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Sustaining a Competitive Edge Through Transforming Organizational Culture in a K-12 Setting

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Consultancy Project Executive Summary

Organization: Gardner-Webb University School of Education

Project Title: Sustaining a Competitive Edge Through
Transforming Organizational Culture in a K-12
Setting

Candidate: April Butler-McConneaughey

Consultancy Coach: Dr. John Balls

Defense Date: July 3, 2017

Authorized by: Mrs. Cheryl Riley - Principal

Acknowledgments

It would not have been possible for me to complete the Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership Program or my Consultancy Project without the continued development of my relationship with God. During this time reading and studying of God's Word, and prayer have remained an integral part of my life. I am thankful for the encouragement, support, and assistance that so many people have provided to me. While it would be impossible for me to acknowledge everyone, there are a few people I must acknowledge.

First, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the wisdom and knowledge that I needed every step of the way to complete the DEOL Program.

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I am grateful for this experience and I will use what I have learned for kingdom building.

Abstract

Sustaining a Competitive Edge by Transforming Organizational Culture in a K-12 Setting. Butler-McConneaughey, April, 2017. Consultancy Project, Gardner-Webb University, Digital Commons/Transforming Organizational Culture

This project addressed how a program of curriculum development and professional support helped a K-12 tuition-based school transform its culture and create and sustain a competitive edge in a private school market.

Because of the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a new 21st Century Literacy/Language Arts Curriculum Support: Professional Development Program at the elementary level, this school has been able to create and maintain a high-performance culture and increase market share and student growth and proficiency.

One of the objectives of this project was to develop and implement systems and processes that would foster a collaborative culture and increase student growth and proficiency in the areas of reading and language arts. The targeted population for this project were students in Grades 3-5.

The Implementation Team included students, teachers, a curriculum program coordinator, administrators and a doctoral student who worked as a Consultant.

The responsibilities of the Implementation Team included the following tasks: to conduct Professional Development for the faculty and staff, collect and disaggregate data and to implement innovative research based practices. These tasks occurred before, during, and after the implementation of the Reading Wonders Program. There were also formative and summative assessments that were utilized to monitor progress during the implementation process.

As a result of data collection, monitoring, and reporting processes, the school was able to use the information that had been compiled to continue to develop systems and processes that were established.

This Consultancy Project helped to facilitate continuous improvement throughout the K-12 setting. The data was monitored frequently in an effort to make informed decisions about the renewal of the project. This helped to guide the delivery of instruction relative to developing strategies for increasing phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills. Implementing any school reform initiative is difficult. Research indicates that school leaders who understand not only the reform but the school's culture have a greater opportunity of sustaining the reform.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

This Consultancy Project addressed how a competitive edge has been sustained in a K-12 setting in a Private School Market by transforming Organizational Culture.

As a result of the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a 21st Century Literacy/Language Arts Curriculum Support: Professional Development Program at the elementary level, this school has been able to maintain market share, increase student growth and proficiency, and create a high-performance culture.

One of the objectives of this project was to implement systems and processes that would foster a collaborative culture and increase student growth and proficiency in the areas of reading and language arts. The targeted population for this project were students in third, fourth, and fifth grades respectively.

Research indicates that a strong literacy/language arts program at the elementary level builds a critical foundation for students in later learning (Morris & Price, 2000). Moreover; if students do not master concepts at the elementary level, students will perform at lower levels throughout their 6-12 educational experience. Performing at lower levels will cause students to fall behind academically. Research further asserts that those students who do not have a strong literacy/language arts foundation by the third grade are at a greater risk of becoming a dropout (Literacy Partners, 2011).

Through formative and summative data, this project will examine the implementation of the school's new Literacy/Language Arts Program. The areas of focus for the project will be two-fold. The first area of focus will be the implementation of a systematic curriculum support and professional development program that provides support to teachers and promotes optimum instruction. The second area of focus will be to significantly increase academic achievement in the area of literacy/language arts as measured by student growth and proficiency. The measurable outcome for both areas of focus will be student performance on end-of-year assessments in the areas of literacy and language arts.

1.2 Associated Documents

Program documents included data from test scores, documentation of Professional Development Activities, and formative and summative teacher evaluations. All of these documents were used to evaluate and measure project outcomes.

1.3 Project Plan Maintenance

The program was updated each semester. The project plan changes were approved by the Consultancy Project Chair and the Principal.

2 Project Scope

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1 Objectives

The purpose of the project was to implement, monitor, and evaluate the effects of a new Literacy/Language Arts Program on teacher engagement, student achievement, and stakeholder engagement. The new Literacy/Language Arts Program was implemented in the Fall of 2014. The new Literacy/Language Arts Program that was implemented was the Reading Wonders Program by McGraw. The program is the first Reading/ Language Arts Program that the school has had that was developed exclusively to align with and meet the Common Core State Standards for Reading/Language Arts. The program combines research-based instruction with tools that address today's challenges. Each lesson has been designed for efficient and effective instruction that works in conjunction with the Common Core State Standards. The literacy/Language Arts Program provides support for building a stronger foundation in reading, accessing and referencing the entire text, participation in collaborative dialogue, and writing.

The program utilizes a wide range of varied print and digital media. Reading Wonders was designed to promote the rigor of the Common Core State Standards.

Prior to choosing the Reading Wonders, a variety of other programs were reviewed by the Implementation Team; however, the Reading Wonders Program was chosen by the school's curriculum and administrative teams based on its research-based practices. At the beginning of the school year, the selected students were given a pretest to determine their current level of performance. After the tests were administered, the students and their level of instruction were taught whole group as well as in small groups that emphasized differentiated instruction based on the results from the pretest.

2.1.2 Success Criteria

1. Teacher engagement and student achievement (growth and proficiency) as measured by end-of-year test scores and the results from summative teacher observations.
2. The Curriculum /Professional Development Support Program will lead to higher levels of teacher engagement as measured by an increase in the submission of quality lesson plans and optimal classroom instruction. (Formative and Summative Observations).

2.1.3 Risks

The known risks were as follows: student and staff attrition, the inability to make changes to the master schedule, a lack of updated technology, the current methods relative to instructional delivery, and the mandated curriculum. The potential risks were as follows: limited funding; the students present level of performance upon entering elementary school (if they were outside of the cohort of the school's preschool); the lack of a viable marketing plan; ongoing competition with other private, public, and charter schools; and school safety.

2.1.4 Objectives

The school had been using the same Literacy/Language Arts Program for the past 20 years. The program worked well for several years as measured by archival data; however, over the past 5 years, the school began to see a decline in test scores as well as a significant increase in the lack of teacher and student

engagement as measured by attrition and test scores. In June of 2011, the end-of-year test results indicated that the students in Grades K-5 performed significantly below their counterparts throughout the state in the area of literacy/language arts. Further analysis of the data revealed that the students did not demonstrate proficiency on the tests in the areas of reading comprehension and critical thinking. The results from the literacy/language arts tests indicated that 57% of the students did not demonstrate growth and/or proficiency. Furthermore, during that time, there was also a decline in the quality of the teacher lesson plans and the delivery of instruction. The school began to seek out curriculum that would promote maximum teacher engagement and student growth and proficiency.

The objectives of this project were to examine the impact of the implementation of the new literacy/language arts curriculum and professional development support program on teacher engagement and student growth and proficiency.

2.1.5 Success Criteria

The success criteria were based on the data from the school's end-of-year assessments. The data were used to identify student academic strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate curriculum implementation and the delivery of instruction. Having the data allowed the school to adjust its programs; validate other benchmarks; and inform parents, students, staff, and other stakeholders relative to student achievement. Other criteria included academic accomplishments and contributions that could be marketed to the community; also, the ability to utilize the data to identify longitudinal trends.

The literacy/language arts section of the end-of-year assessment for this school are centered on the student's ability to answer questions covering both content and process strands. The test also emphasizes the student's ability to read fluently as well as to evaluate a student's propensity towards critical thinking.

Satisfactory performance on the end-of-year assessments is defined by the student's total scores on the test in specific domains (i.e., reading comprehension, mechanics, critical thinking). Students must score at the proficient or above proficient levels in order to be deemed as making satisfactory or above satisfactory.

Federal and state standards have placed a high level of accountability on schools to perform at high academic levels.

Currently, there are two areas that the school has identified that need improvement. Those areas are teacher engagement and student achievement (A. B. McConneaughey, personal communication, December 5, 2014). Moreover; the school needs to place a greater emphasis on developing, implementing, and monitoring systems and processes that actively evaluate teacher engagement and student achievement.

2.1.6 Risks

This project was responsible for increasing student growth and proficiency, reducing student and staff attrition, and increasing the quality of instruction. Risks were minimized by increasing support to teachers through a consistent systematic process through ongoing professional development. Student risks were minimized by providing more frequent opportunities for students to work on skill deficits through benchmark instructional monitoring (see Appendix A).

3 Deliverables

3.1 To partnering organization

1. An increase in student growth and proficiency as measured by benchmark and end-of-year assessments – Ongoing – Annual Review – School years 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017
2. Knowledge of learner needs as measured by the collection and disaggregation of data – August 2015
3. More effective instruction – Beginning August 2015
4. Increased enrollment – August 2016
5. Measurable increases in benchmark and end-of-year reading/language arts assessments – May 2015
6. Ongoing opportunities in the areas of best practices, research, training, and support in reading /English language arts – May 2016
7. Increase in student proficiency to 90% or more – 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years
8. Reading/language arts readiness at the middle school and high school levels – Monitoring
9. Consistent and intentional contributions to the school's mission and vision – Ongoing throughout the duration of the project and beyond
10. Student growth and development as measured by benchmark and end-of-year assessments – 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years

3.2 From student

Quarterly Progress Meetings
Professional Development as needed
Disaggregation of Data

4 Project Approach

4.1 Project Lifecycle Processes

Pretests were administered to students in the Fall of 2014 to establish baseline data and disaggregate data from end-of-year assessments from Fall of 2014. A Professional Development Plan was developed annually to meet and address the staff's needs in the area of reading/language arts. Data from benchmark assessments were disaggregated monthly and instruction was differentiated based on the results from the benchmarks. Fundraising activities were identified and launched, a minimum of two per year; established a staff resource library; implemented quarterly rather than annual staff reviews.

4.2 Project Management Processes

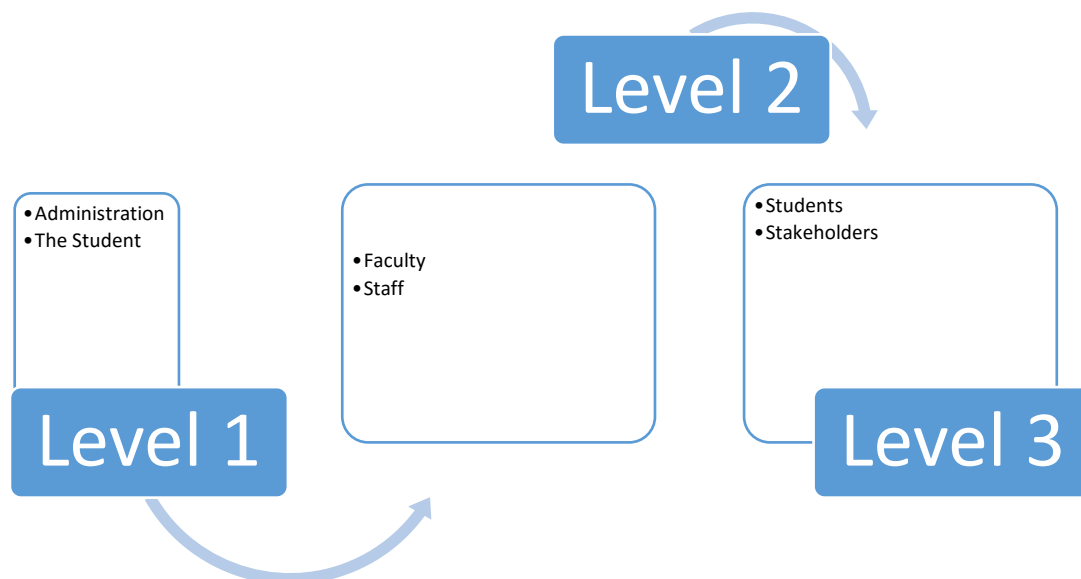
Quarterly progress meetings were held with the administration and the student. Professional development sessions were conducted as needed by the student and other vendors. Disaggregation of data was ongoing monthly or as otherwise requested by the faculty.

4.3 Project Support Processes

Performance information was captured through weekly, monthly, and quarterly reports. These reports were compiled by the school's administration and the Curriculum Support Coordinator and distributed to stakeholders. Opportunities for verbal and written feedback were provided to all stakeholders.

4.4 Organization

4.4.1 Mapping Between Organization and Student



5 Communications Plan

Who - stakeholder	What info do they need	Why do they need it	When will they get it	How will they get it
Administrators	Data Disaggregated, Baseline Data	To develop instructional practices that will promote student growth and proficiency	Fall of 2014	Through spreadsheets that have been compiled
Teachers	Data that indicates their students current level of performance	To develop instructional strategies that will promote student growth and proficiency	Fall of 2014 - Ongoing	Compilation of spreadsheets divided by class rosters
Students	Data that indicates their students present level of performance	To develop and improve their skill set	At the beginning of the school year and weekly after benchmark assessments	Formal and informal conferences with their child's teacher(s)
Parents	Data that indicates their students current level of performance	To be able to monitor their child's progress	Weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually	During formal and informal conferences with teachers, e-mails, phone calls and texts
Stakeholders	Data about the school's overall performance	To develop long-term strategies and provide support	Quarterly and annually	Through meetings, Social Media and Annual Reports

6 Work Plan

6.1 Work Breakdown Structure

Goals	Tasks	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
1. To develop clearly defined procedures to monitor and assess student progress	1. Implement Reading Wonders Program for students in Grades K-5	1. An increase in student growth and proficiency as measured by Benchmark and End-of-Year Assessments	12/ 2016
2. Increase proficiency competencies.	2. Develop proficient competencies of 70% or more for students in Grades K-5 in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development and writing as measured by benchmark and end of year formal assessments	2. Knowledge of learner needs as measured by the collection and disaggregation of data	6/17
3. Design a Professional Development Program	3. Provide ongoing training in the areas of instructional delivery and teaching and learning	3. More effective instruction	Ongoing
4. Grow the Student Body	4. Maximize building capacity	4. Expanded Enrollment	Ongoing
5. Create a level-text Media Center that provides a variety of genre for students to read by August 2015	5. Expose students to a variety of genre	5. Measurable increases in benchmark and end of year Reading/Language Arts Assessments	Complete
6. Establish a Center of Excellence	6. Maintain effective practices	6. Ongoing opportunities in the areas of best practices, research, training and support in Reading /English Language Arts	Under Review
7. Disaggregate data in Reading/Language Arts on End-of-Year Assessments	7. Quantify growth and proficiency over the 3-year period.	7. Increase in student proficiency to 90% or more	Ongoing
8. Obtain feedback from stakeholders	8. Assess Reading/Language Arts Program Effectiveness	8. Reading/Language Arts Readiness at the Middle School and High School levels	Ongoing

9. Establish Professional Learning Communities	9. Collaborative Groups within the school that are committed to continuous improvement	9. Consistent and intentional contributions to the school's mission and vision	Ongoing
10. Establish accountability and support for the Literacy Program	10. Master competencies associated with effective teaching and learning	10. Increase student growth and proficiency measured by benchmark and end-of-year assessments	6/17

6.2 Resources

Tasks and Timeline

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
1. Administer pretest to establish baseline data relative to the students' current level of performance			
2. Disaggregate data from End-of-Year Assessments			
3. Develop a Professional Development Plan annually to meet Staff Needs in the area of the delivery of Reading/ Language Arts			
4. Disaggregate Benchmark Data quarterly and differentiate instruction according to the data			
5. Conduct fundraising activities a minimum of 2 per years			
6. Establish a Staff Resource Library			
7. Distribute, collect, and disaggregate staff surveys			
8. Establish Center of Excellence			
9. Implement Professional Learning Communities			
10. Implement quarterly staff reviews			

Key

2014-2015 - Blue
2015-2016 - Yellow
2016-2017 - Green

7 Milestones

Milestone number	Title	Forecast date
1	Pretesting – Establishing Baseline Data	30-August-14
2	Disaggregating Data from the 14-15 school year	8-September 15
3	Review and monitor staff and student attrition	10-January 15
4	Disaggregate end-of-year test scores	Ongoing at the end of each school year

8 Metrics and Results

In August of 2014, the test scores for the 2013-2014 school year were disaggregated by the Administrative Team. After the data were disaggregated for Grades 3-5, the data indicated a decrease in student growth and proficiency in reading/language arts compared to previous years.

One of the first conversations centered around the fact that the school's current reading/language arts had been a part of the school's curriculum for over 20 years. Furthermore, the components of the current Literacy Program did not mirror the constructs that were being assessed on the end-of-year test.

The purpose of the project is to implement, monitor, and evaluate the effects of a new literacy/language arts program on teacher engagement and student achievement. The new program was implemented in the Fall of 2014. The new literacy/language arts program that has been implemented is Reading Wonders by McGraw. This program is the first reading/language arts program developed exclusively to align with the Common Core State Standards for reading/language arts. The program combines research-based instruction with tools that address today's challenges. Each lesson has been designed for efficient and effective instruction that works in conjunction with the Common Core State Standards. The literacy/language arts program provides support for building a stronger foundation in reading, accessing and referencing the entire text, participation in collaborative dialogue, and writing. The program utilizes a wide range of varied print and digital media. Reading Wonders was designed to promote the rigor of the Common Core State Standards

Prior to choosing the Reading Wonders, a variety of other programs were reviewed. Reading Wonders was chosen by the school's curriculum and administrative teams for its research-based practices. At the beginning of the school year, the selected students were given a pretest to determine their current level of performance. After the tests were administered and the students and their level of instruction were determined, the students were taught whole group as well as in small groups that emphasized differentiated instruction based on the results from the pretests.

9 Risks, Constraints, Assumptions

9.1 Risks

Risk Description	Mitigation Plan (what to do to avoid the risk occurring)	Contingency Plan (what to do if the risk occurs)	Impact (what the impact will be to the project if the risk occurs)	Likelihood of occurrence (e.g., %, or high/medium/low)
Student Attrition	Create Incentives	Increase frequency of surveys	Decrease the number of participants	medium
Staff Attrition	Provide additional support systems	Solicit feedback from stakeholders	Compromise continuity	high
Compromised Instructional Practices	Develop and implement consistent Professional Development Opportunities	Use surveys from the Professional Development Sessions to obtain feedback from the faculty and staff	Continued decrease in student achievement	high
A decrease in student growth and proficiency	Systematically and frequently monitor benchmark data	Implement remediation and enrichment services	Students will not have an opportunity to maximize their potential	High

9.2 Constraints

There are so many program components. Making time within the school day to ensure quality implementation of the program is key to the success of the reading program. The new reading program is costly. The school is privately funded. A potential shift in priorities is also a constraint. Resources are limited due to budgetary constraints. The school has just established an onsite Media Center.

9.3 Assumptions

The school's prior Administrative Team approved my Consultancy Project. My assumption was that the team would be in place throughout the duration of my project. Also, I assumed that the faculty and student attrition rate would be minimal. One of the major goals of the project was to increase student growth and proficiency. Further assumptions included but were not limited to ample revenue to support the Reading Wonders Program, program sustainability, frequently monitored student progress, ongoing professional development for staff, and that daily instruction would be monitored systematically.

10 Financial Plan

Objectives	Benefits	Capital Costs	Operating Costs	Related Assumptions
1. Implement the English Language Arts Program	Updates the curriculum and exceeds minimum state curriculum requirements	\$45,525.00 Books, Consumables, Supplies, Technology	\$20,000.00	An increase in student growth and proficiency as measured by Benchmark and End-of-Year Assessments
2. Increase proficiency competencies	Develop proficient competencies of 70% or more for students in Grades 6-8 in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development and writing as measured by benchmark and end of year formal assessments	\$15,540.00 Novels, iPads, Consumables	\$ 25,00.00 Higher than Capital Costs due to maintenance, equipment replacement etc.	Knowledge of learner needs as measured by the collection and disaggregation of data
3. Design a Professional Development Program	Provide ongoing training in the areas of instructional delivery and teaching and learning	\$ 29,100.00 Hire Trainer, Materials, Snacks	\$29,100.00	More effective instruction
4. Grow the Student Body	Maximize building capacity	\$5000.00 Marketing Materials, Purchased Services	\$5000.00	Increase Enrollment
5. Create a level-text Media Center that provides a variety of genre for students to read by August 2017	Immerse students to a variety of genre	\$25,000.00 Purchase books, furniture and part-time Library Aide.	\$15,000.00	Measurable increases in benchmark and end-of-year reading/language arts assessments
6. Establish a Center of	Maintain effective practices	\$5000.00	\$7500.00	Create and maintain a high

Excellence				performance learning environment Ongoing opportunities in the areas of best practices, research, training and support in Reading /English Language Arts
7. Disaggregate Reading/Language Arts on End-of-Year	Quantify growth and proficiency over the 3-year period.	N/A	N/A	Increase in enrollment, Increase in student proficiency to 90% or more
8. Obtain stakeholder feedback	Assess ELA program effectiveness	N/A	\$ 5000 Program Evaluators	Ongoing SWOT
9. Establish Professional Learning Communities	Establish and maintain Collaborative Groups within the school that are committed to Improvement	\$2500.00 Training, books, supplies and materials	\$2500.00 Training, books, supplies and materials	Consistent and intentional contributions to the school's mission, vision, climate and culture
10. Establish formal accountability	Master competencies associated with teaching and learning	N/A	N/A	Increased student growth and proficiency

11 Quality Assurance Plan

Plan	Do	Check	Act	Mitigation Plan
1. Implement the new English Language Arts Program	Update the curriculum	Benchmark Assessment data from end-of-year and formal assessments beginning August 2014. (Ongoing through the life of the project)	Conduct monthly meetings with teachers, staff and school administrators to disaggregate the data from the benchmark assessments	Restructure instructional guided and independent practice to include both teacher, paraprofessional and trained literacy volunteer led intensive support. Recruit retired teachers/educators to work with learners who are at-risk in an effort to ensure that prerequisite literacy skills are mastered.
2. Increase proficiency competencies	Develop proficiency competencies of 80% or more for students in grades 3-5 in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development and writing as measured	Assess students weekly on proficiency competencies	Adjust individual and small group instruction based on the data that is received from the weekly competencies. Make groups fluid so that students can move through skills groups as they master the skills on an individual basis	Collect and use data graphing system to measure proficiency competencies, individual student intensive coaching/mentoring
3. Design a Professional Development Program	Provide Professional Development Training Opportunities that focus on the Proficiency Competencies Checklist	Conduct bi-weekly teacher observations	Provide formal written feedback to teachers: Observations should be for coaching not evaluative purposes	To ensure that the teacher observations are being conducted administrators should schedule bi-weekly meetings to review the observations to ensure consistency relative to conducting the observations
4. Increase enrollment	Maximize building capacity	Compare enrollment	Review current Marketing Plan	Revise Marketing Plan to ensure that

		from 2014 to the determine the percentage of growth that has occurred since the new Language Arts Program was implemented.		target markets are identified and that advertising and recruitment is ongoing (More specifically having representatives at community, business and educational venues to market the school program
5. Create a Media Center that provides a variety of genre for students to read that is organized according to Lexile scores by August 2017	Solicit donations from donors and use monies that have been designated for the purchase of books	Inventory the books in the Media Center annually	Add or delete books with the Lexile System being the determining factor for the additions or deletions	Seek additional sources of revenue so that new books can be purchased annually. (i.e. grants, book drives and fairs, increase donor base)
Plan	Do	Check	Act	Mitigation Plan
6. Establish a Center of Excellence	Identify key school personnel and stakeholders to oversee the Center of Excellence (Administrators, Curriculum Coordinators, teachers and parents)	Review the data from benchmark and annual assessments, PD Plan, Marketing Plan and Media Center content	Use growth and proficiency targets 80% or better to determine if key indicators are being met	Evaluate curriculum, student performance and enrollment if the data is less than 80% or better
7. Disaggregate Reading/ Language Arts on End-of-Year Assessments	Quantify growth and proficiency over the 3-year period. (14-17)	Determine increases by proficiency and growth	Adjust instructional practices as a result of teacher-observations	Conduct professional development on areas from the proficiency checklist that are not being met
8. Obtain stakeholder feedback	Assess ELA Program Effectiveness	Quantify growth and proficiency over the 3-year period. (14-17)	Use the data from surveys to make adjustments to programs as needed	Create School Leadership/Advisory Team to monitor Strategic Goals
9. Establish Professional Learning	Establish and maintain Collaborative	Review target goals and data with	Evaluate curriculum, student	Establish quarterly meetings in an effort to promote

Communities	Groups with all stakeholders inside and outside of the school to promote continuous Improvement	Collaborative Groups	performance and enrollment if the data is less than 80% or better	consistent and intentional contributions to the school's mission, vision, climate and culture
10. Establish formal accountability systems	Develop systems and processes to ensure ongoing strategic development	Monthly review (minimum) of all data sources) pertinent to the plan	Develop and implement Strategic Goals designed to promote student growth and proficiency, teacher and staff development and increase enrollment	Increase the frequency of administrative, faculty and staff and stakeholder meetings to ensure that progress is measurable and ongoing. (Data-driven)

12 Areas for Future Study

Being able to identify and address the major needs of all students at this or any school extends beyond the extent of this study. Many students are being reared in a culture that does not place a high value on education. Often, parental involvement is limited; therefore, any type of change would have to be focused on variables that are within the practitioner's direct sphere of influence. Therefore, implementing a program that is research-based and one that could be implemented in an effort to increase student growth and proficiency in other content areas would be a logical approach for future study. The following areas are also possible areas for future study.

- 1) The Impact of Mission and Vision on School Culture and Student Achievement
- 2) The Effect of Teacher Preparation on Student Achievement
- 3) How Leadership Styles Impact Student Achievement
- 4) Instructional Effectiveness and Student Growth and Proficiency
- 5) A Clear Understanding of the Climate of Culture

13 Reflection

The purpose of this Consultancy Project was aimed at transforming the core technology of schools (the teaching and learning process). This project helped to facilitate the implementation of a new reading/language arts curriculum. The implementation of the new curriculum ultimately changed the school's culture.

According to Delany and Arredondo (1998), permanent changes in school reform initiatives only affect school performance when teachers and administrators have been transformed by a new school culture. They further indicated that the organizational environment must be conducive to change.

Research about the effect of school reform has documented numerous failures as it relates to comprehensive meaningful change (Ross, 2010).

Every school has a distinct culture. Schools share a history that is connected to their governing organization(s) and their community. School leaders in the 21st century are constantly tasked with reforming schools through initiatives that will have a positive impact on their schools.

According to DuFour (2004), school reform initiatives evolve in cycles of beginning excitement, eventual frustration, and an ultimate desertion of the reform initiative. Embedding a reform often begins with intense training of the school staff. These trainings are often conducted by professionals who are marketing the reform in a very assertive and sometimes aggressive manner. The emphasis is on understanding the rationale behind the reform as well as the technical components that are required to implement the initiative. While the trainers for the reform initiative(s) understand the reform initiative(s), they rarely have a good understanding about the uniqueness of the environment into which the reform initiative(s) are being integrated. Moreover, reform requires not only learning new behaviors and strategies, it also requires unlearning strategies that have been impregnated are well-established and sometimes even saturated within the organization's culture.

According to Burnes (2004), "few social scientists have received the level of praise that has been heaped upon Kurt Lewin". (p.3). Lewin developed a change model in the 1940's which many researchers believe is relevant to organizations in the 21st century (Cooke, 1998, p. 7). The model involves three stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. According to Burnes, Lewin indicated that, "unfreezing occurs when the organization is able to decrease the forces that are striving to maintain the previously held values and beliefs within the organization" (p. 5). Burnes further indicates that based on Lewin's three step model that "the unfreezing can usually be launched by "helping people within the organization acknowledge that there is a need to move towards more appropriate forms of behavior" (p. 5.). During this phase, the search for possible solutions begins. The second stage is the changing/transition phase. This occurs when the organization begins to develop new behaviors, values, and attitudes. This change can be facilitated through organizational structure as well as in the development of new systems and processes. The final stage of Lewin's theory is refreezing. During this phase, the adoption of the reform initiative(s) takes place (p. 5).

One key piece of research that was reviewed was written by Delany and Arredondo (1998): This research asserted that one way to "re-culture and 'restructure' is to release teachers from the isolation of their classrooms" (p. 3). The research further indicates that this will help build a collaborative culture through collegial coaching, reflection, and ongoing dialogue between the administration and the teachers. In order to create sustainable change, individuals must be aware of their theories-in-use verses their espoused theories. Reflection affords teachers the

opportunity to identify and change practices that do not align with their beliefs. Reflection, collegial coaching, and dialogue will also help create the opportunity for greater self-awareness.

By empowering teachers through the use of innovative strategies, the key to organizational change is ignited. The key to organizational change is “individuals/followers” (Delany & Arredondo, 1998). The goal of this project was to promote cultural and organizational change by developing and sustaining a school culture that promotes ongoing student growth and proficiency.

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15 Appendix A

Chart 1 - Known Risks: Colored Coded High, Medium and Low

