. Even under this new system, I think, I think most teachers feel that way, that they're coming to watch us. I think, and maybe the older teachers more so, we feel like we needed an ITIP-type lesson. And, it's got to follow all the steps and fill in all the spots. And if you don't somehow, then something's missing. And so it always feels like a dog-and-pony show a little bit. Even with the comfort level [with the principal] it still seems intimidating. It's a formal time when he comes in.

What Changed?

From the moment the policy was initially introduced to principals, changes began occurring within the district. The prominent change was the intentional focus on students and their learning. Linked directly with this shift was the new emphasis on the role of the principals as instructional leaders. This change in role caused principals to use their time differently; their focus on the activities inside the classroom shifted; their interactions in classrooms changed; the conversation between principals and teachers refocused. Teachers' perceptions of their principals changed regarding their principals' knowledge of curriculum and instruction and their familiarity with students. A more subtle change was the transformation of principals' perceptions of themselves and their efficacy as leaders.

The primary focus in schools and classrooms changed from *how* teachers were teaching to *evidence* of student learning.

Most of Bellevue's building administrators had been trained to use the structure or steps for conducting observations with teachers commonly referred to as *clinical supervision*. This structure focuses most directly on the format of the lesson, the instructional strategies used by the teacher, and the actions and decisions the teacher made in carrying out the lesson. Thus, in this form of observation, significant attention is given to the teacher. With the implementation of the new policy, a change, commonly expressed by both principals and teachers, was the intentional focus on the student.

Principals understood that instructional effectiveness was essential to students' academic success and the direct link between good teaching and increased student learning, but as one principal described,

> I think that the change that we've made in our district is, we are now looking at the [students'] learning as the bottom line rather than the teaching. Although they are closely connected, the learning is the litmus test.

Another principal, in explaining the focus on students and their learning, said,

> If you come into Bellevue you need to know, just know, that student learning is the crux of what we do. It's not "how *many* students do you have?" but [instead, student learning is] at the bottom. That's [where] folks must start--at the bottom. That's it . . . in this district. And that's "what do kids learn?": "What do you know about how kids learn?" Then, "What do you know about putting teachers in a frame of mind so that they . . . support kids in getting in

those skills?" "How do we get teachers there?" Before we started at the top with the teacher.

Teachers commented on this change in a similar manner. A first year teacher remarked,

> I guess that's, that's what I notice, that the focus is on children which is as it should be. It shouldn't be on teachers, it should be on children. And that's one thing that I have heard that's different than in the past. That it is more focused on children. Which, you know, to me is why we're here so . . . that's what it's all about.

An experienced teacher, who had transferred into the district just a year before the arrival of the new superintendent, noted a sense of unity which he attributed to a clearer focus.

> I've just seen it. There's really been such a change here, just in the year, you know. I only came a year--I've been here a year and a half, but I notice a cohesiveness so much more and I'm sure it's because of people being more focused about what we're all about.

Principals gained an increased sense of authority.

A common focus on student learning coupled with the superintendent's *expectation* that principals manage their schools but "be first and foremost instructional leaders" and his *modeling of his expectation* of spending "time, energy, and talents focused on the quality of education being offered in their schools" changed both the role of the principal and how principals perceived their role.

From his first meeting with principals, while the superintendent set clear expectations for principals, he was equally clear that he granted them the authority necessary to lead their

schools. After two years in the district, the superintendent described what he labeled as a "redefined principalship":

> The . . . thing that I think I'm seeing that makes me believe that there's been a change, is that I think we have redefined the principalship in Bellevue. Not in some kind of fancy new way nationally, but I think that principals . . . were without any authority in many cases. And the strongest of them knew how to exert authority almost through their own personality. But a lot of folks felt that there were a lot of situations in their school that they'd like to change, but they didn't have any authority to make the change . . . including addressing unprofessional behavior, poor teaching, things that weren't good for kids. And I think that's changed. I think that principals now feel that a) they are responsible for the quality of the things that occur in their building, not just the instructional program but the whole building. And that b) they have the authority to do something about it. And c) if they don't do it they won't be in the job long. So I think that really probably that is the most dramatic shift.

Principals agreed:

> And to think that I can do this, I can lead, and I can set into place systems that can support so many people is awesome. It's awesome. . . . It was district-wide empowerment. And I used it to the max. . . . Because I've brought up *all* the times I didn't see learning occurring.

Principals redirected their time and attention more to instructional matters.

Principals described their own actions and sense of direction as becoming more purposeful. They characterized themselves as more focused in several ways. The question

"what did the student learn?" guided their actions and observations in classrooms and their discussions with teachers. One principal declared,

> I've become much more solid. I don't think I'm much different in how I talk to teachers, and how I view instruction, and I'm able to see the value in asking questions to get people to learn. I don't think all of a sudden, just two years ago, I started doing that. But I think I do it better, more focused, more purposeful now.

Teachers' perceptions corresponded with those of principals. Teachers saw the policy as providing a clearer focus to the principal. One teacher said, "I think the greatest impact is that it has made him focus very clearly on instruction within the school." Another teacher explained,

> I don't think this has altered her thinking about student learning. I kind of think she's known about it all along. I really do. I think a good administrator is going to look at the relevance of learning that's going on in the classroom. I think she's known. It just gives her a better focus.

Principals discussed their initial uncertainty about meeting the expectations of the new superintendent and their sense of accomplishment in succeeding. "I just couldn't envision doing 90 evaluations in one year. I just couldn't do that. Considering the other scope of work and community and everything else. But I did it."

Teachers, too, were concerned about the impact this new expectation would have on their principals:

> I know the load of principals . . . and I think it's a horrendous load that they have to . . . a burden that they have to run a school, especially this school with

> some of the social problems . . . and I was concerned over the well-being of the administrator with the tremendous responsibility. It almost seemed insurmountable. But, it can be done. I think with the change over in leadership in the school district, they've created some more demands initially, but maybe as people adjust to it, the routines, they will be OK.

Another teacher acknowledged the change in expectation for principals and that fact that his principal seemed to successfully manage his time to appropriately balance responsibilities:

> The demand and expectation that Dr. Riley had, that indeed you'll go in and you will do this, obviously must have meant a lot of shuffling of time and energy and where you were going to focus. You know, we all said, when we heard it was going to happen, "Wow, so who's going to do all the other stuff?" And yet, what I see happening is that the school has become more cohesive. I mean there hasn't been any major disruption in the function of the school.

While most principals claimed they spent time in classrooms and focused on instructional leadership *prior* to the entrance of the new superintendent, they admitted that their former efforts were not well specified:

> In the past, I was the instructional leader, but if you really quizzed me on "What is it you are doing specifically that makes you the instructional leader?" or more specifically, "How has instruction improved because of what you are doing?" I would have had to be more creative in my answer than I am today. It's much easier, now.

In contrast, they described the change in their role:

> My job is about student performance 100% of the time. And once in awhile I'm interfered with that by having to answer e-mails, and go to meetings, and write letters for kids who are truant, and . . . all of that. But my whole job as I see it now is about student learning. And how much time does it take? Every minute of my day that I can give to it.

Principals discussed how teachers' perception of their role as an instructional leader changed:

> [I am] seen as the curriculum and instructional leader. Staff expect me to have ideas for improvement in their areas of weakness. Administrators' roles are very clear. The learning environment is totally focused on student performance and teacher improvement.

This same principal goes on to describe the change in her administrative responsibilities:

> And I feel more that "I" now than ever before, because I am truly in charge. But I also know what I'm in charge of. And that "in charge of" is a responsibility. I'm no longer "in charge" just of my school, but I'm now responsible for ensuring student outcomes. Ensuring that students have high expectations. Ensuring that staff are in an emotional and psychological and academic place to support kids' learning.

She contrasts her current behavior with the pre-Riley era:

> While I said kids weren't learning I didn't write it. I did not put it in writing. I wanted people to like me. I didn't want any more union impact in my life. It was too stressful. So I followed the nice little "nice leader." And I kept being

> the "nice principal" who would push people over a little bit, and then when they got jerky I would back off.

While teachers frequently expressed concern for their principals because of the many responsibilities placed on them, their observations of their principal as an instructional leader supported those made by principals.

> I think that [the policy] has made him focus on the instruction, and everything else seems to be getting done, (laugh), and everything else seems to be getting done. But there seems to be this really good focus on "How can we make it better here for the kids here at [our school]?"

Principals redirected the focus of their classroom observation.

As highlighted earlier, there was common agreement among principals and teachers that the primary purpose of the policy instituted by the new superintendent was to improve student learning. This objective caused principals to redirect the focus of their observation in classrooms. A focus on *evidence of student learning* replaced prior emphasis on classroom atmosphere, commending the use of innovative instructional strategies such as cooperative learning or graphic organizers, or a methodical analysis and labeling of the lesson to ensure that each component was in place. Principals learned that the presence of a collection of learning centers or students seated in table groups did not always equate with purposeful and effective instruction.

One principal contrasted his former emphasis in classroom observations with his change of focus:

> In the years before doing classroom observations, I could have gone through and done what I thought was a very good classroom observation and never

> discussed what the students learned. I could have discussed the way the teacher had arranged the groups-of-four, how the visual aides were appropriate, how the teacher had mainstreamed in certain kids and that was wonderful as far as showing an interest in teaching pupils. And I could have done what I thought was a pretty commendable job of writing up an observation but never in there would I have referenced "what did the kids learn" in the lesson.

Another principal described how the focus on student learning changed *her own thinking* about what constitutes a lesson in which learning is occurring for students:

> Well, it is very interesting to see my shift in thinking from "This is an activity-laden class, and learning is not going on, and how can we be more efficient in our model?" . . . Now I go in [to a classroom] and I get a little bit frustrated with, oh yuck, here we go with another show-looking activity and the intentionality is not there.

What constituted *learning* in the minds of principals? Their definitions and indicators closely aligned with those described by Wiggins and McTighe (1998) in their book *Understanding by Design*. In the same manner as these authors, principals linked learning with understanding. They used the term "to understand" to mean more than simple acquisition of textbook knowledge and skill. Unlike Gardner's (1991) traditional student who seeks to master the literacies, concepts, and disciplinary forms of the school but cannot apply his learning once he has been removed from the context of the classroom (p. 7), Bellevue principals were looking for evidence that students really "get it."

In response to the question, "How do you define student learning?" one principal explained, "Student learning means the internalization of knowledge. Students are able to transfer the knowledge from one academic setting to another and from one learning topic to another."

But more typically, principals responded to the question by describing student learning in terms of student behaviors they observed occurring in the classroom. One principal said,

> In a general way, students have to show me two things. They have to show me an understanding of the concept or a demonstration of the skill; then they have to show me that higher Maslow thing, or some kind of application or some further question about the concept so that I know they got it.
>
> I'm not satisfied with a teacher who says, "Here's what the paragraph looks like. Please write yours and turn them in." And the kids turn them in. I'm not satisfied there's student learning until I'm able to ask the kids the question, "Why do you suppose this is how I would write paragraphs this way?" Or, "What is it about this paragraph that helps you to read and understand what's in it?"
>
> In other words, I want them to be able to apply their learning. I want them to show me some application. So then I know that student learning occurred.

Student engagement, in some form, was an indicator of learning commonly mentioned by principals. One principal discussed how he determined student learning, "First of all, are the kids engaged? In other words, do they consider this important enough to give up their time to actually do something about this?"

Another principal described how she ascertained whether students were learning:

> Well, I'm looking for what kids are doing and being exposed to and if they actually take from what's happening in [the lesson] and know or do something differently than they have before. So I look at what activities they're involved in and how they do something with what they learned. And the "do" could be writing or talking or building or making or it could just be sharing it. So sometimes I need to go around at the end of the lesson and ask kids things. If they're learning about different layers of the Earth, you know, the crust and the mantle, and I need to say, to ask them, "What are they?"; "What's the difference?" Or I've been in lessons where teachers are having them build things and I can see from that that they're learning.

However, while principals focused first on evidence of student learning, they did not completely separate learning from teaching. One principal described how he related student learning and teaching:

> I still think that teachers think that teaching is a science, that it is an act, that it is a performance, it's the steps. And I think that teaching is more of an art. Knowing what to do when. How much to do and not to do. How to set up an environment. How to not let things get in the way so [students] can't learn. Which is different than teaching skills. So when I go in [for an observation] I'm not evaluating all the teaching skills I saw the teacher use. I'm evaluating what I saw the kids learning. And then I try to figure out why they were learning the stuff. Usually it was because the teacher has set up the safe

environment or brought in the right materials or asked the right questions to get the kids interested enough to learn. And so that's the shift. I've made it.

And though principals were looking for the engagement or participation of students as evidence of their learning, principals acknowledged the importance of an effective lesson design as significant to supporting learning. Two principals commented on this relationship:

> Are the students actually engaged in learning and do they have something that they show that they are engaged in learning? Either by staying real attentive or by getting involved in written work, or questioning strategies, or doing research or something. But there's always some energy by the student showing that this is valuable, that they're getting something from this.
>
> And when I go into a classroom where I don't think students are learning, usually students are very unfocused, time is not well spent, they're not engaged and they're not giving the behavior that shows that they really care about what's going on. So it's pretty easy to see if a lesson is taking off or going flat and students really are the barometer of that.

The second principal further elaborated,

> How much participation do you have from the kids and are the kids giving the answers to the participation that are connected to the objective? I think that that is one of the main things to look for. Another thing is just to see if the lesson is tight.

One principal took the student perspective and used his own ability to grasp the concepts as an indicator of student learning and effective teaching,

> If I can get through the learning. If I start to finish or if I learn something new in a class that I didn't know before I went in. If it's a skill that I have already, then how was this presented so that I, as the learner, would be able to do what is there?

When teachers were asked what indicators they believed their principals used to determine student learning, their responses were closely aligned with those of principals. A veteran teacher remarked.

> He's talked to me about what he's seen in terms of kids' responses. . . you know that idea of the types of questions that come out of here [points to his mouth]. And I'm starting to realize as we work on this that that's such a big part of this comprehension and learning and understanding. It like Socratic questioning in very close ways. It's what comes out of here and the way I ask the question and the words I use. So that's becoming much more a focus of what we talk about.

A third-year teacher responded,

> Student engagement . . . in terms of conversation, the questions . . . excitement, interest. . . I think all those things. I don't know . . . [laugh] that's what I think anyway.

When asked how she believed her principal assessed the degree of learning occurring in classrooms, an intermediate teacher said,

> By the conversations that he has with students. What information are they able to give back to him, whether it is verbal or a written, what written expression have they demonstrated during the time that he was in the classroom?

However, in one interview, a teacher with a career of more than twenty years in the district, expressed frustration with the focus on student learning being promoted by the new superintendent, and questioned a principal's ability to determine whether student learning was truly occurring:

> We all want to impress [the superintendent] so much that we sometimes go out of our way to make sure that the kids are learning. You know? There are days that I don't know if they learn or not; I really don't. And sometimes I don't know for weeks. You know I'll talk to them one-on-one. What did you just learn now? You know, we've gone over it a hundred times. But given the same kids over two or three weeks or an accumulation of papers, three or four writings, you can actually see some progress.
>
> But I don't know. . . Well, it's got to be some sort of student-based outcome. But I don't honestly know how [the principal] knows that. . . . I do know that some sort of student-based outcome is part of it . . . because that's what he's looking for. He comes in and that's the kind of questions he asks, "How do you know the kids are learning?"

As principals reframed their conception of effective instruction and searched for indications of student learning, their own behavior in the classroom changed. Unlike their practice in clinical supervision of sitting in one place in the room taking detailed notes of the teacher's actions, in the new mode, principals frequently interacted with students. They questioned students' understanding of the lesson in the principal's pursuit to gather evidence of learning. One principal described how she decided whether students were learning, "I go to the source. I look at what the children are doing. I ask them questions."

Another principal described his change in behavior, "Well, one of the things that has changed for me is originally I would more or less sit in the classroom and observe the teacher teaching. I'm much more now, moving around and seeing what the kids are doing."

A teacher in his school concurred with this change in behavior:

> I will say that [his behavior] has changed this year from the first year. He used to come in and kind of have some conversation. But then it seemed to be more formalized. Now I see . . . [he] is talking more to the students. [He] is more focused on the students during the school day and he is less focused on the parents. He is having more conversations about students.

The manner and content of principals' conversation with teachers about students and their learning changed.

As principals discussed their changed behaviors caused by their purposeful search for indicators of student learning, their more direct focus on students' actions in the classroom, and their attention to lesson designs that most effectively promoted learning, principals remarked on the manner in which these behaviors redirected their focus in working with teachers:

> So I'm working with ways of helping people be more intentional. [We] talk about what it would look like if the activity wasn't there. I'm getting more directive (chuckle) even in the cognitive coaching arena. I'm able to say, "That really looks like you were trying to kill time with this group of students." And they go, "Yeah, you're right." And I go, "OK, so how can we make it be a learning experience in a more efficient way." And it's really fun for me to figure that out. It's like a puzzle.

The themes of purpose and intentionality in both planning for learning and conducting lessons were ones frequently mentioned by principals as they talked about their interactions with teachers. In the same way that principals intentionally gathered data during classroom observations that provided evidence of student learning, principals' conversations with teachers changed to focus on this evidence:

> When I take time to talk to teachers now, most of my conversation with teachers is quite directed towards what is going on in class and what the kids are learning. All of the other stuff still goes on in my life as a principal, but I'm not talking to that many teachers about it. So if you had a meter on me during the year [that recorded] "teacher talk", . . . most of the times [when] I talk to teachers it's about kids and instruction and what worked and what did they learn.

Principals suggested that the emphasis on student learning supported by purposeful data collection strengthened the conversation focused on students:

> And the thing that that has done is, although this went on before, I didn't have as much evidence to go with the conversation, I don't think. It has really strengthened the conversation around individual students and what they are learning and how they are learning.

Thus, implementing the policy provided principals the opportunity to regain a measure of authority in their schools. Executing the policy required principals to modify their focus and behavior in the classroom and to redirect their conversations with teachers. It altered the manner in which principals spent their time *during* the school day. The requirements of the policy impacted the principals' time *beyond* the school day, as well.

The policy extended the principal's work schedule outside the school day.

A significant change, mentioned by every principal, was the extended amount of time principals found themselves dedicating to the evaluation policy *outside* the school day. This time was spent reflecting on teachers' teaching, students' learning, and then turning these reflections into written summaries. Principals talked about the value of taking time to review their classroom observations and discussions with teachers. They found that this exercise helped them more thoughtfully analyze the lesson; "The observation process is a very positive one. I have the opportunity to be reflective and revisit the observation twice--once physically and the other visually when I am ready to write the document."

Principals discussed a change in their own behavior. In the past, when observing classroom lessons, they had relied most heavily on verbal feedback. The new model insisted on a written summary and principals described the impact the document had on teachers:

> Before, I put a lot of emphasis in the verbal, obviously not much in the written. And now that I've been finely tuned to do the written, I can sometimes see where there is a lot of power in the written. That, I didn't appreciate before--that, I didn't use at all before. There is more power in the written word than in the spoken word.

Another principal commented, "I don't mind doing the write-ups and it helps me to focus in. And the teachers like getting them--they go over them word by word by word."

And yet, every principal claimed that this was not a document that they could produce within the school day. Comments included, "The write-up is on my time. . . . I think you'll hear this a lot from principals"; "It has lengthened the work week. Essentially, there's not a weekend that I don't spend at least half a day working."; "I will find a time, usually very early morning,

late at night, or weekends where I'm doing the writing piece"; "I'm not able to do the written report while I'm in the building. There's too many other things, students and parents, and too many other things, you know, . . . that, I just can't seem to sit down for the half-hour or forty-five minutes that it takes me to do. So my writing is usually on the weekends in the morning, and I might have to do, if I get backed up, five or six or more on a weekend."

Principals emphasized that they needed uninterrupted time not just to complete the task of writing up the lesson summary, but that uninterrupted time was essential to do the kind of reflecting they believed the task warranted:

> The activity is truly one that requires deep reflection. As such, it is impossible to complete the written work on site. The work day is filled with writing behavioral contracts, answering parents' concerns, interacting with staff about instruction, supporting families with difficult issues, and on and on. I value the time I spend in the classroom, both with observations and non-scheduled visits. Each of the components of the day is important and I need to accept my reality [of taking work home.] Even if time was in the day [to complete written summaries], I'm not sure I could do the written work on site. I need quiet reflective time to revisit the observations in my mind and the written work.

Change Upon Change

The new superintendent's directive, like a pebble dropping in a pond, caused a series of ripples. Within the first ripple of change was a purposeful focus, altered roles and actions and behaviors on the part of principals, and conversations among principals and teachers targeted at student learning. The next ripple of change included increased knowledge of

curriculum and instruction, *thinking* about learning, and signs of ownership and commitment to the new policy.

Teachers identified an increase in principals' familiarity with students and knowledge of curriculum and instruction as a change promoted by implementation of the policy.

Teachers believed that by being in classrooms more, principals' knowledge of students increased. "I do think he knows more how kids are doing. He's more aware of individual students," commented one teacher. A first-year teacher confirmed, "I'm amazed at how much he knows about the children, . . . and he's got to be that way with every class, I would imagine. Even at the beginning [of the year], when he was telling me about my class and going through and talking about the different kids, you know, he had a good sense of who was who."

Principals agreed with this observation: "So [the evaluation model] really helped me to learn a building and learn teachers pretty quickly, as well as students."

Teachers cited a change in the knowledge of curriculum and instruction evidenced by their principal. One teacher said, "Oh, I think he's learned more about curriculum and instruction. This is doing something for him. Because I think he has more of a feel for . . . the curriculum. I do think he knows more how kids are doing. He's more aware of individual students."

One principal disagreed with this supposition. Both his interest and emphasis was in the arena of instruction:

> I think the policy has had the biggest impact on me in the area of instruction. . . . I haven't spent the time to become as deeply 'curricularly,' . . . as I could have. . . . But I haven't felt the need enough. . . . But I'm still more interested in *why* the teacher did what she did to get the kids to do what they did. . . . I

know enough about [the curriculum] to ask questions about it. I don't enough about it to make statements about it.

However, this principal's self-assessment did not match the common perception held by most teachers. In November, 1996, three months after the new teacher evaluation policy was introduced, a staff survey was provided to all the district's teachers for the purpose of determining teachers' evaluation of their principals' strengths as instructional leaders. The survey was conducted in the fall the following two years. The data in Table 1 suggests that it is teachers' impression that their principals' knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and of the teachers' teaching has increased during the first two years of the policy implementation.

Table 1

How Teachers Rate Their Principal's Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction and Quality of Teaching
Percentage of Positive Ratings

	Principal A			Principal B			Principal C*	
	Yr.1 (n=20)	Yr.2 (n=16)	Yr.3 (n=26)	Yr.1 (n=21)	Yr.2 (n=13)	Yr.1 (n=15)	Yr.2 (n=13)	Yr.3 (n=21)
My principal is knowledgeable about curriculum								
Strongly Agree	53	47	54	29	38	67	69	81
Agree	47	40	46	67	54	33	31	19
Disagree	0	13	0	5	8	0	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
My principal is knowledgeable about instruction								
Strongly Agree	63	60	73	29	46	53	77	95
Agree	37	40	27	71	54	47	23	5
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
My principal is knowledgeable about the quality of teaching in our building								
Strongly Agree	47	43	46	48	54	60	38	62
Agree	47	50	42	52	46	33	62	38
Disagree	6	7	0	0	0	7	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

** Principal C transferred to current school after Year 1*

The policy promoted a change in thinking for both principals and teachers.

Principals and teachers described their new behavior of *thinking first* about the goal or purpose of a lesson and of searching for evidence that reflected that student learning was occurring, with secondary emphasis given to a focus on instructional strategies and classroom activities. Principals talked about their role in supporting teachers' thinking. Teachers commented on the power of the policy in providing both a focus and purpose to their thinking, and on the support of their principal in facilitating their thinking.

> One principal discussed his change in approach and its impact on his thinking:
>
> One thing I've moved away from is "Well, how did you think the lesson went?" I don't take time for that anymore. Instead, I get right to the "What was it you were trying to get them to learn?"; and . . ."How did you arrange the situation for that to happen?; and "Did you get it right or did you miss it?"; "Could you have done the arrangement a little differently to get better learning?"; and "Did they not learn because you arranged or didn't arrange?" So I'm really funneling into that area. . . . And I'm having fun with that because it's making me think more and more about it. And that's what I'm sharing with them, you know. I don't know the right way to do it. I just want you to think about, "Is this the best way to do it?"

In like manner, other principals and teachers frequently linked their comments about purposeful conversation with a change of thinking. Principals talked about the need for teachers to redirect their thinking:

> I think the effect of the observations and the way that we've talked about what students are learning, is really a new way for a lot of people to take a look at

> what they're doing. And that when we emphasize that, they really have to rethink what they're doing in order to get the results they hope for kids, too.

Principals described the change in the learning environment prompted by the focus on student learning. One principal illustrated this change by sharing his conversation with a teacher:

> A teacher made the following comment, " When I saw you walk by my window toward Dana's class I thought to myself, 'Wow, if he walked in here right now, what would he say he saw the students learning'?" . . . And so if teachers are always thinking that--wonderful! . . . But I heard her. Those were her exact words. "What would he say, if he walked in here now; what would he say the kids are learning?" If that isn't a self-governing agent I don't know what is.

Principals, without exception, discussed their own role in supporting teachers' thinking:

> I'm not sure when the transition occurred. Could have happened midway through the first year even. I just remember, very much, my original purpose was to be the gatherer of information, the sharer of information [with] teachers about student learning. And if you asked me now, that's not it. My whole purpose now is to get to teachers to be thinking actively.

Principals reported various purposes for prompting "teachers to be thinking actively." One principal described his intention was to "get teachers thinking about their own stuff." Another principal talked about teachers thinking about using "different strategies." His intended outcome did not directly focus on student learning outcomes. Rather, his objective

was that teachers would acknowledge that instructional strategies made a positive difference because they "saved time, or we got further along, or more kids participated."

However, teachers' comments expressly reflected that their principals had convincingly communicated the concept that student learning was to be of primary consideration--not strategies nor activities. A first-year teacher described the ease of falling into the activity-directed lesson trap and the beneficial support of principal intervention:

> I can see how it would be really easy to get into, "This is an activity that I did last year, it was fun, kids liked it, so we're going to do it," as opposed to really thinking it through as to what are kids going to learn from it. . . . I guess that I find that the day is so . . . goes so fast that it's finding the quality . . . so I think having the principal or the supervisor around helps that.

Other teachers described how the policy brought a sense of focus and purpose to their thinking and to their discussion with others:

> And so [the policy] really makes me, and I think other teachers, be real thoughtful and purposeful in teaching. I think viewing that model . . . which is "what to do to help evaluate student learning." You really think about it when you are trying to say not "How can I do this?," but "What will they learn?" and "How can I help them to learn?"

An experienced teacher stated,

> Well, [the policy] really allows me to revisit. Revisit, revisit, revisit. It allows this whole reflective piece to happen. And that's what I find valuable. Because, you know, I think it's important that, I'm sure like every teacher, that we tap into the thing that's going to do the most for each kid. And that's what I see

this whole model as being able to do. It is making that possible. So we can talk about the kids that are really going ahead, and really picking up the information or picking up the concepts quickly. And then we can talk about the kids that are having more difficulty with it. So it keeps that discussion going.

There are indications that the policy was no longer solely owned by the superintendent.

When discussing changes that resulted from his introduction of the policy, the superintendent directed his remarks toward the concept of instructional leadership:

I think I'm seeing some of the principals really own the whole idea of instructional leadership where it's become theirs, and if I left tomorrow they would probably stay committed to the idea of being in classrooms. They'd probably still be trying to keep the bureaucracy at arms length. They'd still be real invested in curriculum.

Principals agreed with the superintendent. However they stated several reasons for taking ownership of the policy. Of greatest significance, they believed that the policy empowered them to take actions that directly supported students:

I truly appreciate having the initiative in place. In previous years, I worked until 11 p.m. and even later. At no time did I have evidence that my actions impacted students' learning, teachers' instructional practices, or teacher competence. At this time, I feel I have my hands on the pulse of the school. I am able to identify deficit areas and can be clear as to what needs to be done to positively impact student learning.

Principals talked about the policy representing the substance or purpose of education. As one principal said,

> I think the policy now is everybody's. Certainly all of the principals. And I can't speak for all teachers, but I'm going to say most teachers. All principals in a very positive way in that "what are students learning" is the sole purpose of us being in there.

Another principal came at it from a slightly different angle, equating the intent of the policy with valuing students:

> For me, the policy, the intent of the policy is just a frame for what we needed to do. And at this point, to abolish it is to say that we don't value kids. To abolish it would be to say, "We no longer care how you earn a check--if you are working with our children." It would be to say that we no longer value our kids.

Principals claimed that the policy has become integrated into the fabric of their work:

> The policy could be abolished. It doesn't really matter any more because now it's a fact. . . . A policy is needed when you want people to do things. The policy could be abolished now because you expect people to do it. You know what I mean? If you want to be a principal in [this district], here is what you need to know.

Principals maintained that carrying out the policy's intent has become an integral part of who they are as building administrators: "I feel better and better about [the policy] all the time. 'Cause again, it's more and more 'me.'; and, "I do believe that it is a core part of our job. A third principal stated,

> It started as top-down in the sense that Mike talked to us about what he expected and wanted. Then I, in my style of life, as I adapt and never adopt anything, I started adapting what it was that I knew he wanted. And everything he said made sense. So, what I quickly did was internalize and said, "OK, how do I do that?" Rather than "What does he want?" And so, from the get go, I haven't had a problem with "the policy" so to speak. You know, the central office directive, because I have adapted it and I haven't been feeling like it's anything contrary to anything I believe in. It's kind of strengthened, put words around things I think are right.

What Factors Impeded Change?

Implementing a change that affected every principal and teacher in the system was certain to be faced with problems. A feeling of resentment and anxiety toward the policy and toward the policy's originator, the new superintendent, and the extensive time obligation the policy required of principals were the two major issues generated by both principals and teachers.

First impressions were negative.

The superintendent's introduction of the policy created discomfort and resentment. Principals were confounded by the new superintendent's brash style. They were uncertain about the message he was sending. Many were uncomfortable by their conception of their new role. Principals accepted the directive that they were to devote their energies toward being instructional leaders in their schools and to spend time observing and communicating with teachers. They left the August meeting acknowledging that their responsibility was to aggressively address poor teaching practice. They understood that their own effectiveness

would be judged on their ability to carry out this task in a competent manner. However, many principals believed that the superintendent expected them to model his brazen behavior. And while they heard that improved student learning was one expected outcome of the new policy, eliminating ineffective teachers and principals was the weightier message they walked away with. One principal's comments represented the feeling shared by many of the principals: "I thought it was initially very, very selfish of him. I did. I didn't like it. I resented it. He was causing me to feel very uncomfortable."

Principals felt that the superintendent's message focused on their inadequacies as building principals:

> You are a lousy principal. You have a record of being lousy principals. There is evidence that says you have not dismissed folks. These folks are not teaching kids and you still are not doing anything about it.

And that the directive to principals was to "fix" the deficiencies:

> When we had our inservice in August there were things that felt top-down, punitive. Mike Riley has been sent here to clean us up. We're not as stellar as we all think we are. There's some things about us that need to be fixed, and by gosh, you're going to go out there and fix them.

Therefore most principals entered into the change process unsure about the approach to use with their staffs, unclear about the superintendent's intentions, and anxious about the security of their own employment.

Mismatch with principals' style and beliefs.

While some principals relished this new approach and enjoyed the opportunity to become more assertive in their dealings with staff and parents, most principals did not feel this way. One principal described the new superintendent's approach as "in-your-face":

> But what startled me, I think, was the training and the write-ups. The write-ups, to me, I termed them at the time as "in-your-face" write-ups. And so it was calling [attention to] things that maybe the teachers hadn't spent enough time developing and there were areas of deficit. And so we [were directed to] start out with areas of deficit. And I didn't really know how I was going to work that through the staff 'cause a lot of these guys, you know, are "warm fuzzies."

Another principal described her first impression of the superintendent:

> My initial meeting with [the new superintendent], he came in and kind of asked me about all the things that needed fixing. And my belief was that there were a lot of things that didn't need fixing . . . that were going rather well and that I was rather proud of with our school district and our community. And I don't know if that was just a newcomer's mentality or the fact that he'd just been to a school where the principal thought that a lot of things needed to be fixed. . . . I was a little disheartened at the notion that we were broken and that we needed to be fixed. . . . And to kind of have a mirror held up to you and say, "No, there's a whole bunch broken" is disconcerting. And I don't know that he meant to do that.

She expressed her discomfort with what she described as the superintendent's deficit model:

> I was really concerned. . . . because I have always tried to work off of people's strengths. . . . I don't think we get any change out of teachers unless we work from their strength areas. And I really believe that strongly. . . . And to [have someone] come in and think that we need fixing, that something is broken, was really getting at the core of my belief system--that that's not going to work and this feels really scary to me, and I can't do this. And there were a couple of weeks of real disequilibrium going on for me.

As principals began to introduce the policy in their schools, the anxiety and resentment entered the teachers' ranks. Again, the uncertainty was caused by lack of clarity regarding the policy's intended purpose and a lack of trust in the new superintendent. One principal described the initial experience of some of his peers:

> What I found then over the next several weeks when . . . I would see other principals, hear from other schools, and [my] teachers were picking up from other schools, there was a lot of unrest in the district about teachers not knowing what was happening to them. Because principals came charging on the horse saying, "OK, I'm in your class. What in the heck are kids learning?" And it was very threatening. And the teacher change process didn't happen very well for a lot of principals. And so the principals got beat up, 'cause schools were rocky.

Another principal described how stories were being passed from teacher to teacher:

> [The teachers] were afraid. They were afraid. And when I delayed [my first round of formal] evaluations, they had already heard from a number of other

> staffs and whether the principals had meant it, they had done a number of those "in your face" evaluations. And so when it got back to this staff it was "Guess what those guys are doing, and so now we are all going to get killed." And so my guys were prepared to get killed in that first round.

A teacher agreed with the principal in his assessment of the early reaction to the policy introduction:

> You know, when the model was introduced. . . . I tended to sense a lot of apprehension on the part of other staff members and people throughout the district. I'd bump into people and there'd be this real apprehension.

Time management.

Some principals were candid with their staffs about their own reservations about the new teacher evaluation policy. One principal shared his conversation with some of his faculty:

> I had some interesting questions by teachers. They said, "Well, . . . what do you believe about this?" And for a few of them that asked me personally, I said, "I'm going to have to wait and see, because I don't know. I don't know what this means to me. I don't even know if I'm going to be able to do this.

Questioning their ability "to do this," was a common concern among the principals. They felt challenged by the amount of time required of them to carry out 90 observations, conference with teachers, and complete the necessary write-ups. Though the superintendent involved the principals in setting the goal of 90 observations, some principals were initially concerned with whether they could actually complete this task.

One principal described the disquietude among building administrators. As a group they supported the intent of the policy, but they were not sure they could meet its conditions.

> Again, I think [the principals] were philosophically in agreement, with the emphasis of being in the classroom and watching for student learning. I think there was also a sense--I don't want to use the typical "overwhelmed" word--I think there was a sense of heavy burden on the part of principals. That "Wow, this is really going to be hard to get this many observations done." And so, the heat was on; the pressure was on. It was a stressor, a strain.

Completing the required number of observations and written summaries was one pressure. A second was completing the write-ups in a form acceptable to the new superintendent.

> I questioned my ability to write in the manner modeled. Time to complete the task and have a life. The number of evaluations desired was very stressful. Knowing the demands of the day, I could not see myself engaging in the process and achieving success. The policy is the right thing to do if we are serious about student learning. . . . I was concerned that the magic number would not be reached. [Lack of] time, other tasks, a need to interact with staff are all important parts of the day but do get in the way of observations.

Thus anxiety and resentment were the prevailing themes that confronted principals, teachers, and the new superintendent during the first year of the policy introduction. Principals and teachers were anxious about job security. They resented the implication that the district was in need of repair. Principals were uncertain about their ability to adequately complete the task and manage all the other requirements of their role.

And yet, both principals and teachers frequently supported the direction the superintendent was taking:

> I mean if you want change--and change is difficult--you have to somehow get people's attention. And I think that [the policy] got people's attention.

A second principal continued:

> When you go in [to a post conference] and you ask them "What did the students learn?"; that very simple statement is so powerful. . . . And once we got past the notion that we were looking for the bad or we were looking for people to screw up or people to not be addressing it, I think it just was so wonderful. . . . It's such a wonderful question to keep asking the teacher--what is it they're seeing that kids learned?

What Factors Supported Change?

The new superintendent provided the district a clear sense of focus and a unity of purpose directed toward students and their learning. The teacher evaluation policy provided principals one strategy for directing their own efforts and attention on students. The question "What did the students learn?" gave teachers direction for planning and carrying out instruction, and principals and teachers a focus for discussion. The superintendent's actions in other arenas--the reallocation of resources, the creation of full day kindergartens in every school, the attention given to increasing the number of Advanced Placement classes and the number of students enrolled in these classes, further emphasized the direction the superintendent was taking the district. "What's in the best interest of kids?" became the gauge by which administrators calibrated their decisions.

One principal stated,

> Whether you want to be . . . or not, you can't be in Bellevue if you don't believe in students and if you're not focused on it. And you certainly can't

work with Mike Riley. . . . So you can't pretend any more. You have to be genuine.

Clarity of direction.

Clarity of direction was a change for the Bellevue School District. After a decade of site based decision-making, and several decades of ambiguity regarding curriculum and assessment expectations, there was rampant autonomy among teachers resulting in little alignment of curriculum or common accountability for student progress. At the same time that clarity of direction was identified as *a change* resulting from the direction of the superintendent, it was labeled as *a support* for promoting change.

Principals and teachers identified three ways in which they believed the direction provided by the policy supported them in promoting a change focused on students. First, the policy provided everyone with a common goal. One teacher described this goal in relation to her conversation with her principal:

> So even if we disagree, we have the same goal and we can talk about it in that way. If [I don't agree with the principal's] suggestions--I usually do because they're usually good suggestions--but if I happen not to, we can still talk about 'OK, well then how is this student going to learn?' We both have the same goal, kind of like fighting for the same thing.

A *common dialogue* is a second support principals described: "The first thing [the policy] did was give us a common dialogue . . . So just the common language of re-emphasizing, refocusing in on [student learning] was really wonderful, and putting the expectations out there that everybody's going to do this and this is the way it is." Linked to the common dialogue was the *common model* or lesson plan that the superintendent provided

principals. One principal described the training provided by the superintendent as "specific and focused." Another principal saw the importance of the initial training for principals as the "time spent together thinking about this topic. . . . That helped me get more defined."

The focus provided by the policy supported principals in a third way. The policy provided *specific expectations* for principals. They were to conduct a minimum of 90 classroom observations, focusing on evidence of student learning. They were to complete postobservation conferences with teachers and document a summary of both the classroom observation and conference. Copies of the written summaries were to be given to both the teacher and the executive director. One outcome of these specific requirements was that principals felt they were granted permission to set some activities aside in order to focus most of their work day in classrooms looking for evidence of student learning.

> It's given me permission to say, "This is my job. This is what we're doing." It is the role of the building principal. There's no other role outside of basic safety for these kids that I think we should be doing. And it's helped me put some boundaries around trying to do it all. I can say I can't do X, Y, Z. I need to be in the classrooms right now. The message has gone out loud and clear, I think, to the support staff, to the parents. . . . "Oh, she's in the classroom doing this; that's what she's supposed to be doing.

The teachers' bargaining association was informed of the policy by the superintendent and it received their support. Thus principals felt that they were empowered to give teachers useful, but at times, candid feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction and recommendations for improving their teaching without reprisal from the association.

> The behavior of BEA has caused me to see the model as highly effective, as well. The organization appears to be partners in focusing on improving student performance. When having conversations with the organization about teacher performance, it seems to be totally focused on student performance, not staff's job retention or personal attacks on the administrator.

Agreement with the policy purpose.

While many principals struggled with their approach to introducing the policy to their staff and how to cope with the time consuming requirements of classroom observations, conversations with teachers, and writing up summaries, universally they agreed that the intent of the policy lined up with their own beliefs and attitudes. They believed that instructional improvement should be the most important aspect of their job and that a focus on students should be the highest priority.

> My attitude was good when we went into this 'cause it focused on student learning rather than teacher behaviors first, and so I bought into it immediately and started implementing and trying to interpret what it meant.

Another principal spoke directly to the policy impact on students: "I think every youngster, every youngster deserves to be taught in this district, but I also feel that about any kid in the world." Thus a shared sense of purpose was a powerful support to policy implementation.

We're all in this together.

That all building administrators were under the same directive to spend a significant part of their workday directly involved in activities designed to promote improved learning for students provided a sense of cohesiveness among the principals. One principal summarized the opinion of his colleagues,

> The thing that I thought was positive was that all the principals were in this. So there was a network of principals out there we can talk to and there still are. So they're out there doing the same thing. So it was like none of us was hanging out there alone. So if something didn't work, we talked about it and went on from there. I think having the whole district doing it at the same time was good. No one was out there on point on this--even the guys who came in and [were real aggressive in their approach]. It wasn't like that this was their idea and let out there to hang out to dry. Which I think is a really positive thing I've found in Bellevue. Nobody lets anybody drift and get hurt, really.

Another principal spoke more specifically to the support from her colleagues in providing samples of written summaries and time management strategies for meeting the requirement of the policy;

> Well, I really appreciate [written summary] templates and sharing within the collegial ranks of the way people are managing and just that basic survival stuff of how they are doing it. . . . Sometimes I feel like I'm stuck on some things and I just pull somebody else's [copy of a write-up] or something out, and they have just a couple starter-sentences that get me off and rolling.

While the goal, policy, and direction were conceived and introduced by the superintendent, principals commented on the fact that there was common support among the superintendent's administrative team for the policy;

> The other thing you need to remember is that while Mike Riley, the superintendent, said the words regarding evaluation, student learning, but Mike Riley's troops implemented it. You know what I mean? [The Cabinet is]

> a group of people that has a belief in what's going on. He couldn't do this if he had not been surrounded by a cadre of people who had the same belief system. Who believe in . . . in his words regarding what we were doing.

Principals felt supported by this administrative team: "Well, [I was helped] by the superintendent, by the executive directors that have come out and said, 'Yes, keep going. Keep looking [for indications of student learning]. You are doing what you are supposed to be doing'."

Support of the superintendent.

However, the one person that principals repeatedly identified as key to their support system was the new superintendent:

> The picture was built that here is a man that is going to stand here with you, who's creating systems in the district as a whole, to support not just what he believes should be occurring but what you've been working for. . . . Finally seeing, and hearing, and believing that we're on the same side.

Principals discussed the first two visits the superintendent made to their school and the impact these visits had on their impression of the superintendent. They frequently talked about their initial misunderstanding of the superintendent, his approach, and intentions.

> His writing that he used as a model was very different from my writing style. . . . But this is another part of that "misunderstanding the messenger," and having to take time to revisit the message. I was internalizing, "Here is what *you will* write." And he was saying, "Here is a *model* for what you *could* write." So when I talk about his rudeness or his selfishness, we're talking a very short period of time.

Another principal expanded the misunderstanding beyond himself to the larger district. He compared the feelings of teachers and principals:

> Now, I think that in the first year that we did this, I think the threat had . . . the threat of more observations, more written feedback, and real obvious central leadership had an effect on what people did. I think it really did. Because, in conversations, . . . and the going over observations and that kind of thing, I mean people would ask questions about . . . there was a certain amount of vulnerability that they talked about . . . as far as, "Gee, am I going to have a job?" You know, that kind of thing. I mean it was the same thing that I think a lot of principals were even feeling. . . . So I think it was a sensitized year.

In contrast to their first impression of a man intent on weeding out principals and teachers, principals described a person who was understanding of the limited instructional repertoire of inexperienced teachers, a man who applauded principals' efforts in working with veteran teachers in need of renewal. As one principal said, initially people either misunderstood or took the superintendent's words too literally: "Because you see the thing was, I was listening to the words. Not internalizing the words. . . . I heard the words, but I didn't hear the message." Another principal reiterated the comments of his colleagues when he explained the new impression he formed of the superintendent resulting from his response to their classroom visit in his school:

> I was afraid when Mike came in to observe. . . . I didn't know what was going to happen. But it was all productive. The lesson was a clunk—one of those "fuzzy" jobs. And so he spent a few minutes talking about the "fuzz." But

> then he showed real caring in how to impact these teachers--and they are good teachers. They're brand new--well two years--but there's a lot of caring. And I thought he meant the end result is, "How do we make them more effective?" I just think that everybody is on the right track.

Principals discussed the reinforcement they were provided by the superintendent. One principal described the feedback he received on one of his written summaries from the superintendent and how this response increased his confidence in his own competency:

> I wrote one [summary] up and sent it to him. He sent me back--it was like my old English teacher--he sent me back a paper with more writing than I had on it, to say "You are on the track", "You are going to have to defend this"; "Why are you looking at this?" And I thought at that time, "Whoa, this guy is really into this and I'm not that far off." So, at that point I said, 'OK, I'm cool. I'm in this.'

One principal spoke of the theme of cohesiveness described by her colleagues. The superintendent's focus and direction encouraged a sense of collegiality that promoted reciprocal support among principals and teachers.

> Mike Riley has set the tone for each and every one of us. . . Mike has allowed me to be the kind of human being in the workplace that I've always been [internally] but I can act it out. I can act it out because now I'm surrounded by other folks who think the way I think, who believe the same things I believe in. It's like the birds flying south for the winter, . . . I'm not flapping my wings alone. It's like we're all there in that V flying together.

Finally, principals talked about their growing trust in the superintendent caused by the consistency of his message:

> In other words, his integrity has been validated over time by his behavior and his talk. He walks his talk. So I can trust what he says is what he's saying and meaning. There's not a lot of hidden meanings there, and so I can value that.

No one right way.

Although the teacher evaluation policy had several requirements (e.g. 90 observations, written summaries, postconferences) the superintendent emphasized that the end result--improved student learning, was the ultimate goal. He did not expect principals to employ a packaged model to achieve this goal. Therefore some autonomy of implementation was granted to principals from the outset of the policy introduction. As an example, while all principals were required to introduce the policy to their staffs, and the superintendent provided them with a model to carry out this task, principals were not required to use the model. Rather, they could customize their introduction to match their style and staff. All principals were required to complete 90 classroom observations. They could conduct 90 discrete observations, each with a separate write-up. Or principals could do a series of observations, spending time in the same classroom for several consecutive days, and conclude with just one write-up to summarize the learning evidenced over an extended period of time.

Principals accepted the common expectations and appreciated the opportunity for flexibility in implementing the model and the absence of absolute standardization:

> [The policy] made sense to me when it was presented, so I started internalizing it rather than trying to figure it out or how to put it into place. I am one who adapts, and who doesn't adopt. So as he explained what he expected us to be

> doing, I wasn't thinking, 'I will or I won't.' I was thinking, 'How shall I. . . how can I make this work for me?' But [the goal] was still . . . 'Well, what did the kids learn?'

Confidence and capacity within the teacher and principal ranks.

Two final conditions that supported the policy implementation and promoted change within the district were the *prior knowledge and experience* the principals brought to their role and to the responsibility of teacher evaluation, and the *confidence and relationship* that principals were able to establish with the teachers on their staffs.

In listing factors that readied them for instituting the policy, principals commonly included their Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) and clinical supervision training, their knowledge of working with people, their knowledge of curriculum and instructional practice, and their prior experience in the role of school principal:

> I think just prior experiences. You know, how far can you push an individual. Doing a lot of observations and write-ups in the past. That whole ITIP-era I think helped out a bit. . . . Coaching teachers. I think just having some common sense helped out a lot.

While teachers recognized principals' knowledge of instruction and acknowledged that they gained valuable suggestions for improving instruction from their principals, teachers more frequently discussed the relationship and rapport they had with the principal as the important factor that supported them in accepting the policy and making changes in their instruction. Frequent communication, visibility, personal warmth, and a relationship in which teachers felt their principal was approachable, and that they were treated as "an equal" or in a nonauthoritarian manner by the principal were attributes mentioned by teachers. A young

teacher, new to the school district, described his relationship with his principal: "Well, she comes in and it's not like she has a clipboard, and sits down [with] the white gloves. It's usually coming in and talking about 'how's your family?' She makes me feel very comfortable." One second-year teacher commented,

> I've personally gained the most from the post-conference, from the dialogue, her suggestions. I really value her opinion and her suggestions, and her compliments I take highly, it means a lot to me. . . it makes me feel really good.

A veteran teacher discussed *relationship* as an element that he believed supported his principal's effectiveness in implementing the policy:

> And a factor would probably be the relationship with the principal . . . and we have a good relationship . . . not one of, I'm going to say "boss/worker," but it's along those lines. It seems a much more equal relationship. It's a give and take of ideas. . . . It's not real autocratic. I think it's just time and trust. You have to be in a relationship over time to do that. And he usually, during the conference, drops two or three hints of how he might have done it or some ideas of "Have you ever thought of doing it that way?" And I've appreciated those. I've followed through on several of those. And I think, I think that's real helpful.

The findings of this study suggest that in two years, the decisions and actions of a district leader have promoted a change in function and form of the building principal. Principals spend considerable time in classrooms focused on gathering evidence of student learning. The conversations of principals and teachers are centered on examining this data.

Though principals continue to struggle to balance their new responsibilities with the other demands of their professional and personal lives, they claim ownership for the policy that has provoked a significant change in their workday.

In the following chapter, I discuss my findings in relationship to the actions of the leader from a multiframe perspective; I suggest considerations and cautions specific to the implementation of the Bellevue policy that I then generalize to the execution of other school reform; and, I propose an incremental journey necessary for promoting and sustaining ownership of change. I have chosen this array of perspectives in order to acknowledge the complexity of systemic change and to add to the theory that looks at the relationship between the goals of organizations and the actions and abilities of people who work in those organizations.

Chapter V

Discussion And Conclusion

This study examines the actions of a school superintendent in the midst of building a seawall. Behind the seawall, a school district is undergoing changes, provoked in part by a teacher evaluation policy introduced by the new leader upon his entry into the district. Early indicators suggest that the leader and his policy are transforming the role and responsibilities of school principals and their relationship with him and with the teachers in their schools. The learning environment in the school house is changing. Principals and teachers are more intentional in centering their attention and discussion on students and evidence of their learning. The seawall, a structure composed of leadership, purpose, and organizational dynamics, is being constructed to protect these early efforts from the battering of resistance, tradition, habit, and the indifference that so frequently defeats change initiatives.

To those directly impacted, the changes forged by the new superintendent are not subtle. One school principal commented,

> When you think of the amount of work we've done with [teacher] evaluation now, we've made a lot of progress. We've covered a tremendous amount of ground. And I think the organization is much . . . more tolerant of doing things differently now than [it was] a few years ago. There is a plasticity to trying to change, to meet some real needs of kids; that awareness was not there a few years ago to the degree that it is today. But I have to credit Mike Riley with that. I mean because he brought [that awareness] in and kind of shook the rug and everybody's going "Oh, yeah. That's right." He's helped build a vision that

I think people can respond to . . . which is very powerful. That's a very key aspect of leadership.

So what is to be learned from the Bellevue case study relative to how a school leader creates a vision and produces change within a school culture? To answer this question, I examine both the leader and his deeds from several perspectives. First, I use the four lenses described by Bolman and Deal (1991) to analyze the superintendent's leadership and his actions. These authors have synthesized and integrated the major theoretical traditions in the field of organizational study into four frames--structural, human resource, symbolic, and political. Reflecting on the actions of the superintendent through these four lenses is an informative way to focus on his experiences, to posit why people reacted to him as they did, and to offer insight to other school leaders as they pursue a change effort.

Next I discuss the cautions and recommendations, surfaced by my study, that a school leader should consider when contemplating significant reform. Specific to the Bellevue case study, I offer possible next steps to sustain support of the teacher evaluation policy.

Visions drift, fade, and in time disappear if they belong only to their originator. So lastly, I again examine the superintendent's actions, this time to uncover how his efforts fostered a sense of expanded ownership for his vision. However, the path to ownership was not without obstacles and challenges. Thus, I recount the issues and concerns, the things that did not work and the lessons that were learned. And finally, I describe the step-by-step process recipients of the change experienced on their journey from compliance to ownership of the policy and its purpose.

Employing Multiple Perspectives To Examine The Superintendent's Leadership And Actions

Developing a vision requires ongoing support and nurturing by the one holding the vision. The Bellevue case documents the actions of the superintendent necessary not only to maintain his vision, but to sustain his ideals by shaping them into the work and the mind set of principals. Employing a multiframed perspective to examine the superintendent's leadership and efforts reveals how the new leader's actions aligned with the various frames, and offers insights into the factors that contributed to his ability to promote change.

Human resource frame.

Looking at the actions of Bellevue's superintendent through the human resource frame, described by Bolman and Deal (1991) as the "interplay between organization and people" (p.120), is most useful in understanding where he stumbled and where he prevailed. The human resource frame is built on the concept that organizations are inhabited by individuals with needs, feelings, and prejudices; individuals have skills and limitations; individuals have the capacity to learn but they also have a greater capacity to defend old attitudes and beliefs.

This study suggests that what leaders do, say, or request may be *very loosely linked* to how people around them hear, interpret, or otherwise respond to them.

> The relationship between the leader and the lead is anything but simple and direct; the distance between them is as distinct as the distance between any two persons of diverse minds. . . . Because leadership is itself a human relationship, it takes the same kind of hard person-to-person work to create and sustain as any relationship. It takes learning, and a will to learn, on the parts of both the leader and those they propose to lead. (Neumann, 1995, p. 271).

In new relationships, misunderstandings are often a result of lack of common history that can lead to "what is said" not matching with "what is heard." This was the outcome of the superintendent's introduction of the policy at the first August workshop. The superintendent's manner and message was inconsistent with many Bellevue principals' beliefs. They interpreted his brash behavior and autocratic style as a signal for how they were to behave. They walked away from the workshop with the understanding that the primary purpose of the teacher evaluation policy was to identify and terminate poor teachers and principals.

In contrast, the new superintendent ended his first workshop with principals believing he had presented clear objectives and expectations. His overheads and handouts stated that he expected principals to be instructional leaders; that they were "expected to spend the bulk of their time, energy, and talents focused on the quality of education being offered in their schools"; that "the best way to improve/increase the power of instruction is by judging it solely on the basis of what students learn, how they change as a result of instruction"; and that principals "would be judged on the quantity and quality of instructional feedback they provided teachers"; and that ultimately principals "would be judged on their effectiveness at improving the instructional effectiveness of their teachers."

Unfortunately, Riley-the-teacher had not checked for understanding. However he was willing to learn from this experience. Quickly he addressed the "needs, feelings, and prejudices" of the principals through personal and persuasive one-on-one conversations and turned the dynamic around. It was in these conversations that principals learned and confirmed that while the superintendent was determined to eliminate those players unwilling to modify actions that were not benefiting students, *his primary purpose* was to promote effective teaching with the goal of improved learning.

The superintendent, in reflecting on his own learning, acknowledged a need for clear communication and the importance of deliberately articulating one's purpose, principles, and beliefs.

> I've learned some stuff from being the superintendent here that would affect my next superintendency. And that's partly to pay more attention to the clarity of the communication. . . . I took if for granted that we were all working for the same thing. So I didn't waste a lot of time saying to people, "Here's the ten reasons why we are trying to make every kid an AP [Advanced Placement] kid or something. But I think I learned here that we're not necessarily all in it for the same reason so there does need to be more clarity from the top. I would go into my next district, I think, and spend more time trying to explain who I was and what I was trying to accomplish then I did in Bellevue. . . . I think after my experiences here, the next time I would say, "Let me start with my first meeting in the district by explaining what I'm trying to accomplish, who I am and what I think I'm trying to accomplish."

Riley devoted a great deal of time and effort to amend his initial omission. Between September and December of his first year in the district, he spent time in nearly every Bellevue teacher's classroom. He affirmed the effective instruction he observed by writing a personal note to teachers specifically describing how their decisions and actions positively impacted student learning. Every school visit included a meeting with the faculty. Riley wanted to understand teachers' concerns and issues. He also wanted to correct misunderstandings regarding his goals for the district.

Riley spent time with principals in their schools. He was interested in learning about their own goals and their vision for their schools. He was equally interested in getting to know them as individuals and was open in sharing about *his* background and interests.

By the close of his first year in the district, Riley had met with groups of students in every school--elementary through high school--and had discussed with students what they were learning and what they wanted to learn, what enhanced their learning and what got in the way.

Riley sought counsel from and empowered those with whom he worked most closely. He conducted nearly daily conversations with members of his Cabinet to gain their insights and information and used them as sounding boards for both planning and problem solving. Those in the school house recognized that while the vision for change began with the superintendent, that implementation of the change was a team effort. As one principal stated,

> While Mike Riley . . . said the words regarding evaluation, student learning, . . . Mike Riley's troops implemented it. . . . [The Cabinet is] a group of people that has a belief in what's going on. He couldn't do this if he had not been surrounded by a cadre of people who had the same belief system.

With his hands-on approach, Riley strove to counter the feelings of incompetence and insecurity his initial actions had provoked. Thus, the necessity for purposeful, personal, and ongoing communication when forging change is a key learning from the Bellevue story. Riley, as a human resource leader, provided support in the form of empathy, listening, personal warmth, candor, and individual mentoring, all important considerations for those implementing a new initiative.

The symbolic frame.

The fact that the new leader's first significant action was the introduction of the teacher evaluation policy to principals was important. Viewed from the symbolic perspective, "policymaking is the notion that policy sends signals and creates symbols that serve a number of functions, among them, legitimization of the policymaking institution and mobilization of commitment among constituencies" (Malen & Knapp, 1994, p. 14). From this perspective, "the outcomes of policy are to support the institution, to legitimize attention and commitment, to change people's perceptions, or to create the impression that something is being done or can be done" (Shen, 1995, p. 85). The teacher evaluation policy sent a powerful signal to the *larger community* that the district was committed to improved student learning as its highest priority, that there was a direct link between effective teaching and student learning, and that teachers and principals would be held accountable for what the *public* constituency--parents and community members, typically identify as the legitimate purposes of schooling--teaching and learning. The policy sent a powerful signal to *teachers* that they would be held accountable for their students' learning.

Furthermore, the symbolic nature of the policy assisted in its gaining acceptance by the principals and in turn supported them in implementing it in their schools. The superintendent constantly wove the notion of "what's best for kids" into all his comments. From this perspective, principals had no difficulty accepting the policy. Studies have show that while their actions do not always reflect their beliefs, principals highly value working with teachers and spending time in classrooms with the focus on improving student learning. They believe that this activity *should* form the core of their work (Krajewski, 1978; Lake Washington School District, 1980; Smith & Andrews, 1989). Bellevue principals were no exception. While

this change in behavior asked a great deal of the principal, it made sense and it seemed the right thing to do.

In turn, principals gained strength and support from the symbolic nature of the policy in implementing it in their own schools. They were able to use it to explain and justify their actions. While some teachers were uncomfortable with the principal's presence in their classroom and some parents were frustrated that the principal was in classrooms and not immediately available to serve them, it was hard for anyone to argue with the purpose the policy symbolized--improved student learning.

The structural frame.

While employing the *symbolic frame* to set forth his purpose, Riley, as a *structural leader*, developed a new relationship of structure, strategy, and environment for his organization. The structural perspective is based on the assumptions that organizations exist primarily to accomplish established goals; for any organization, a structural form can be designed to fit its particular set of circumstances; organizations work most effectively when bounded by norms of rationality; and that organizational problems typically originate from inappropriate structures or inadequate systems and can be resolved through restructuring or creating new systems (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 48). Though leaders are not able to directly change others, they can do so by changing the nature of the setting or the nature of their work. By changing the nature of their work, Riley created a situation that required principals to act differently in the workplace, to reorganize their time and the manner in which they worked, and the manner in which they interacted with others. Put simply, principals were told they "must complete seventy observations; must complete all observation reports by June 1st; must complete year-end summaries on all teachers" (Workshop handout, Riley, August 1997).

However, such clear-cut directives caused principals to thinking differently about what they were doing and why. Ironically, these top-down orders gave principals a sense of empowerment and support most felt they had lacked for more than a decade with decentralized decision-making. Prescribed directives restored to principals a sense of clarity regarding their role and their responsibilities.

The political frame.

Unlike the structural approach to policy that suggests that all options are open within reach of the decision maker,

> The political frame views organizations as arenas in which different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is everywhere because of differences in needs and perspectives. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are all part of everyday organizational life. Coalitions form around specific interests and change as issues come and go. Problems arise because power is concentrated in the wrong places or because it is so broadly dispersed that nothing gets done. Solutions are developed through political skill and acumen. (Bolman & Deal, 1991. p. 15)

Riley entered a school district that was under stress. The school board wanted clear goals and accountability. They wanted teachers in their classrooms teaching students, not spending time in committees or attending workshops. The board had begun promoting the process of downsizing the central office and reallocating resources to the schools. Dissension between the school board and the prior school chief led to his departure. The district had been under the leadership of an interim superintendent for a year while awaiting the appointment of a permanent superintendent. Central office was caught up in confusion, discouragement, and

fatigue. Among administrators, teachers and even the school board there was a collective feeling of being overwhelmed by the number of activities and projects the district and schools had taken on, yet no one could decide what to eliminate.

The complexity of the student population was increasing annually and veteran teachers were no longer feeling competent to address their diverse needs.

Parents of elementary students complained that they were not clear what their students were supposed to be learning -- phonics or whole language, editing or invented spelling, mathematics through discovery or memorization of basic arithmetic facts? Many elementary teachers shared the parents' uncertainty. And at the high school level, in some subject areas there was so little uniformity in course offerings that students could not transfer their credits from one district high school to another.

Bellevue prided itself as being a forerunner in engaging in decentralized, school-site decision making. But this initiative had run amuck as well. While the school board was looking to the building principals for leadership and holding them accountable, the principals found themselves pulled in several directions by competing factions of teachers and parents. Many principals felt that school-based decision making usurped their authority to lead and shackled their ability to promote change in their schools.

> Political perspectives view policy as a vehicle to regulate conflict over the distribution of scarce material and symbolic resources in ways that retain the legitimacy of the system . . . this perspective seeks to uncover the interest-driven, power-based interactions that occur as actors holding diverse conceptions of problems and priorities, diverse views and values compete as well as cooperate to influence decision outcomes through bargains,

negotiations, compromises and other accommodations. (Malen & Knapp, 1994, p. 12.)

Peering at the Bellevue teacher evaluation policy through the political lens, one sees how it could prove a successful strategy to regulate conflict. In implementing this policy, the superintendent satisfied the needs of a variety of diverse actors. The school board could now head out into the community with the message that teachers and principals were being held accountable for student learning. Parents believed that their concerns were being addressed and that teaching and student learning was receiving significant attention from principals and district administrators.

At his first official meeting with principals, the new superintendent challenged principals to take charge. He stated that they would be responsible for making appropriate decisions that affected students and their learning. Principals now were clearer on their role and responsibilities and were more confident with the knowledge that they were granted the authority to carry them out.

The superintendent discussed his evaluation policy with the teachers' union and gained their endorsement. He was fortunate to be "negotiating" with a union leader who was personally committed to promoting a strong teaching rank. While BEA's executive director had challenged principals on many occasions for their lack of attention to appropriate protocol in their dealings with teachers' deficiencies, he did not hesitate to state publicly to the school board and to his own members that it was not in the best interest of his organization to accommodate teacher incompetence. However, the union leader was politically shrewd, as well. He supported Riley's evaluation policy by agreeing to a Memorandum of Understanding that permitted principals to formally observe and provide oral and written feedback even to those

teachers on the professional growth cycle. By taking this action, BEA's leader began creating an environment conducive to implementing a long-held goal of his, the Consulting Peer Educator plan that was instituted the following year.

The concepts of power and politics are often partnered. Negative power is typified by exploitation and personal dominance. Negative politics emphasizes negative power, conflict, bargaining, and self interest. In contrast, positive power means creating visions and collective goals. Positive politics "requires the ability both to understand and diagnose diversity and complexity and to accumulate and use power effectively" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 207).

During his first several months in the district, when Riley employed his positional power to get his initiatives underway, both teachers and principals interpreted his actions as negative power. One principal described him as "selfish," and "rude," and complained that he was " not asking me" but rather, "telling me" and that "It was like top-down from the word go."

However, as time went on, the new superintendent demonstrated a powerful blend of positive politics mixed with the structural, human resource and symbolic frames. He displayed his political acumen in strategic but more subtle forms. As an example, in the second year of policy implementation, it was important to the superintendent that principals begin observing instruction beyond their own schoolhouse and spend time discussing what they learned from these observations with their administrator colleagues. He promoted the concept of day-long monthly meetings of building administrators and their respective executive director for the purpose of addressing this goal. The superintendent avoided potential conflict that could have erupted by his layering one more expectation on principals by "negotiating" a reduction in the number of required observations. In cutting the observation number from 90 to 70, the

principals were willing to commit to Riley's request that they spend time out of their buildings and in conversation with their colleagues. In turn, the principals felt the time and effort necessary to take on this additional expectation was being acknowledged with the trade-off of fewer observations.

Tangential to the evaluation policy, the superintendent began the construction of a curriculum department. This action, viewed from the structural perspective, addressed the need to create a new system to accomplish the goal of describing what students *should* be learning. However, viewed from the political vantage, forming a curriculum department and giving the department the authority to define and develop the requirements for what Bellevue students needed to know and be able to do, began to quell the conflict and concerns of anxious parents and uncertain teachers.

In constructing the curriculum department, Riley demonstrated several of the important skills necessary to a savvy political leader--the skills of agenda setting and networking and forming coalitions (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 208). His "agenda for change" was improved instruction and increased student learning for every student. His "strategy" for achieving his vision was to provide teachers and principals with a clear description of what students were expected to learn coupled with assessments to determine the amount of learning occurring. Along with the curriculum, principals were directed to spend time in classrooms looking for evidence of student learning and time in dialogue with teachers providing them with feedback as to whether learning objectives were appropriate and being met. While the superintendent's agenda provided clear structure and direction, he also addressed the needs of the stakeholders -- the teachers -- with the pledge that they would be adequately supplied with the textbooks and equipment needed to implement the new curriculum. He made good on his

promise by delivering more than a million dollars worth of teaching materials to schools in the first two years of curriculum implementation.

As a discerning coalition builder, Riley figured out who needed to be led, who might resist and why, and tapping into the human resource frame, he developed relationships with those people to deal with resistance. He knew that in order to implement a new curriculum, the efforts of exemplary teachers were integral to the development of that curriculum. Therefore, with the exception of two administrators -- the executive director of curriculum development and her assistant director, the people who made up the curriculum department, who were charged with the responsibility, and who were given the authority for setting expectations and requirements regarding curriculum and assessment selection and implementation, were all teachers. Most of the curriculum developers stepped directly from the classroom into their new role and several developers continued to teach part-time.

Riley recognized that the need to give up favorite curriculum and course work, and the loss of autonomy enjoyed by many Bellevue teachers would create resistance within the teacher ranks. At the same time, he knew he needed allies to get things done. Thus, he spent countless hours in conversation with classroom teachers in an effort to understand their issues, clear up misinformation, and communicate his agenda. Over time, as teachers learned that while the superintendent expected a great deal of them, he also addressed their needs and kept his promises, most resisters became advocates.

The Relationship of the Four Frames to Transformational Leadership

Effective leadership is a complex endeavor. Analyzing the actions of a leader using a single frame, while useful for illustrating that solitary frame, fails to describe the manner in which these frames are interwoven to produce potent leadership. While perhaps not on a

conscious level, successful leaders combine and integrate several frames in carrying out their work (Bolman & Deal, 1991). In implementing the evaluation policy, while the human resource side of Riley worked to remove emotional barriers for principals by being visible, accessible, and spending time providing them with information, as a structural leader he provided principals with formal expectations outlining what they were to do to accomplish a particular task. He stayed focused on the implementation of his policy by working closely to remove obstructions in the organization that could block principals' progress. For example, Riley recognized the difficulty of putting his plan into place without an agreement with the teachers' bargaining unit. With a blend of the symbolic ("improved learning is the hallmark of good teaching"), human resource (including the union in the decision making), structural (clearly defining the role and responsibility of the principal in the evaluation process), and political ("we both have a common interest in improved teaching") frames, the superintendent managed to gain buy-in from the union.

Using the multiperspective framework to analyze the Bellevue superintendent's actions in implementing his policy and in his work with principals, reveals Riley's reliance on all four frames--human resource, symbolic, structural and political. What is interesting to note, is how the frames supported deep-seated, transformational change within the district. By contrasting the two forms of leadership described by MacGregor Burns (1978) as *transactional* and *transformational*, and placing these models within the context of the Bellevue story, an observation emerges worthy of consideration.

Transactional leadership implies a relationship that is based on bargaining or bartering. "Each party to the bargain is conscious of the power resources and attitudes of the other. . . . Their purposes are related, at least to the extent that the purposes stand within the

bargaining process and can be advanced by maintaining that process. But beyond this the relationship does not go" (Burns, 1978, pp. 19-20). We follow transactional leaders because it is in our best interest to do so. In exchange for our support, they will give us something we need or want (Kellerman, 1984).

Initially, many building principals complied with the new superintendent's mandate to spend time in classrooms in exchange for job security. Riley's use of positional power created conflict because both principals and teachers were unsure of his motives and goals. Negative politics stirred up stormy district seas and the superintendent's boat was taking on water at this point.

In contrast, transformational leadership moves participants beyond the dependent and calculated association linked with transactional leadership to a relationship of mutual commitment and interdependence. Such a relationship is guided by ideas and values rather than being regulated by favors and obligations. Individuals are no longer concerned only with their own condition, but with the general good; they invest personally in the schools and are motivated to act selflessly by the prospect of shared accomplishments (Enochs, 1981).

What righted the superintendent's vessel and supported him in moving from acting as a transactional leader to one who was genuinely transforming those he was leading to "a relationship of mutual commitment and interdependence" was his skillful use of the symbolic, human resource and structural frames. By repeatedly explaining that success for every student was what he wanted to accomplish, by personally connecting with principals, teachers, students, and parents to garner commitment to his goal, by removing obstacles and creating structures to support his vision, the storm abated, the waters calmed, and work began on building a seawall.

The superintendent used positive politics to somewhat subdue the conflict and uncertainty in which he initially found the district and to forge the environment he needed in which to begin his work. However, this study suggests that an integration of the symbolic, human resource, and structural frames were key to moving the superintendent from the role of "transacting" to one of "transforming." In the case of Bellevue, "every student a successful learner" served as the symbolic lighthouse that guided principals' work. The superintendent maintained a close and supportive contact with those charged with making the changes and he established an organizational structure that promoted both autonomy and accountability. These actions created or reinforced a change in the mindset of principals that produced a group of school leaders guided by ideas and values; individuals concerned with the greater good; leaders committed to investing personally in their schools and to act selflessly, motivated by the prospect of shared accomplishment.

The Bellevue story does not discount the value of the political frame nor the need for leaders described by Kotter (1985) as "benevolent politicians," who can form coalitions, mobilize people, and effectively use bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise to move their agenda. Nor does the Bellevue story suggest that the superintendent did not understand or manage politics or masterfully employ the skills of negotiation and bargaining to move his agenda. However, specific to the transformational outcomes described by this study, the political frame was not as informative as Bolman and Deal's other frames for the purpose of analyzing the factors that brought about change. To further understand the role of the political frame in fostering transformational leadership, it would be important to examine different actions taken by Bellevue's superintendent or actions taken by other new

superintendents that appeared to be changing the human conduct and ethical aspirations in their districts.

Cautions And Considerations For Change Agents

In examining the results of this study from the vantage of a school leader, several questions surface that deserve serious thought when planning for comprehensive reform. In turn, these questions, when directed toward the Bellevue teacher evaluation policy, pose cautions and suggest possible next steps.

What is the big picture? How does this single initiative fit within the broader scope of change?

This policy study illustrates the problem of introducing isolated innovations without the recipients understanding the larger arena in which the effort is placed. Riley's introduction of the policy initially faltered because of a mismatch between what the superintendent intended to communicate and what principals walked away believing. The principals' lack of understanding of the superintendent's greater plan may have added to their misunderstanding and to their belief that the policy's emphasis was directed, first and foremost, at eliminating incompetence. The teacher evaluation policy was only *a part* of the superintendent's larger reform effort that included the development of an articulated K-12 curriculum and embedded student assessments linked to the curriculum. This larger vision was clear in the superintendent's mind as evidenced by his restructuring of the central office to include an executive director of curriculum development even before he officially assumed his new role. However, at the early stages of introducing and implementing the teacher supervision and evaluation policy, this was not clear to principals and teachers.

The lesson learned from this example underscores the importance of clearly stating and frequently reinforcing the connection between a single change and the greater purpose the initiative supports. For Bellevue, this means clearly linking classroom observations and teacher-principal dialogue with the development, adoption, and implementation of curriculum and assessments. Follow up questions to "What did the students learn?" should be "In what ways are changes in our curriculum leading to improved student learning?" and "How are our assessments informing us about student learning?" Teachers should be asking themselves, "How is this information altering my thinking about the way in which I teach and the manner in which students learn?" Principals should be continually reflecting on the question "What changes are occurring in my school that are leading to school improvement?" And at the district level, the question should be "How are we using what we learn to make changes in our curriculum, staff development, and support services?" Together, the district, principals and teachers need to work in partnership to ensure that answers to these questions are shared, discussed and, when deemed appropriate, that action plans are developed.

What support is necessary to support and sustain this initiative?

This case study focuses on the early implementation of a new initiative. However, it is not too soon to consider what it will take to maintain this change. Berman and McLaughlin (1978) found that common causes for lack of continuation of an initiative included lack of interest or lack of resources to support staff development and staff support for newcomers. Lack of interest and support at the central office and lack of commitment to the initiative on the part of the principal at the school level were additional reasons initiatives were not sustained.

The Bellevue case clearly describes support from the central office and ongoing insistence on the part of the superintendent. Principals indicate their commitment to the intent of the policy and acknowledge the importance and value of spending time observing teaching and learning. A system is in place for introducing the policy to building administrators new to the district. Principals are expected to introduce the policy to newcomers to their school.

However, the findings of this study clearly point out that the missing resource that serves as a significant hindrance to principals in effectively implementing this policy is a lack of time. As one principal said, "Philosophy is not the problem, it's the allocation of time." Principals describe the challenge of finding uninterrupted time during the work day to devote to focused, thoughtful, reflective dialogue with teachers. Principals discuss the need to extend their workday and workweek in order to reflect on their observations and to complete written summaries of their conclusions and post-conferences. While principals stated that "the other stuff gets done," they continued to struggle with how to maintain a sense of balance between management and serving as an instructional leader, as well as how to balance their professional and personal lives.

Next steps to overcoming this obstacle are up to educators and policy makers. Restructuring of the workweek for the purpose of producing blocks of uninterrupted time for professional development is a strategy being employed by some innovative schools in the district, not participants in this study. Examining how the half day of time without students impacts teacher/principal dialogue and the supervision/evaluation responsibilities of the principal could provide valuable insights for addressing the time issue. Another resource is the growing consortium of schools belonging to the Coalition of Essential Schools. In these schools, curriculum, instruction, the organization of teaching and learning, administration,

professional development, and evaluation are all structured to allow teaching that is student centered and knowledge based. These schools organize time so that teachers can jointly develop curriculum, invent authentic assessments of learning, discuss student progress, and evaluate school functioning (Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993).

Teacher peer evaluation and peer mentoring are two additional strategies worthy of consideration. In the second year of the policy implementation, the Bellevue School District collaborated with the Bellevue Education Association to initiate changes in teacher evaluation based on a model originated in Toledo, Ohio. In this plan teachers are engaged in mentoring beginners, providing consultation to each other, and policing their own ranks. The consulting teachers are released from their own classroom duties to work intensively with first-year teachers on all aspects of teaching. A companion "intervention" program provides intensive assistance from the consulting teachers to veteran teachers who are having serious difficulty and have been identified by principals as teachers being considered for probation. Upon referral by the principal, the consulting teacher assumes the supervision and evaluation responsibilities for the teacher. The consulting teacher works with the teacher to remedy the concerns and makes a recommendation to a panel composed of teachers and administrators about probation or dismissal of the employee.

While this program had been underway for just one year at the time of this study, there were indicators that this program could significantly support building principals. Rather than concentrating their efforts on the time-consuming and often morale-shattering confrontations common to addressing serious performance issue, principals can focus their time on working with teachers where there appears to be a better chance for some pay off.

Peer coaching is yet another strategy that has potential to lighten the principal's work load and, at the same time, enhance mutual learning within the larger educational community. Several of Bellevue's school staffs have been trained in peer mentoring, in the form of Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 1994). Cognitive coaching is founded on the principle that teaching is a professional act and that coaches support teachers in becoming more resourceful, informed, and skillful professionals. Cognitive coaches attend to the internal thought processes of teaching as a way of improving instruction. "Coaching . . . occurs within a relationship that is action oriented, result oriented, and person oriented" (p. 5). When a cognitive coaching relationship is established between two professionals with similar roles, or *peers*, it is referred to as *peer coaching*. Capitalizing on the strengths of peer coaching, one possibility for Bellevue would be to move toward a peer review of practice to include growth-oriented forms of evaluation featuring personal goal setting and peer-mediated self-evaluation. In this way, some of the supervision/evaluation responsibilities could be shifted from the principal to teachers.

A restructured work week, peer evaluation and peer coaching are possible next steps requiring expansion or further study in an effort to address the lack of time for supervision and evaluation frequently mentioned by Bellevue principals. Without a plan to address the considerable time this policy requires of principals, it is questionable whether the policy, in its current form, would be sustained were its insistent author to go away.

Is this initiative leading to improved school performance?

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) wisely observe that "the capacity to bring about change and the capacity to bring about improvement are two different matters" (p. 345). The overarching question for educators in attempting to institute change, to reform, restructure,

reorganize, and to try new leadership approaches is, "Do the changes lead to improved school performance?" While at the end of two years, principals and teachers describe changes in *their own* learning, there are not yet measurable indicators to show the impact of the Bellevue policy on *student* learning.

Despite the claim that "improved student learning" was the driving force behind the school-centered decision making policy, Riley entered a district in which there was little connection between teaching and student assessment. One consequence of school-centered decision making was the lack of a common district curriculum or common assessments that teachers used to inform their instruction. While some individual schools developed spiraled units of study in science and social studies, and the teachers within the school agreed to teach these units, no school had a well-crafted method for measuring student achievement.

In year two of this study, the development of an articulated K-12 curriculum was underway in the Bellevue School District. Decisions regarding curriculum selection and its placement on the student learning continuum were being made by Bellevue teachers under the guidance of district curriculum developers. These new curriculum developers were teachers who had just stepped out of the classroom themselves or were continuing to spend a part of their day teaching. The design of courses and choice of textbooks and other instructional materials were being made based on particular performance demands with the Washington Assessment for Student Learning (WASL) being one significant performance demand.

To ensure coherence between curriculum and assessment, the development of assessments was an integral activity lodged within the total curriculum design. The information gained from studying, analyzing, and discussing students' performance on these assessments by both teachers and principals should provide one set of data regarding evidence of student

learning. The results from the WASL provides another set of data. However, assessment needs to be a regular event integrated naturally into the curriculum. "What did the students learn?" should be a question teachers are asking themselves after every lesson. The cycle of assessing-modifying-learning should be ongoing in the classroom. Knowing that ongoing, regular assessment is so important, it is essential that principals and teachers are provided with key questions and instructional strategies they can use to informally assess students on a day-to-day basis in order to more effectively and accurately respond to the question "What did the students learn?"

The Journey From Compliance To Ownership

The Bellevue case describes a leader who entered the district with a strong personal vision. He acknowledged, "I've never felt a real strong loyalty to a place. I think my loyalty is to kids . . . ." He immediately set to work turning his vision for improved student learning into an action plan--the teacher evaluation policy. However, this study suggests that, over time, principals were no longer willing to grant the superintendent sole ownership for changes in the school resulting from the teacher evaluation policy nor even sole ownership of the policy. What actions caused the bottom-up to connect with the top-down to create this sense of shared ownership? Expanding the question, what should a leader consider when attempting to implement change as a co-constructed endeavor with "bottom-up" meeting "top-down?" How can a superintendent promote his own vision and goals and yet draw upon principals' inspiration and capture their energy for a districtwide effort to improve education?

The action taken by the superintendent started as a top-down initiative, an action which runs counter to current research favoring decentralized or school-based decision making (David, 1994; Wohlstetter, Kirk, Robertson, & Mohrman, 1997). The findings of my study

challenge the notion that top-down reform is addressed primarily at restructuring--not educating, and that a top-down decision fails to pay attention to those expected to implement the change (Goodlad,1992; Sarason,1990). However, this study does not advocate for one-way decision making--top-down. Instead, it illuminates the relationship of top-down and bottom-up and illustrates how both pressure and support is employed to promote change. Fullan (1993a) states that, "Change flourishes in a 'sandwich'. Where there is consensus above, and pressure below, things happen" (Fullan, 1993a, p. 37). This study reverses the order--where there is pressure above, and consensus below, things happen. Furthermore, this study begs the question, "Where's the beef?" in the sandwich; the "beef" being a focus on students and their learning, on teachers and their instruction, and the buy-in of that notion by principals and teachers.

Balancing Pressure With Support

Fullan (1991) contends that elements of both pressure and support are hallmarks of effective change initiatives. Without pressure, projects tend to drift or resources are wasted. However, pressure without support leads to resistance and alienation. While Bellevue's superintendent offered sincere and ongoing support to principals once his project was underway, the policy was initiated with some not-so-subtle forms of accountability and pressure. A minimum number of observations write-ups were mandated; while principals were encouraged to personalize their writing, specific elements were to be included in the observation summaries; principals were required to send write-ups to their supervisor and they were regularly informed of their progress; deadlines were set for completing all write-ups and year end evaluations; there was an understanding that failure to complete these requirements could result in termination.

Though Riley used pressure to get the ball rolling and to ensure follow through, his commitment to offering ongoing education and one-on-one support to the principals was essential in moving the policy from one of compliance to one of ownership. Thus another learning borne out by the Bellevue story is that education in the form of a vision or a "target that beckons"(Bennis & Nanus, 1985) is essential to promoting change. The case emphasizes that helping all members of the school organization develop and share a common vision is the first step necessary to changing behaviors and beliefs.

Evoking a vision requires action. People needed to act themselves into change. Ironically, they needed to make a move to see where they were going. The Bellevue case supports Fullan's (1991) notion of a *ready-fire-aim* approach to developing a concrete image of the proposed change.

> Ready is important, there has to be some notion of direction, but it is killing to bog down the process . . . before you know enough about dynamic reality. Fire is action and inquiry where skills, clarity, and learning are fostered. Aim is crystallizing new beliefs, formulating mission and vision statements and focussing [sic] strategic planning. (Fullan, 1993a, p. 31-32)

The Bellevue case documented the new superintendent's decision to introduce the teacher evaluation policy with minimal input from his Cabinet and no pre-work with the immediate recipients, the school principals. It was only after the policy was "fired" that the aim was clarified and corrected.

However, this study illustrates the claim that a leader cannot "mandate what matters" (Fullan, 1993a, 1993b; McLaughlin, 1987). After more than two decades studying local policy implementation of federal changes, two ingredients that McLaughlin (1987) describes as being

essential to successful policy implementation are local capacity and local will. Principals and teachers must develop both the competency to act in the new ways the policy requires and the commitment to make the changes. More recently, McLaughlin has added "getting it" as a third necessary ingredient. McLaughlin defines "getting it" as knowing what the vision looks like (Rallis & Zajano, 1997).

In the Bellevue case, "getting it" meant that principals needed to change their way of doing business and allocate significant time to classroom observations and conversations with teachers regarding teaching and learning. "Getting it" meant principals needed to envision their role in a new way. After a decade of school-centered decision making, as it seemed to play out in this district, many principals were not sure what their place was in the schoolhouse and had a blurry sense of authority. A mandate to spend significant time in classrooms and to be candid with teachers about what they observed granted them influence they were missing. But more important, "getting it" meant that the superintendent, principals and teachers needed to experience a working relationship in which, together, they focused on what constituted "evidence of student learning."

"Getting it" is an incremental process. Bellevue principals began by adopting new routines and practices. For example, most principals first dealt with the mechanics of reorganizing the way they allocated their use of time during the school day to ensure that sufficient time was dedicated to classroom observations and conferences with teachers.

The next stage of "getting it" was a shift in attitude. Principals initially struggled with the policy for several reasons. Some questioned its intent. Was it really intended to improve teaching and learning? Or was it an accountability measure to be used as evidence to fire teachers and principals? For most principals, their understanding and acceptance of the policy

as a means to improve instruction evolved as a result of further conversation with the superintendent.

For some, their initial resistance was caused by a lack of confidence in their own ability to confront poor teaching in the candid manner they believed the superintendent required. Their confidence and competence was bolstered by the shared experiences of their colleagues, and through ongoing dialogue with the superintendent and with their supervisors. At first, perhaps more out of compliance than conviction, principals tackled difficult discussions with teachers. They learned from these ex, eriences and adapted their approach. By the end of the second year, principals described their ability to approach conflictual situations with increased self-assuredness.

As the mechanics of implementing the policy became more natural to the rhythm of their work and the attitudes of principals changed, the concept of "getting it" moved to a third stage that was an outgrowth of the policy implementation. At this stage, the policy served principals as a model or template for instructional leadership. One principal, referring to instructional leadership as "a skeleton" said,

> I think that when Mike Riley came to our district, he put some new flesh and bones on a skeleton that we'd been operating on. I think that all of us believe that what we are doing now is probably what we needed to be doing for a long, long time, but not having the, the authority, or even the push to do it that way, meant that we did it a different way. So I really think that . . . the policy is congruent with our own beliefs, and now we've been given the green light and a push to say "Just make sure it really goes that way."

Principals gained insights from their time spent observing in classrooms and in focused discussions with teachers. Their notion of what constitutes learning became more defined. They could see evidence of change in classrooms as an outcome of their actions. They began *feeling* like instructional leaders. The policy served as a catalyst for principals to introduce new initiatives. Contrasting past efforts with the present, one principal explained it this way:

> In previous years, I worked until 11 p.m. and even later. At no time did I have evidence that my actions impacted students' learning, teachers' instructional practices, or teacher competence. At this time, I feel I have my hands on the pulse of the school. I am able to identify deficit areas and can be clear as to what needs to be done to positively impact student learning.

Bellevue's leader was impatient and relentless in his efforts to instigate change. He was unwilling to wait for widespread consensus and for the time-consuming processes common to achieving agreement before launching his initiative. Rather, he pulled up anchor and set sail, resolute in his commitment to support his crew and to continually adapt, modify, and refine his proposal once the journey was underway.

Leading to Change

In summary, this study documents the story of a man who entered a district determined to make a positive difference "for every kid," but particularly to increase the achievement of the least advantaged student. His first action was to redesign the role and responsibilities of the building principal, to focus the largest part of their workweek directly toward the improvement of teaching and learning. He described the way that "you make good things happen for kids" is to,

> Roll up your sleeves and see what's really happening with the kids themselves, in classrooms, and you talk to teachers a lot. And that produces that energy flow, that idea flow . . . . And then I think you support that by turning those ideas into programs and practices. And you've got to move fast I think. If you don't move fast than I think that you are just part of the bureaucracy as opposed to an educational endeavor.

There are several lessons to be learned from this study that should prove useful to both prospective and veteran superintendents who are interested in rolling up their sleeves and use their role and relationship with the school community to impact change for improved schools. These lessons highlight the importance of being clear about one's own values and sense of moral purpose, the need to provide clear direction while promoting collaborative leadership, the role of the superintendent as teacher, and the significance that relationship plays in fostering change.

Lesson 1: Be clear about one's own values and sense of moral purpose

This study suggests that a superintendent's capacity to lead rests in part on his own moral purpose, his commitment to an appropriate education for every student, and his courage to stand up for what he believes. To become a credible educational leader, superintendents must think deeply about the purpose of schooling and be very clear about their own educational values. Even before Riley entered Bellevue, he knew that his *purpose* as a superintendent was no different than his purpose had been as a classroom teacher. While his strategies had changed with new roles and over time, his goal was "to be totally focused on the quality of instruction that a kid gets, and that means the quality of life a kid has within our school system." As a leader, he challenged himself and those around him. "How do you

produce the maximum amount of learning for every kid you get? Because I think that education empowers people. So I think there's more to the mission than just does the kid learn English well. It's whether the kid becomes an empowered human being."

Riley coupled purpose with insistence. In order to achieve the goals he set out for the district, he insisted that principals be instructional leaders in their schools; he insisted that they devote considerable time to the task of classroom observations; and he insisted that their performance as administrators be judged by their achievements in improving the learning in their schools. Purpose without insistence provides substance but no urgency to make a change. Insistence with no purpose simply causes resistance and resentment.

Lesson 2: Provide clear direction while promoting collaborative leadership

A second lesson is the importance of maintaining a balance between owning and sharing the leadership role. While resolute in purpose and insistent on follow through, Riley knew that he could not achieve his goal without the support and cooperation of his constituency, most specifically school principals. In both overt and subtle ways, he redistributed power and influence in the district. He rescued principals from the uncertainty, confusion, and lack of definition many principals felt after years of school-centered decision making. He replaced their uncertainty with clearly stated requirements. However, he gave principals license to individualize the requirements to fit their style and their school culture. There was no mandated template for completing observation write-ups. There was no required script for conducting post-conferences. Principals were not required to complete strategic plans or submit a set of school improvement goals. Instead, Riley passed off his authority to the principals. He encouraged principals to assume responsibility for change in their schools and he expected them to work with their staffs to engender change. He wanted communication to

move in many directions--between himself and principals and teachers, between principals and teachers, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students. He worked to erase the concepts of "top-down" and "bottom-up" and replaced them with the term "common sense of the profession." While he used his authority to provide direction and pressure, he balanced control with collaboration and "common sense" to promote change.

Lesson 3: Participate as an educator among educators

A third lesson that was highlighted by this study was the significance of the role of superintendent as teacher. Riley taught those whom he sought to influence. Not only did he carefully plan and prepare his initial lesson, the introduction of the teacher evaluation policy, but he continued to model his expectations. Unlike many superintendents of medium-sized districts, Riley did not leave the staff development of his principals to their direct supervisors. Instead, he personally assumed the responsibility of ongoing education of the building leaders. As a teacher, he modeled the kind of leadership he expected of others. He listened attentively to principals, teachers, and students. He asked good questions. Repeatedly, he explained his commitment to his moral purpose--increased learning for all students. He was as eager to learn as to instruct, and he adapted his lessons so that others could find meaning in them to inform their own leadership. As a teacher he was charismatic and energizing, collaborative and informative. While his focus was directed at the improvement of teaching, he was willing to tackle any facet of running a school from budget to staffing to bus schedules.

When principals and teachers believe that their superintendent is truly committed to children and dedicated to making schools work, when they see him in the school house "bothering people enough until they begin to think things through more thoroughly, discuss

them together, take the time to appreciate the significance of what they are doing" (Starratt, 1993), they are more likely to invest in school reform.

When superintendents are willing to adopt the role of educator of educators and to work closely with principals, they are improving the chances for their initiatives to take hold and remain even after their departure. For if superintendents coach their administrators, those leaders will in turn educate others, expanding the district's capacity for improvement and bettering the likelihood that change will be sustained.

Lesson 4: Recognize the significance that relationship plays in fostering change

And a final lesson: Collaborative leadership leading to change requires a person-to-person approach. Riley's efforts faltered until people came to know their superintendent as an educator, but more important, as an individual. The tide began turning in his favor as he traveled from school to school, classroom to classroom, personally connecting with principals and teachers. It was through these encounters that he was able to move people beyond the stage of resistance, to acceptance, involvement, and finally ownership.

In Conclusion: A Temporary or Transformational Change?

The case of Bellevue School District is compelling. It is heartening that a superintendent interacts with a school community as a teacher-learner. It is hopeful that principals are able to adapt his lessons to their own school culture. It is impressive that student success and the improvement of learning forms the core of the thinking and actions of principals and teachers. However, this study focused on the reflections, experiences and actions of six elementary principals and a sample of teachers in their schools. Is their experience unique to an elementary school setting? Would the same story be told by principals and teachers at the secondary level? Sufficient time was one factor challenging elementary

leaders. Knowing the many demands put on secondary administrators caused by the size of their schools, the needs of their students, and a school day lengthened by sports and other extracurricular activities, would these building leaders testify to their commitment to the policy and admit that "all the other stuff gets done?" In secondary school cultures where members take pride in their autonomy, traditionally align themselves with their department, and seniority earns the right to teaching the "best" students, how does the concept of increasing the achievement of *every* student resonate? In a community where national tests and letter grades are the markers of student achievement, how are principals and teachers expanding their thinking about evidence of student learning? These questions argue for an extension of this study with secondary administrators and teachers.

This case study depicts the actions of a new superintendent during his first two years in the district. Was the commitment to change described by principals and teachers a reflection of the "honeymoon" period of a new leader, or will these changes endure? Over time, will the superintendent be able to sustain the same level of energy and drive to be in schools that became his trademark during his first two years? Like his principals, will *his time* be taken up with the management of the district and his attention shift to issues of budget, board politics, and bargaining? Or will his personal interaction with schools no longer be necessary as principals "own" the policy and are able to sustain it independent of such close supervision? And what about student learning, the "beef" in Fullan's sandwich? Has the district succeeded in making good on the goal "Every student an AP student?" Is every student appropriately challenged and are there clear indicators that prove that to be the case?

The sturdiest of seawalls require ongoing maintenance in order to continue to successfully shelter and guard the landscape they protect from being reclaimed by the sea. Revisiting the seawall described by the Bellevue case study at a later time will establish

whether the changes described by this study were only temporary or confirm that those remaining behind the seawall were committed to maintaining its structure and integrity.

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Appendix A: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
CONSENT FORM

The Impact Of A Teacher Supervision and Evaluation Policy On The School Principal

Investigator: Jan Zuber, Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Work: (425) 456-4112

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

Investigator's Statement

In the fall of 1996, the superintendent of Bellevue School District introduced all building principals to a model of classroom observation that focuses initially on evidence of student learning and then on teachers' actions and behaviors that promote or inhibit student learning. Principals were directed to devote a fourth of their work week to the improvement of instruction. Their activities were to include classroom observations, pre- and post-conferences with teachers, and written feedback to teachers. The purpose of my research is to study the impact that this policy is having on principals--their role as evaluators, their working relationship with the teacher they supervise, and the effect on their other responsibilities.

As educators, our most important obligation is to build a structure of relationships within schools so that all children can learn. Effective and appropriate teacher evaluation is an important part of the structure. Hopefully, the results of this research study will assist school districts in examining their teacher evaluation models and the role of the principal as the primary evaluator of teachers.

PROCEDURES

Activities that I will employ to gather information for my study will include interviews and observations of principals and teachers, and a review of written observation summaries. A single interview should not exceed one hour. Interviews and conferences will be tape recorded; only with the permission of the participants. Taking part in these activities is voluntary and participants may chose to not answer a question or withdraw from participation at any time.

All data will be confidential and the identity of the participants will remain anonymous. Information gathered in this research activity will be used to complete a qualitative dissertation study as a part of the requirements of my doctoral program in the College of Education, Educational Leadership and Policy, which I am completing at the University of Washington. You have the right to review and delete any portion of the audiotapes you choose. I will be pleased to provide participants a copy of the final study.

_____ _____

Signature of investigator Date

Subject's statement:

The study described above has been explained to me. I voluntarily consent to participate in this activity. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I understand that future questions I may have about the research or about my rights as a subject will be answered by the investigator listed above.

_____ _____

Signature of subject Date

Copies to: Subject
Investigator's file

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Initial Principal Interview Questions

Principals' Interpretation of the Policy

- What do you believe is the purpose or goal for you to be spending a significant part of your work week observing, conferencing, and writing up observations?
- What did you initially think this policy was asking you to do? Now what are you thinking?
- How has your attitude toward the evaluation model changed over the two years?

  Probes
  - Reduced anxiety?
  - Becoming more efficient in completing the activities?
  - Increased confidence in providing feedback to teachers?
  - Becoming a rote or boring activity?

- What is the relationship of this activity to your overall role as building principal? to your other responsibilities?

Readiness factors to enter into the activity

- What factors in your experience or thinking readied you for this activity?

  Probes

  Possible factors
  - Lengthy or recent classroom experience more or less
  - Significant background in curriculum or instruction
  - Amount of experience as a supervisor/evaluator
  - Personal attributes, strengths, attitudes or beliefs

- In considering your own readiness to accomplish this directive, were there or are there factors that challenged your ability to carry out the policy?

  Probes
  - Need for training, information?
  - Need to alter expectations or responsibilities? Lack of sufficient time?
  - Teacher resistance?

Change in Behavior/Thinking of Principals

- How do you define the term "student learning?" In what ways has this definition changed over the past two year?

  Probes

  - How (if in any way) have the activities of classroom observations, conferences, write-ups modified your thinking about the work of teachers?; of instruction?; of curriculum?; of learning?

- What are your indicators of student learning?

- Now that you've been engaged in observing teachers for nearly two years, what are you noticing?

  Probes

  - An area of growth or concern in instruction by a number of teachers?
  - A change attitude or beliefs by teachers?

Relationship with Teachers

- What do you see as the impact of the evaluation model on your working relationship with the teacher?

Impact of Writing

- What has been the effect or impact of writing up observations and conference summaries on you? on your work with teachers?

  Probes

  - Through the writing activity have you discovered patterns or themes in instruction that they are pursuing with teachers?
  - Has the writing process (reflection and focus) produced new insights regarding learning or instruction for you?

Second Principal Interview

The Policy and the Superintendent

- We often talk about decisions or policies being made top down or bottom up. How would you describe this policy?

- Who "owns" this policy?

- When the superintendent introduced the policy what "messages" you were you getting?

- What do you think was the initial impression of this policy among your colleagues?

- Do you think much has changed in terms of principals' impression of this policy?

The Policy and the Principal

- Was there/Is there ever a time that you questioned your own ability to carry out this initiative?

- Now that you've been into this for more than two years, how or have you changed?

The Principal Implementing the Policy -- The Principal's Curriculum

- I know that we are all asking ourselves "What are the students learning?" when we walking into classrooms. How do you decipher that for yourself? What does that question really mean to you? When you walk into a classroom for an observation what's going through your mind?

- How do you think about or plan for a post conference? How do you see your role?

- In talking with other principals, they mention the differences of working with new or newish teachers and more senior staff. What are your thoughts?

- How do you go about doing a written summary? at work, at home, before or after the post?

- What are you thinking about when you write up an observation summary?

- Compare what you are doing now with clinical supervision and/or cognitive coaching.

- How much more time would you estimate you now spend in classrooms; writing up observations; meeting with teachers?

- What impact has this policy had on you in regard to your own knowledge of curriculum?

- If you personally could recraft this policy -- including abolish it -- what changes would you make?

Teacher Interview Questions

Overall Impressions/Attitudes/Understanding

A year ago in the fall, principals introduced their staffs to a model of teacher evaluation that he or she was being directed to implement. [To a first-year teacher: This year, your principal introduced you to a model of teacher evaluation that he or she was being directed to implement.] What were your initial impressions of this evaluation model? What is your thinking now? What do you believe is the goal or purpose of this evaluation model?

Your principal has been spending a good deal of time in classrooms observing students and teachers, and in conferencing with teachers and writing up observations. What are your observations of the impact or effect this activity has had on your principal?

Change in Behavior/Thinking of Principals

Do you believe that this activity has altered your principal's thinking about student learning?

What evidence does your principal use to substantiate that learning is occurring?

Relationship with the Principal

What do you see as the impact of the evaluation model on your working relationship with your principal?

Principal Readiness

What factors do you believe support your principal in implementing this policy?

What factors might impede or hinder your principal from implementing the policy?

Appendix C: Staff Survey on the Performance of Principals 1996-97

1. My principal is knowledgeable about curriculum.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark
2. My principal is knowledgeable about instruction.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark
3. My principal is knowledgeable about the quality of teaching in our building.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark
4. My principal ordinarily makes informal visits to my classroom.
   (A) weekly
   (B) once every two weeks
   (C) less than once a month
   (D) never visits my classroom
   No Mark
5. The principal talks to the staff about instructional issues.
   (A) weekly
   (B) monthly
   (C) almost never
   (D) never
   No Mark
6. My principal is accessible to me.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark
7. My principal demonstrates that effective instruction that promotes quality student learning is the most important consideration.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark

8. My principal fosters thoughtful reflection regarding effective instruction within our school.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark

Please respond to items 9-11 <u>only</u> for the administrator that is directly responsible for observing your instruction for the purpose of evaluation.

9. The principal makes good suggestions to me for improving my instruction.
   (A) Strongly Agree
   (B) Agree
   (C) Disagree
   (D) Strongly Disagree
   No Mark

10. My principal usually provides me with *oral* feedback on the quality of my students' learning following an observation,
   (A) the same day as the observation.
   (B) within 5 school days following the observation.
   (C) within 10 school days following the observation.
   (D) does not provide oral feedback.
   No Mark

11. My principal usually provides me with *written* feedback on the quality of my students' learning
   (A) before our post conference.
   (B) within 10 school days following our conference.
   (C) within 15 school days following our conference.
   (D) does not provide written feedback.
   No Mark

Appendix D: Coding of Data

Codes Used To Categorize Data

1. Overall Policy Implementation

1.1 Purpose of Policy

1.1.1 Student Learning Definition

1.1.2 Evidence of Student Learning
1.1.2.1 Principal's Philosophy of Teaching

1.1.3 Maintain Teacher Autonomy

1.2 Factors That Impact Policy Implementation

1.2.1 Policy Introduction by Superintendent
1.2.1.1 Initial Reaction -- Principals

1.2.2 Principal Style/Personality

1.2.3 Principal Prior Knowledge and Experience

1.2.4 Factors Supporting Implementation
1.2.4.1 Factors Which Positively Changed Principals' Attitude

1.2.5 Factors Impeding/Challenging Implementation
1.2.5.1 Conflict With Prior Beliefs and Practices
1.2.5.2 Time To Balance Responsibilities
1.2.5.3 Teacher Seniority

1.3 Principals Implement The Policy in the Schoolhouse

1.3.1 Principals Introduce the Policy
1.3.1.1 Initial Reaction -- Teachers

1.3.2 Principals Customize the Policy
1.3.2.1 The Preconference
1.3.2.2 The Classroom Observation
1.3.2.3 The Postconference
1.3.2.4 The Written Summary
1.3.2.4.1 Coping With Writing Summaries

1.4 Policy Impacts/Outcomes

1.4.1 What Changed
- 1.4.1.1 Principal Change
  - 1.4.1.1.1 Role Relationship to the Policy
  - 1.4.1.1.2 New Behavior of Principal
    - 1.4.1.1.2.1 Principal Visibility in the School and in Classrooms
  - 1.4.1.1.3 Principal Gains New Information
    - 1.4.1.1.3.1 Principal Familiarity with Students
- 1.4.1.2 Teacher Change
  - 1.4.1.2.1 Policy/Principals Influence Teacher Thinking
  - 1.4.1.2.2 Principal Observations Useful To Teachers
    - 1.4.1.2.2.1 Principals Give Teacher Practical Ideas
- 1.4.1.3 Commitment to Policy
  - 1.4.1.3.1 Principal Satisfaction
  - 1.4.1.3.2 Teacher Satisfaction
  - 1.4.1.3.3 Suggestions for Policy Change
  - 1.4.1.3.4 Policy Ownership
- 1.4.1.4 Feelings
  - 1.4.1.4.1 Principal Anxiety
  - 1.4.1.4.2 Teacher Anxiety
  - 1.4.1.4.3 Principal/Teacher Relations
    - 1.4.1.4.3.1 Building Trust
    - 1.4.1.4.3.2 Teachers Need For Feedback
- 1.4.1.5 Principals Goals to Develop Resulting From Policy Implementation
  - 1.4.1.5.1 Need for Collegial Time with Peers
- 1.4.1.6 What Has Not Changed/Been Impacted

Linking Questions And Codes

POLICY INTRODUCTION

- *How was the policy conceived, developed and introduced?*
  - Superintendent Interview
- *We often talk about decisions or policies being made top down or bottom up. How would you describe this policy?*

1.2.1 Policy Introduction by Superintendent
1.2.1.1 Initial Reaction -- Principals

How did the principal respond to the policy? Initially? Over time?

- *How do principals describe the intent or purpose of the policy?*

1.1 **Purpose of Policy**

- *What is the principals' attitude toward and about the policy?*

1.2.1.1 Initial Reaction -- Principals

- *How has the principals perception and attitude toward the policy changed over two years?*
- *How would the principal rank his response to the policy on a continuum from compliance to commitment?*
- *If the principal could personally recraft the policy -- including abolish it -- what changes would the principal make?*

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

1.3 **Principals Implement The Policy in the Schoolhouse**
1.3.1 Principals Introduce the Policy
1.3.1.1 Initial Reaction -- Teachers

How has the principal interpreted the policy in employing a method of supervision and evaluation?

- *What models, methods, and strategies are principals using to supervise and evaluate teachers? What factors contributed to this decision?*

1.3.2 Principals Customize the Policy
1.3.2.1 The Preconference

- *When you walk into a classroom for an observation, what are you looking for?*

1.3.2.2 The Classroom Observation
1.1.3 Maintain Teacher Autonomy
1.3.2.3 The Postconference

- *What are you thinking about when you write up an observation summary?*

1.3.2.4 The Written Summary

How did policy implementation influence the principal's learning (thinking)?

- *How has spending significant time observing in classrooms changed the principal's conception of student and adult learning; altered beliefs, attitudes, values regarding the principal's own work; modified the principal's understanding of the purpose of schooling, and informed the principal about curriculum and instruction?*
- *How do principals personally decipher the question "What did the students learn?" when they walk into a classroom?*
- *What evidence does the principal use to define student learning?*

  1.1.1 Student Learning Definition
  1.1.2 Evidence of Student Learning
  1.1.2.1 Principal's Philosophy of Teaching

What factors influenced the implementation of the policy?

1.2 Factors That Impact Policy Implementation

1.2.1 Policy Introduction by Superintendent
1.2.1.1 Initial Reaction -- Principals
1.2.4 Factors Supporting Implementation
1.2.4.1 Factors Which Positively Changed Principals' Attitude
1.2.5 Factors Impeding/Challenging Implementation
1.2.5.1 Conflict With Prior Beliefs and Practices
1.2.5.2 Time To Balance Responsibilities
1.2.5.3 Teacher Seniority
1.3.2.4.1 Coping With Writing Summaries

- *What personal attributes or strengths contribute to the way principals implement the policy?*

  1.2.2 Principal Style/Personality

- *Are principals with lengthy or recent classroom experience or with significant background in curriculum and instruction more or less likely to redefine student learning? Do years of experience as an evaluator support one in refocusing on what students are learning rather than what teachers are doing?*

  1.2.3 Principal Prior Knowledge and Experience

POLICY OUTCOMES

- *As a result of implementing this policy, what has changed for principals? (What were policy outcomes?)*
- *Now that you've been into this for more than two years, how or have you changed?*

1.4 Policy Impacts/Outcomes

1.4.1 What Changed?
1.4.1.1 Principal Change
1.4.1.1.1 Role Relationship to the Policy
1.4.1.1.2 New Behavior of Principal
1.4.1.1.2.1 Principal Visibility in the School and in Classrooms

- *What impact has this policy had on you in regard to your own knowledge of curriculum?*

1.4.1.1.3 Principal Gains New Information
1.4.1.1.3.1 Principal Familiarity with Students

- *What has changed in terms of principals' impression of the policy?*

1.1 Purpose of Policy

1.4.1.2 Teacher Change
1.4.1.2.1 Policy/Principals Influence Teacher Thinking
1.4.1.2.2 Principal Observations Useful To Teachers
1.4.1.2.2.1 Principals Give Teacher Practical Ideas

How did the policy implementation impact the principal's role and responsibilities and alter working relationships with teachers, students, the parent community?

1.4.1.4.3 Principal/Teacher Relations
1.4.1.4.3.1 Building Trust
1.4.1.4.3.2 Teachers Need For Feedback
1.4.1.4 Feelings

- *Was there ever a time that you questioned your own ability to carry out this initiative?*

1.4.1.4.1 Principal Anxiety
1.4.1.4.2 Teacher Anxiety
1.4.1.6 What Has Not Changed/Been Impacted?

- *Who owns this policy?*

1.4.1.3 Commitment to Policy
1.4.1.3.1 Principal Satisfaction
1.4.1.3.2 Teacher Satisfaction
1.4.1.3.4 Policy Ownership
1.4.1.3.3 Suggestions for Policy Change
1.4.1.5 Principals Goals to Develop Resulting From Policy Implementation
1.4.1.5.1 Need for Collegial Time with Peers

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