Systemic and Personal Change: A Retrospective Case Study Of Balanced Literacy Implementation as Perceived by Those Involved

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SYSTEMIC AND PERSONAL CHANGE: A RETROSPECTIVE CASE STUDY
OF BALANCED LITERACY IMPLEMENTATION
AS PERCEIVED BY THOSE INVOLVED

by

Donna J. Anderson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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Donna J. Anderson
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS........................................................................................................ ii
LIST OF TABLES.................................................................................................................. ix
LIST OF FIGURES............................................................................................................... x

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION.............................................................................................................. 1

Focus for this Study........................................................................................................... 4

Background......................................................................................................................... 4

Building upon Previous Research...................................................................................... 8

Conceptual Frame............................................................................................................... 10

Problem............................................................................................................................... 13

Study Purpose.................................................................................................................... 17

Research Questions........................................................................................................... 19

Rationale............................................................................................................................. 21

Overview of Study Methodology......................................................................................... 23

Study Limitations and Delimitations................................................................................. 24

Summary.............................................................................................................................. 24

II. LITERATURE REVIEW.................................................................................................. 26

Introduction......................................................................................................................... 26

Change as a First or Second-Order Process........................................................................ 28

Examining School Level Elements Associated with Implementation of Second-Order Change............................................................................................................................................. 34

Shared Vision....................................................................................................................... 35

Collaboration....................................................................................................................... 37

Professional Development................................................................................................ 40
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

| Administrative Support and Leadership .................. | 44 |
| Assessment and Continuance of Change Implementation ... | 48 |
| Implications for Adult Learning .......................... | 51 |
| Sense Making ............................................. | 53 |
| Conclusion .................................................. | 54 |

III. STUDY METHODOLOGY ....................................... 57

| Overview ..................................................... | 57 |
| The Questions ............................................... | 60 |
| The Proposition .............................................. | 60 |
| Unit of Analysis ............................................. | 60 |
| Logic for Linking the Data to the Propositions .......... | 61 |
| Criteria for Interpreting the Findings .................... | 61 |
| Study Methods and Procedures ............................... | 62 |
| Subjects, Sampling, and Access ............................. | 64 |
| Data Collection Methods .................................... | 67 |
| Data Analysis Approach .................................... | 73 |
| The Researcher .............................................. | 74 |
| Limitations and Delimitations .............................. | 75 |
| Summary ...................................................... | 75 |

IV. RESULTS ..................................................... 77

| Introduction .................................................. | 77 |
| Analysis Strategies ......................................... | 77 |
| Results of Inductive Analysis and Deductive Analysis for Personal Change | 79 |
| Overview ...................................................... | 79 |
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

Theme 1: Teacher Empowerment ................................................................. 81
   Subthemes ......................................................................................... 84
   Personal Change Related to Teacher Empowerment ......................... 89
   New Learning Related to Teacher Empowerment 
   During Implementation ..................................................................... 89
   Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs Related to Teacher 
   Empowerment During Implementation ............................................. 92
   Changes in Practice Related to Teacher Empowerment 
   During Implementation ..................................................................... 95
   Personal Change Related to Teacher Empowerment - 
   Years Later ..................................................................................... 98

Theme 2: Time ........................................................................................... 100
   Subthemes ......................................................................................... 102
   Personal Change Related to Time ..................................................... 105
   New Learning Related to Time During Implementation .................... 105
   Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs Related to Time 
   During Implementation ..................................................................... 107
   Changes in Practice Related to Time During 
   Implementation ................................................................................. 109
   Personal Change Related to Time-Years Later ................................... 111

Theme 3: Building Culture ........................................................................ 112
   Subthemes ......................................................................................... 113
   Personal Change Related to Building Culture ..................................... 117
   New Learning Related to Building Culture During 
   Implementation .................................................................................. 117
   Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs Related to Building 
   Culture During Implementation ......................................................... 119
   New Practices Related to Building Culture During the 
   Implementation .................................................................................. 122
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Change Related to Building Culture-Years Later..............</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion of Inductive and Deductive Analysis...............................</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of Deductive Analysis Against Meister’s Five Elements..........</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of Vision</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of Collaboration</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of Professional Development</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of Leadership</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of the Assessment of Change</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion of Deductive Analysis against Meister’s Five Elements........</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Analysis of Inductive and Deductive Analyses.................</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Limitations</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. DISCUSSION</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Discussion of Results</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap of Study Problem and Purpose</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Findings</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Empowerment Related to Meister’s Themes.........................</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Related to Meister’s Themes</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Culture Related to Meister’s Themes</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Change against Indigenous Theme of Teacher Empowerment.......</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Empowerment- Years Later</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Change against the Indigenous Theme of Time....................</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-Years Later</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents – continued

CHAPTER

Personal Change against the Indigenous Theme of Building Culture................................................................. 158
Building Culture-Years Later............................................................................................................................ 160
Implication of Findings...................................................................................................................................... 160
A New Lens for Change....................................................................................................................................... 160
Discovering the New Lens through Three Levels of Analysis........................................................................... 165
Integrating the Theme of Time with the New Lens............................................................................................ 165
Summary............................................................................................................................................................. 166
Applications of Study Findings.......................................................................................................................... 171
Recommendations for Future Research............................................................................................................... 175
Concluding Remarks........................................................................................................................................... 176

REFERENCES....................................................................................................................................................... 178

APPENDICES

A. Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Letter of Approval................................................................. 182
B. Focus Group Questions..................................................................................................................................... 184
C. Individual Interview Questions....................................................................................................................... 186
D. Written Narrative Prompts............................................................................................................................. 188
E. Written Narrative Letter................................................................................................................................... 190
LIST OF TABLES

1. Indigenous Themes and Subthemes................................................................. 80

2. Deductive Analysis of Personal Change Under Each of the Indigenous Themes................................................................. 80

3. Deductive Analysis against Meister’s (2000) Themes of Incident Prominence................................................................. 127
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Five Areas Affecting Implementation ......................................................... 69
2. A New Lens for Understanding Change....................................................... 162
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Schools have many evaluators and followers. The students, parents, teachers, local school boards, and government officials all have an interest in the quality of their public school. Each entity wants to know that their school system is top notch and well-informed on current practices. Parents and students want to be sure that the students receive all the knowledge necessary to compete with their peers outside of their school. Teachers and school personnel often need the assurance that sound decisions are being made and district initiatives are worthy. Local school boards and government officials are making schools more accountable so “no child is left behind”.

With multiple stakeholders, deeper scrutiny, broader and more complex challenges, and higher expectations, schools and school systems are under pressure, more than ever before, to operate at peak performance. Spillane (2002) reports, “the reform initiatives call for more intellectually demanding content and pedagogy for everyone, challenging deeply rooted beliefs about who can do intellectually demanding work and questioning popular conceptions of teaching, learning, and subject matter” (p. 1). Notwithstanding conflicting and competing priorities, disparate definitions of success, and limited resources, schools are expected by both their internal and external stakeholders to be more strategic, more efficient, and more accountable for results.

“With increased accountability, American schools and the people who work in them are
being asked to do something new—to engage in systemic, continuous improvement in the quality of the educational experience of students, and to subject themselves to the discipline of measuring their success by the metric of students' academic performance” (Elmore, 2005, p. 91). While the accountability structures associated with state and federal school reform policy do, in fact, emphasize traditionally underserved student populations, the underlying assumption is one of maximizing learning potential for each and every student. Thus, it comes down to measuring school success through both the aggregated and disaggregated learning achievements of students as individuals.

The implementation of recent state and national standards-based reform initiatives involves all three levels of change (assumptions, beliefs, and practices) because the reforms press for instructional changes that require teachers and other school personnel to give up existing schemas or frameworks for thinking about instructional practice (Spillane, 2002, p. 14).

The hallmark of this shift in practice is the expectation for adapting instruction to individual student learning needs and authentic assessment of individual students’ functional learning. To respond to this expectation, schools must employ all means at their disposal and develop strategies on every front. This includes what happens in the classroom, how the school works with parents, and how the school interacts with the community. This also includes the way the school shapes its norms, procedures, and operating systems. In each of these areas, schools cannot afford to employ weak, outdated, or even counterproductive practices. To be successful, schools today must be places where practice is continually evolving and where only “what works” gets sustained.
Elmore (2005) states, “to succeed, school reform has to happen ‘from the inside out’” (p. 3). This statement recognizes that the real work of school reform happens between teachers and their students. It is the very nature of the teaching and learning relationship that sits at the heart of this work and results in different conversations. These conversations are about the evidence that individual students are learning and the response to that evidence deriving from a research-supported repertoire of instructional strategies applied in strategic ways that reflect deeper understanding of students as learners.

With that being said, it is imperative that a school be well-informed on current best practices. As best practices continually evolve, a school can be put in a constant mode of change. Not only is a school constantly undergoing change, but it also needs to be successful in these changes as the many evaluators and stakeholders often keep a close watch. Moreover, the vigilance of that watch is focused on which students are learning, which students are not, and what we are doing to adapt instruction so those who are not learning begin to achieve success. The constant monitoring and adjusting, as teachers continuously adapt their teaching repertoire to incorporate new research-supported strategies and adapt those strategies to the given needs of the individual students who flow through their classrooms, puts teachers in a constant mode of change. To deal with this constancy of change and to be successful in creating a second-order change where needed to achieve learning results for all students, adult learning must also be occurring.

This means that schools must be shaped in ways that foster both student and adult learning. Elmore (2005) reminds, “Shifts in policy improve teaching and learning only if they are accompanied by systematic investments in the knowledge and skills of educators
If teachers must function in a constant mode of change and adaptation, they need work environments characterized by learning and adaptation. For these environments to emerge and thrive at the school level, school systems need to become learning organizations that support the individual school in dealing with being in a constant mode of learning-driven change. Fullan (1993) believes that educational systems becoming learning organizations would require a new mindset. This mindset demonstrates the need for dealing with change as a way of life. Learning organizations must handle change as a normal part of work. School personnel who rise to the challenge of being agents of change need to be recognized and rewarded as they learn and implement best practices at the classroom level. If teachers must become experts at dealing with change as a normal part of their work, schools must be in the business of continuous innovation and change themselves, i.e., learning (Fullan, 1993).

Focus for this Study

Background

The pressure on schools as organizations to provide a state-of-the-art educational environment that responds to diverse individuals is great. Demands from stakeholders such as the government, community, parents, school administration, and students make schools and their teachers more accountable. The high demands put on schools today require different outcomes than previously expected. The stakes are much higher as there are mandates for increased student achievement, increased qualifications for staff, and continual assessments of student and school progress. According to Marzano (2005), in order to get different outcomes as needed by these demands, a deep change is required.
He states, “Deep change alters the system in fundamental ways, offering a dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting” (Marzano, 2005, p. 66). This deep change is a second-order change, or a change that challenges strongly held assumptions, behaviors, and even beliefs.

In the past, school organizations’ success with incremental or first-order change was sufficient. Currently, the demands put upon school organizations require more. The school community must achieve different outcomes as mandated by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Elmore (2005) reminds us that, “this law is unprecedented in the specificity of its requirements on state and local agencies: annual testing in grades three through eight, specific targets for annual yearly progress in student performance, mandates for quality control in hiring of teachers, state and local remedial measures for failing schools, and exit options for parents of children in failing schools” (p. 216). These outcomes, universal proficiency with a rigorous core academic curriculum, are a major shift for an educational system built to deliver universal access to but not universal success with a K-12 education. Moreover, that education has become much more explicitly defined around increasingly more rigorous curriculum standards with the goal of maintaining an educational edge in a global society.

A shift in the expectations of schooling this broad and deep cannot be met with the usual “tinkering around the edge” of school improvement (Tyak & Cuban, 1995). Rather, the shift in expectations represented by NCLB calls for a matching shift in schooling practice, policy, and process. As the impact of this shift trickles down to the classroom, teachers are forced to confront challenges to their basic assumptions about teaching and learning along with pressures to alter their teaching practice. Often this
involves abandoning long-held practices in lieu of new and unfamiliar ones. This is where second-order change knocks at the classroom door.

Second-order change to achieve universal success with a rigorous core curriculum requires a new set of strategies because prevailing classroom practices were not built around such high expectations for all students. Due to decades of classroom based research, teachers now have access to a repertoire of new strategies and practices which offers greater potential for learning success with a broader range of students. Getting those strategies and practices into play at the classroom level, however, is a significant challenge especially in a context where the norm is individual teacher autonomy for day-to-day classroom decisions.

Historically, research has found K-12 organizations to be culturally tight but structurally loose (Lipsky, 1980). The American educational system is built on an assumption of teacher control over the ways and means of classroom instruction. Schools may be organizationally tight around policies and practices outside the classroom, but they are steeped in the tradition of individual teacher control over what happens when the classroom door closes and instruction begins. In wave after of school reform, where a change is initiated from the top, the structural looseness at the bottom of the organization, especially at the classroom level, resists that change. Moreover, when the change is based on a fundamental shift in assumptions about teaching and learning, the challenge of getting that change into practice becomes twofold: change long-held beliefs and assumptions and change long-held practices.

This can help us understand why a particular district may have an outstanding school improvement plan that outlines specific changes in teaching and learning practice,
but in effect, there is little change occurring at the classroom level. The demands put on schools require changes at the classroom level, but teachers hold the key to whether or not changes that support the new expectations of universal proficiency with a rigorous core curriculum actually make it into classroom practice. Since practice is so closely tied to assumptions and beliefs, schools that attempt to make fundamental second-order changes in classroom practice must attend to strongly held teacher belief systems as well as deeply entrenched teacher practices. This requires that teachers be fully engaged in examining their current assumptions and practices and evaluating alternatives.

The engagement of teachers in examining their current assumptions and practices along with evaluating alternatives requires reflective thinking and adult learning. In order to make a deep and necessary second-order change at the classroom level, which meets the demands of a rigorous core curriculum, schools must engage in reflective practice. Through reflective practice, teachers evaluate their current beliefs and assumptions and the opportunity to alter these beliefs presents itself. Teachers engaged in this type of reflective thinking can alter their beliefs which, in turn, can pave the way to alter their current and future classroom practices.

As teachers hold the key in changing practice at the classroom level, creating conditions where teachers have the opportunity to examine their current assumptions and beliefs leading to a possible change in practice becomes necessary. These opportunities can present themselves through professional learning communities. "Professional learning communities set out to restore and increase the passion of teachers by not only reminding them of the moral purpose of their work, but also by creating the conditions that allow them to do that work successfully (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2006).
The professional learning community model is a powerful new way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. It requires hard work and requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement” (Common Ground, 2005, p. 42).

If operating in a professional learning community creates conditions where altering classroom beliefs and practices becomes a reality; it is critical to understand the elements that aid the change to a professional learning environment.

Building upon Previous Research

The elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change present themselves over and over as one studies the literature on the implementation of a planned change. In her literature study, Meister (2000) identifies these elements as areas that provide great insight into the successful implementation of change. Many researchers have studied and identified what it takes to create a successful school (Marzano, 2005; Fullan, 1991; Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2005). Still others have traced the change process in schools through examinations of systems and strategies associated with change and improved student results (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Marzano, 2005; Lipsky, 1980; Senge, 1990; Elmore, 2005). Little work has focused, however, on how teachers, who share the experience of implementing deep systemic change, understand their experience in retrospect once the hard work of implementing the change concludes and the school shifts into a sustaining mode. There may be insights about the process of confronting and changing assumptions, strategies,
and expectations that can only be fully understood after teachers have worked through the process of change and can look back on their experiences.

This study begins by examining the key elements associated with the successful implementation of deep systemic change already articulated in the literature. From there, this research explores how the findings of previous research associated with school change resulting in improved student outcomes compares with the retrospective understanding of teachers who reflect back on their experience with a successful (in terms of raising student achievement) major school improvement change initiative. The current literature on school change offers little understanding of how teachers themselves are changed by the process of working together through a systemic change experience. It could be very instructive to know if and how being a part of such a change process affects future individual teaching practices or perspectives.

This study will use the findings of major elements associated with systemic change that results in improved student outcomes – vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and assessment of change (Meister, 2000) – as a lens for comparing teachers' retrospective understanding of their experiences as implementers of a major change initiative at the school level. In doing so, we are looking for additional understanding of those elements associated with deep, systemic change and any additional aspects of teachers' experiences that may not be reflected in the findings of previous studies.

Additionally, this study is interested in the issue of transfer. By understanding more about how teachers experience the change process and translate that experience into alterations of their teaching beliefs and practices, we might gain insights on how to build
school cultures that both sustain and continuously regenerate change driven by a continuous improvement ethic (Fullan, 1993). Currently, the literature stops short of fully examining the issue of how teachers who work through deep, systemic change connect that experience with changes in how they understand and go about their work as teachers. Better understanding those connections could provide clues on how a school can build upon one successful implementation of a systemic change initiative to generate and sustain a continuous renewal and improvement culture.

*Conceptual Frame*

Teacher perceptions and experiences with change are critical in evaluating factors associated with a deep, systemic change. If successful systemic change is what the high demands for improved student outcomes require; then schools must transform themselves into places where both adults and children see themselves as capable learners and conditions allow for and foster deep or second-order change (Marzano, 2005; Fullan, 2001). Teachers will either reject or embrace change depending upon how that change affects them and how they are experiencing the change process in their work environment. Fullan (2001) reminds us that “Significant educational change consists of changes in beliefs, teaching style, and materials, which can come about only through a process of personal development in a social context” (p. 124). “In an indirect sense, teachers need to increase their capacity for dealing with change because, if they don’t, they are going to continue to be victimized by the relentless intrusion of external change forces” (Fullan, 2001, p. 123.). Because the changes that teachers are being asked to
make challenge their basic assumptions about teaching, learning, and students, the work to address both the personal and social side of the change context are mutually important.

When we discuss second-order change which happens at the classroom level, it is important to recognize that innovation is multidimensional (Fullan, 2001). When discussing educational change, Fullan (2001) describes at least three components that are at stake in implementing any new program policy. Fullan refers to the possible use of new teaching materials, the possible use of new teaching approaches and the possible alteration of beliefs as the three components. Fullan reminds us that all three aspects are necessary in the achievement of a specific educational goal. His point is logical and supports this research in that the change has to occur in practice along the three dimensions in order for it to have a chance of affecting the outcome. As the expectations of NCLB remain strong; a change in practice is non-negotiable. Therefore, a different outcome requires attention at the classroom level.

If the expectation for schools is a changed or expanded outcome, then most schools will need to undertake second-order level changes; i.e., they will need to approach this challenge with fundamentally new strategies or changes in practice that are a significant departure from previous and prevailing practice (Marzano, 2005). Those who must implement these new practices and adapt to the new norms of operation (usually and predominantly teachers and principals) are likely to find themselves ill-equipped to automatically make the necessary shifts in order to adopt new practices and form new system norms (Marzano, 2005). This triggers the need to address adult learning in an intentional way if that learning is going to help those who must change, make the necessary alterations in their knowledge, assumptions, practices, and behaviors
to implement new strategies (Cohen & Ball, 2006; Elmore, 2005). The process of adults learning new practices, new methods, new technologies, new materials, and adopting new assumptions often causes those same adults to confront beliefs associated with the ways they have always conceived and carried out their roles and responsibilities in the schooling process. Argris and Schon (1974) examine two types of adult learning that are associated with changes in practice and differentiate that learning into two types: single-loop and double-loop learning. While single-loop learning is useful in the process of making refinements or enhancements to prevailing practices, double-loop learning will expand an individual’s view of the world while adding new strategies (as cited in Marzano, 2005, p. 67). New strategies are critical to having a second-order change.

The reality of schools being in a constant state of change, and also being responsible for the success of all learners, creates a worthwhile case to gain an understanding of the sense making process that teachers go through when new practices are implemented in schools. Kelchtermans (2005) reminds us

Emotion and cognition, self and context, ethical judgment and purposeful action: they are all intertwined in the complex reality of teaching. In times of educational reforms, aimed at changing teaching practices for the better, these complexities are brought to light even more prominently” (p. 996).

Teacher emotions are embedded in their practice.

Teachers feel-often passionately- about their pupils, about their professional skill, about their colleagues and the structures of schooling, about their dealing with other significant adults such as parents and inspectors, about the actual or likely effect of educational policies upon their pupils and themselves” (Nias, 1996)

So, not only do teachers experience new learning; but as a profession, there are emotional ties which need to be understood when examining the change process.
Problem

A successful educational change in the organization is not a simple task. There are many factors associated with change. Fullan (2001) wrote about research that describes successful improvements and identifies the small number of key variables that emerge. Fullan (2001) also states, however, “intrinsic dilemmas in the change process, coupled with the intractability of some factors and the uniqueness of individual settings, make successful change a highly complex and subtle social process” (p. 71). The challenge, then, becomes one of navigating both the subtleties and complexities associated with change in ways that are responsive to the given context.

There is much research to identify the types of change in classroom practice that are associated with raising student achievement. There is also a general set of factors or conditions that research has linked to the successful implementation of change, especially second-order change, in school settings. There is still a need for more understanding; however, about how teachers experience the process of abandoning long-held practices, assumptions, and beliefs in favor of new ones that align better with new research-supported best teaching practices and if their experience with this has any influence on their individual or collective perspective or practice years later. There is a need to understand how a teacher articulates a change process experience, in retrospect, with consideration of the sense making that might have occurred. It is particularly significant to develop an understanding of how teachers connect one successful change experience to their practice or perspectives on teaching once change process has concluded and they
shift into sustaining the change and looking forward to other potentially necessary changes.

As improving educational outcomes become firmly rooted in the national education agenda, it is safe to project that schools and their teachers will be required to be in a constant mode of change. Change is hard and costly work, and schools that find ways to leverage one successful change experience into greater capacity for tackling the next change will have an advantage. One way to support this capacity building is to develop a better understanding of how much influence being a part of one successful change process has on how teachers understand their work and how future classroom practices are shaped. When considering the high demands put on teachers through state and federal policy initiatives that drive change, it is safe to assume that teachers will most likely be working in a constant mode of change for some time to come.

Understanding that this kind of change keeps people in a constant state of active learning and emotional upheaval (Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 1993), it is reasonable to expect that participation in a deep successful change process will have a profound effect on a teacher’s perspective and practice even years later. By examining any lasting effects that being part of a successfully implemented change process has on how teachers understand and practice their professional practice, we can begin to better understand if the same elements associated by previous research with creating the conditions for change translate into a sustainable culture for change in an ongoing way. After a successful implementation has taken place and time passes, do the teachers carry with them any evidence of being part of such a deep change? Do the elements of shared vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and assessment emerge as the frame
for how teachers understand their experience with deep, second-order change long after they have concluded the work of implementing the change, and do these elements become significant in teachers’ ongoing professional perspectives and practices?

Schools need to understand how teachers actually process and adapt to pressures for change and how they work through the experience of shifting their paradigms and practices to achieve different results with students. This understanding is important because, in a post modern society, continuous change is the norm rather than the exception. Teachers will likely need to be in a constant mode of undertaking and working through new systemic change initiatives as they aim for the next level of improved results for students. Better understanding of how teachers internalize one change experience could provide guidance for how teachers can use what they learned from that experience to facilitate the next one.

In gaining a better understanding of how teachers perceive and adjust to a change in classroom practice and beliefs, school systems can be better prepared to provide their schools with the leadership and support needed for those schools to successfully prepare students for a world where change is constant and dealing with change forces is pervasive. In addition, as a deeper understanding of teacher perception of the change process and how they make sense of it is gained, schools and school leaders can gain insight on how to provide the support necessary to insure that targeted change strategies are successfully drilled down to and carried out at the classroom level in ways that lead to full incorporation into the norms of classroom practice.

We know that previous research has identified factors that are often associated with successful implementation of deep or second-order change, but we do not know how
the five elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change are actually experienced by the adults involved in major systemic change processes in schools or how these adults would connect their experience with their perspective or practice years later. We do not know if any of these factors surface from the teachers themselves as they make sense of a change implementation that they have experienced and reflect on the influence it may have had on their future practices. Further, we do not fully understand how these factors interact with one another in actual school change processes. Finally, we do not know if there are other elements of teachers’ actual experiences with the change process that previous research has not identified.

There is an abundance of research identifying the elements needed for a successful change, but that research often looks at the change as it is unfolding or at the end of the process from observations made from the outside looking in. Such studies can be limited in offering explanations of the interaction’s various elements they identify as associated with change. They can also be limited by the lack of retrospection by those who were a part of the change implementation. Retrospection can offer insights that are often missed by looking at an experience in a more immediate way (Creswell, 1998). Observing change as it unfolds can be a reliable source of understanding “just what is going on,” but retrospection can be a more powerful way of understanding how people are actually changed by being part of a deep systemic change experience. Better understanding of this aspect of change can be important because teachers hold the power to resist or implement and sustain new strategies at the classroom level.

How teachers see themselves as professionals, understand their work, and shape their practice are significant factors in their response to change (Elmore, 2005). The study
of the change process through retrospective reflections of teachers is needed to better understand the dynamics between the teachers and the five elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change. There is a need to better understand how teachers make sense of the change process in retrospect and determine whether these elements of change are identified by the teachers. There is a need to examine a successful implementation of a change after the complete change process has occurred if we are to gain an understanding of exactly what a teacher attributes the change to or how a teacher makes sense of the entire process. An understanding of this is critical if we are to create sustainable cultures where teachers initiate and carry out successful, second-order change to meet the great demands put on school systems today as part of their paradigm of practice.

**Study Purpose**

Research outlines the many critical elements that are needed for implementing change. The elements of having a clear vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and assessment of change are articulated quite clearly in the literature. This study will engage teachers to reflect back on the “street level” (Lipsky, 1980) attributes of a successful second-order change experience. It is important to understand how teachers make sense, after the fact, of their experience implementing change, as they are such critical players in ensuring a second-order change process translates into sustainable new ways of achieving better results with students.

This case study will examine the process of a successful second-order change through the eyes of the teachers who lived the change firsthand. The lens of vision,
collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change (Meister, 2000) will serve as a frame for comparing how teachers make sense of their change experience in retrospect and the elements isolated in previous research with facilitating the actual change process. By soliciting and analyzing retrospective descriptions of teachers’ personal and group experiences through the change process, this study will shed some additional light on the change process from the perspective of those who were involved at “street level” (Lipsky, 1980) as they understand that experience five years after the change reached sustainable implementation. Since most of the second-order change strategies employed in K-12 school reform involve deep changes at the level where teachers interact with one another and with their students, it is important to better understand how teachers internalized their experiences with making fundamental changes to their teaching technologies, their work habits, their professional culture, and their interactions with students.

Through engaging the teachers who have previously worked through a significant change process in a case study school, this study seeks to find the missing pieces that explain more about the experiences teachers go through in the change process and how those experiences might relate to the factors that previous research have associated with successful change. Specifically, this study will look for ways that teachers who were part of implementing a systemic change in a case study district years ago make sense of their experiences with that change five years later, and how they account for their success in implementing the change. Additionally, this study will explore if and how teachers’ experiences with that change process are associated with how they see themselves as teachers and how their teaching practices today are shaped. With the insights gained
from examining lived experience in retrospect, this study hopes to fill in some of the gaps in understanding how some of the conditions shown by previous research to accompany successful second-order change actually evolve and how they might be associated with professional perspective and practice years later.

**Research Questions**

The literature suggests that there are five key areas to look at when trying to explain successful implementation of change. The areas of (a) vision building, (b) collaboration, (c) professional development, (d) administrative support and leadership, and (e) assessment of the continuance of change are all important when looking at an implementation of change (Meister, 2000). Literature also suggests that teachers’ emotions are linked to implementation of new policy or practices (Kelchtermann, 2005).

This case study will look at teachers who worked through a deep, systemic change process in their school years ago, and how they characterized the process of working through and adapting to that change. The research questions seek to identify how teachers internalize the key experiences associated with implementation of the balanced literacy program in the case study school. At the conclusion of the study, the results will be analyzed in terms of the dynamic interaction between the five factors suggested by Meister or other factors not identified in the literature associated with the actual change process as described by the teachers in the case study school. This research will look to see if the same five key areas that are identified in the literature as being critical, surface; and if they do, in what combination and with what interactions. This study seeks to learn how teachers’ retrospective understanding of their experience with the change process
relate to or extend beyond each of the five factors; what their remembered experiences suggest about the interaction between the five factors, and how they played out in the case study change process. Additionally, this study seeks to examine any lasting effect the change experience may have had on teachers in terms of how they see themselves as teachers and shape their teaching practices years later. As the researcher, I will look to see if this case study can expand upon the literature on shaping second-order change by identifying themes and patterns in the actual experiences of the teachers who were major players in an actual case of successful second-order change.

To capture the essence of the actual change process in the case study school from the perspective of the teachers who lived through and effected that change, this study raises the following research questions:

1) How do the teachers, who participated in a school-wide literacy change initiative over several years, process their own personal experience with the change?
   a. What new learning do they describe?
   b. What changes in assumptions or beliefs do they describe?
   c. What changes in actual practice do they describe?
   d. How do they describe the way these changes unfolded for them?

2) Reflecting back on the change process, what major elements of that process do teachers describe and how do they connect those elements with their own personal change?

3) Eight years later, what lasting effect, if any, has being a part of this change process affected their professional life today? What, if any, impact has this had on their sense of their work and their practice?
By getting teachers to tell the story, in retrospect, of a deep, systemic change process around implementing the balanced literacy program, this study seeks to better understand the key elements associated with the change process and how those elements relate to characteristics of systemic change. This study also seeks to understand the implications of teacher sense-making throughout the change process and determine any impact on teachers’ perspective or professional practice years later.

**Rationale**

Given the complexity of educational change, the implementation of a balanced literacy program at the case study school cannot be studied as a simple list of critical factors. Fullan advises that we not think of factors in isolation; rather, they form a system of variables that interact to determine success or failure. Through a better understanding of the dynamic interactions between factors as experienced by teachers, this study could provide greater insight into the systemic processes in play and how those processes evolved into a sustainable and successful second-order change at the classroom level. By doing this research in a retrospective light, the participants can respond to the entire change implementation process. They can examine their whole experience and describe how it occurred and how they were able to make sense of it. Participants will also be able to describe any impact that being a part of that change process has had on them today.

Given that much of the lack of impact on student achievement associated with school improvement and school reform has been related to the lack of implementation (Reeves, 2004), better understanding of the systemic process of getting to full
implementation of a targeted change could provide useful guidance to teachers and principals who are beginning to shape their own implementation process around an important change targeting improved student achievement. Further, an examination of how teachers are themselves changed by working through a successful implementation of a systemic change initiative may yield clues on how future change efforts can build upon previous ones. Complete implementation can only be described after it has occurred; therefore, a retrospective look at this change to balanced literacy is appropriate.

This case study may serve as an example to the educational community of how various elements associated with the successful implementation of second-order change are processed and internalized by those teachers who lived and worked through the change process. The insights gained from this study may be useful in beginning to understanding how schools can use one successful second-order change experience to build the capacity for future change initiatives. Because the literature is replete with examples of how mandated or top-down change runs into roadblocks at “street-level”, the field will benefit from better understanding how teachers take charge of change, work through that change together, and make sense of their experiences at a point where a significant change becomes embedded in the culture and practice of the school. This study may also help understand how the five elements associated with facilitating a change process convert or translate into ongoing school practices and ongoing understanding about the work of change.
Overview of Study Methodology

The methodology for this research is qualitative. Qualitative research can reveal how all parts work together to form a whole (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). This research uses a critical case study, from a historical perspective, and was chosen because of its potential to “…yield the most information and have the greatest impact in the development of knowledge” (Patton, 1987, p. 55). The descriptive nature of a case study is appropriate for this research because it will better enable the researcher to discover the interactions of the critical elements of change within the context of the situation. The qualitative approach will allow the researcher to gather data, discover themes, and possibly make generalizations based on the themes. This will be done through the eyes of those who lived the change and made sense of their experience years later. The rich stories, and recreation of their experiences, as explained by the people involved with the change will offer insight as to what they describe as being important to the implementation of the planned change and how they make sense of the change years later.

The data will be gathered through focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written personal narratives. All data will be triangulated to ensure validity. Sanders (as cited in Merriam) writes, “Case studies help us to understand the processes of events, projects, and programs and to discover context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object” (p. 33). This critical case study of the implementation to balanced literacy, from a historical perspective, will be a reconstruction of the teachers’ experience of the entire change process and how they make sense of it now, which will help in addressing the above research questions.
Study Limitations and Delimitations

This study has the delimitation of focusing on one individual school’s change experience within a specific area of program and practice, i.e. balanced literacy. The implications of the findings are further limited by the number of staff that from the case study school who serve as participants in study. Because of the in-depth nature of the interview process, participants were selected based on the depth and duration of their involvement in the full change process being studied. A final limitation is the researcher’s involvement in the change at the case study school. The researcher has her own retrospective understanding of the change experience being studied and that understanding could be a factor in both the design and conduct of this study. The researcher’s handling of these limitations will be discussed further in chapter III.

Summary

In summary, the increased demands put on school organizations today require deep change. The expectation of various stakeholders for increased student performance puts schools in a constant mode of change, forever searching for the latest best practice. Many of the practices that support better achievement for students and elimination of achievement gaps require deep, systemic change and new learning. This study is a qualitative case study, from a historical perspective, of one elementary school’s implementation of a deep, systemic change to implement a balanced literacy program. The case was chosen based on the level of implementation of a research-supported set of instructional practices that are fundamentally different from what had been the
instructional norm in the case study school. It examines the entire process of implementing the change in retrospect from the teachers' perspective, studies the characteristics that teachers associate with their experience working through the change process (including the critical elements that current research articulates), explores the interactions among and between those characteristics, and studies the impact that this change process had on individuals' professional practices or perspectives years later.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter I proposes that the current context and objectives of school reform for many schools requires schools to undertake second-order systemic change. This second-order change requires a deep implementation where the pressures for altering beliefs, challenging assumptions, and changing practices knock at the classroom door. In order to best understand what is required of this second-order change type of school reform, it is appropriate to study the literature on undertaking and implementing deep change. In this literature review, I first presented the literature on deep change; then, I presented the conditions that research has associated with deep change. Specifically, I discussed the conditions that most often can be controlled and put strategically in place. Finally, I introduced the role of adult learning and how shaping the process of adult learning could help build the conditions that support deep or fundamental change in the processes that shape teaching and learning.

It was appropriate for this study to look at the implications of adult learning when undertaking the deep, second-order change increasingly associated with true school reform. By definition, second-order change requires a different kind of learning than first-order change. This literature review examines the distinction between the two and the implications for adult learning. When school reform calls for all students to progress
educationally with a rigorous core curriculum and for educators to systematically measure student progress against universal performance standards; many overlapping layers of both first and second-order change are likely to characterize the teaching and learning, leadership, and operations environments. This literature review examined the complexities of dealing with overlapping change and the implications for adult learning in such challenging change environments.

As deep implementation of change was studied, the literature presented the problem of systemic change characterized by fundamental shifts in assumptions, beliefs, and practices; i.e., second-order change. The problem of second-order change which includes a change in assumptions, beliefs and behaviors is that it is situational and highly dependent on the people who have to implement the change (Marzano, 2005). Fullan (2001) reminds us, “changes in beliefs and understanding are the foundation of achieving lasting reform...(but) the real crunch comes in the relationships between the new programs or policies and the thousands of subjective realities embedded in people’s individual and organizational contexts and their personal histories (p. 46). What may be a second-order change for one may be a first-order change for another. This is where conditions cannot necessarily be controlled, but they can be shaped in such a way as to create safety and security for people as they experience the challenges associated with second-order change on an individual or collective level. Marzano (2005) outlined 21 responsibilities of school leaders that must be attended to during the change process that help enable these conditions to be shaped as such. Second-order change in varying degrees across the people and practices of traditional school operations is required if a school is going to meet the increasing demands put upon them by various stakeholders of
universal proficiency with a rigorous core academic curriculum. Thus, the people within the school play a critical role. A clear understanding of second-order change is required as this type of change process is not a simple task.

**Change as a First or Second-Order Process**

We must first briefly examine the change process in general. Change can be implemented in an organization at the surface level or deeply integrated into the way people think, act, and shape the decisions and systems that guide their work. Marzano (2005) explains the change process in two ways; first-order and second-order. Depending on the nature of the change required, it may be a subtle or gradual first-order change, or it might be something more dramatic and drastic which would be a second-order change. First-order change can be incremental refinements or adaptations on current ways of operating (Marzano, 2005). Marzano refers to this type of surface level change as one that may represent the day-to-day changes in procedural or school routines, or it could refer to the many educational movements that are often short-lived and do not result in a deep level of change because they are implemented in a way that does not challenge the status quo.

This first-order type of change will not necessarily challenge a person’s beliefs or assumptions. Marzano (vol. 116, 1995) calls first-order change more psychological in nature, as it assumes that the innovation is assimilated to existing beliefs. Schools are, more and more, in a constant mode of change as they either work to refine prevailing practice or begin adapting to new, more effective and efficient practices. For the most part, the refinement work is first-order change when it aligns with widely held and
systemically embedded practice. Marzano defines a first-order change as a change that does not require altering a person’s beliefs or assumptions or abandoning long-held norms of operation. First-order changes are gradual and do not involve a deep or fundamental change in practice (Marzano, 2005). In developing an understanding of deep implementation of change, one must recognize, however, the overlapping or different realities for different people experiencing the same change stimulus. For one person, the required change may be experienced as first-order change, while for another; the change may be challenging their assumptions, beliefs, and long-held practices, thus placing them in a circumstance where they are working through a second-order change experience. Even in cases where the emphasis is on refining generally prevailing practice, some people who are still not up to speed with the fundamentals of that practice, may find the pressure to align their practice more fundamentally challenging, thus more like second-order change.

Marzano describes second-order change as another form of change process. This is deep change that results in and/or derives from new thinking. This new thinking may require an individual to alter their beliefs, assumptions and practices. Thomas Kuhn (1962) is often credited with this concept of a paradigm shift in which one actually alters their beliefs or assumptions. Marzano states, “Second-order change alters the system in fundamental ways, offering a dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting (p. 65).” This study assumes that schools are in a constant mode of change and that these change processes are either first or second-order. In creating a deep or second-order change, many of those involved with the change will experience a dramatic shift in the assumptions and ideas associated with how they view and are
oriented to their work. Marzano (vol. 116, 1995) states, “this ‘new way of being’ involves 1) experimentation with new paradigms and 2) commitment to selected paradigms.” The shift from universal access of schools to schools being held accountable for universal proficiency is dramatic, and therefore is likely to set up conditions for teachers and school leaders to encounter second-order change as they adapt their thinking and practice to support the new expectations.

In order to do something that has never been done before, school systems may need to discover new strategies and ways to impact student learning. This also includes new learning and new thinking by the adults involved which may then impact all aspects of the school operations down to day-to-day instruction at the classroom level. This second-order type of change almost always requires new learning and, in some cases, “unlearning,” if schools are going to rise to the challenges put before them. In essence, adapting the practices and operations of a school in fundamental ways to get fundamentally different results, must often be preceded or complimented by equally fundamental changes in the beliefs and assumptions people carry into their work and draw upon to carry out their work.

With both first and second-order change, new learning will occur. Argyris and Schon differentiate between the different types of change through single-loop and double-loop learning (1974). When an organization uses the same strategies from the past to approach a new problem, it can require single-loop learning to either refine, perfect, or slightly alter the way those strategies are applied to the given context. If one of the existing strategies works, it reinforces its value. This is similar to trial and error of already used strategies until something proves successful. This single-loop learning is
common in first-order change. Argyris and Schon (1974) explain, “In single-loop learning, we learn to maintain the field of constancy by learning to design actions that satisfy existing governing variables. In double-loop learning, we learn to change the field of constancy itself” (p. 19).

Double-loop learning takes place when no existing strategy has been successful in solving the problem. With the shift from universal educational access to universal proficiency in our educational system, double-loop learning becomes a necessity wherever people are attempting to deploy new strategies that are a significant departure from business as usual. This double-loop learning goes hand in hand with supporting second-order change as schools shift to the new reality that universal proficiency is a new expectation. Argyris and Schon suggest that such problems or challenges need to be conceptualized differently. New strategies must be created or discovered. “Double-loop learning, then, expands an organization’s view of the world while adding new strategies to an organization’s repertoire (Marzano, 2005, p. 67).” The use of these new strategies include new learning on the part of the teacher, who is the person implementing a change at the classroom level.

In today’s accountability environment with high stakes associated with fundamentally different expectations, schools and the educators who serve them are stretched to change at rates and in ways they have not previously experienced. Elmore (2005) states, “Schools simply cannot do what they are being asked to do without more explicit and powerful guidance and support for instructional practice and without major changes in investments in knowledge and skill for educational practitioners” (p. 217). As a result, not only will a classroom teacher be involved with single-loop learning and first-
order change; the teacher will also be involved with double-loop learning and second-order change. Patricia Sikes (1992) writes that when we implement a change on teachers, "...it is not a one-way process, for the implementation of change is influenced by the teachers' ideologies: in other words, by the beliefs and values, the bodies of ideas which they hold about education, teaching, the school-process in particular and life in general" (p. 38). Deep change will require a school system to examine their current beliefs, assumptions and practice and make necessary changes to rise to the challenges that school reform has put before them. Managing the overlapping layers of both first and second-order change as it relates to the people involved is critical as deep implementation of change is made. As current school reform requires success for all learners, it is imperative that school systems engage in continuous school improvement that will impact classroom instruction.

As double-loop learning is indicative of second-order change, new strategies associated with the new learning need to be fully incorporated at the classroom level. The learning and implementation of these new strategies by the classroom teacher often challenges the teacher's already existing beliefs on instruction. "Double-loop learning changes the governing variables of one's programs and causes ripples of change to fan out over one's whole system of theories-in-use" (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 19). As a teacher learns the new strategy and attempts to implement it; she must also attend to the underlying rationale, assumptions, beliefs, and purposes associated with that strategy in order to internalize both why and how the strategy is to be implemented.

This understanding of the overarching rationale, premises, and purpose may challenge the teacher's beliefs and practice. Fullan (2001) states,
The use of new materials by themselves may accomplish certain educational objectives, but it seems obvious that developing new teaching skills and approaches and understanding conceptually what and why something should be done, and to what end, represents much more fundamental change, and as such will take longer to achieve but will have a greater impact once accomplished (p. 44).

Fullan (2001) referenced McLaughlin and Mitra's unpublished work that drew a similar conclusion when they studied three innovations in which they studied what it would take to achieve deep reform. "The experiences of these three theory-based reforms underscore the point that the relevant 'it' that needs to be embedded in practice is not the particular activity structures, materials or routines of a reform but rather the first principles" (Fullan, 2001). To initiate deep change, teachers must gain an understanding of the principles of the intended change first. Fullan concludes that changes in beliefs and understanding are the foundation of achieving lasting reform.

Teachers are at the heart of implementing lasting school reform and when they understand the principles behind the reform, the odds of them incorporating them into their own belief system may be greater. Tyack and Cuban suggest teachers will make an imprint on educational policy as it becomes translated into practice (1995). If improvement comes from the inside out rather than top down, teachers can adjust their beliefs and understandings based on their experiences.

Lipsky uses the term "street-level bureaucrats" to refer to public service workers, such as teachers, who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work (1980). These street-level bureaucrats are a key factor when implementing a deep system change. As Tyak and Cuban (1995) state, "As 'street-level bureaucrats,' teachers typically have sufficient
discretion, once the classroom doors close, to make decisions about pupils that add up
over time to de facto policies about instruction, whatever the official regulations” (p.
135). Therefore, as school reform calls for universal access and universal success for all
students, systemic deep change must occur in which teachers may need to alter their
beliefs and assumptions and change classroom practice.

Just as it is important to develop an understanding of deep, second-order change
and the types of learning that may accompany it; it is also important to gain an
understanding of the conditions that support a successful implementation. These are
conditions that the literature suggests be in place in an organization that is attempting to
implement a deep, systemic second-order change. The next section of this review will
look specifically at conditions that support the double-loop learning that supports deep
implementation of fundamental or second-order changes in the system and translates to
altered practice.

Examining School Level Elements Associated with Implementation of Second-Order
Change

In order to fully understand what the literature says about deep implementation of
deep, systemic change, we must examine and build background knowledge on the
conditions that can be controlled at the school level and put in place for successful
implementation of a change. These areas include vision building, collaboration,
professional development, administrative support and leadership, and assessment for the
continuance of change. The literature suggests that these five areas provide insights into
successful implementation of change (Meister, 2000). This chapter will provide details
and support from the many experts of these five areas. Change is complex and requires a narrow focus in order to thoroughly develop an understanding and seek support as it relates to this particular research.

*Shared Vision*

As an organization attempts to implement change or reform, a shared vision becomes important. Fullan (1991) stated that vision building “permeates the organization with values, purpose, and integrity for both the what and how of improvement” (p. 81). Senge (1990) wrote that personal visions are the precursor to a shared vision. He discusses that an organizational leader should encourage individuals to create their own personal visions. As individuals develop their personal visions, they have a strong sense of commitment and motivation to their personal vision. “People with a strong sense of personal direction can then join together to create a powerful synergy toward what we truly want” (Senge, 1990, p. 211). These individuals can then come together, bring their own individual ideas and merge together. This allows for common or shared vision. According to Senge, when a group of people come to share a vision for an organization, each person sees his own picture of the organization at its best. Therefore, each individual is operating at his fullest potential.

As Roland Barth (1990) wrote about improving schools, he focused on the improvement coming from within the organization. This is similar to how a vision comes from within. Barth (1990) states, “the character and quality of schools will dramatically improve when, and if, those who work in schools – teachers, students, parents, and administrators – come in touch with one another, with their personal visions, and with the
way they would like their schools to be, and then take deliberate steps to move toward them” (p. 158).

Many researchers find a consistent relationship between the presence of a vision and the effectiveness of the school. These visions are those of the teachers and principals. Joan Lipsitz (1984) concluded that “extracting effective school practices from one setting and replicating them elsewhere may make a bad school mediocre. To become a good school requires a change in vision from within.” (p. 216). Barth (1990) also cited a study done in 1980 by Blumberg and Greenfield. After studying eight very good but very different elementary school principals, they concluded that each had a noble, clear, and realistic vision for their schools. The existence of a shared vision is critical for implementing school reform. As Barth (1990) states, “one reason to honor the visions of school people, then, is that these are the prescriptions for school reform that have the best chance to be taken seriously, enacted, and sustained by teachers and principals” (p. 150).

“A shared vision is a shared image of what you desire your school to look like in the future” (Wallace, Engel, & Mooney, 1997 as cited in Roberts & Pruitt). Deep change can occur around the shared vision and drive the change. Robert and Pruitt (2003) state, “as educators collaboratively engage in conversation and deliberate about teaching and learning, they gain new knowledge and discover original ways to resolve instructional issues. In the process, they develop a shared vision and strengthen their ability to achieve the vision that they want for their schools” (p. 20). These original ways constitute a second-order change.

This case study examines the implementation of a school-wide balanced literacy initiative involving both first and second-order changes for staff, students, parents, and
administration. The case allows for a close examination of the issues that the literature associates with deep implementation of second-order change. The investigation will look at the issue of vision from the perspective of teachers and determine how they understand the vision, how they were or were not involved in the formation of the vision, and the way they link the vision with their day-to-day decisions and actions.

We know that the literature stresses the importance of clarity of vision, broad ownership of vision, and congruence between vision and practice. What we do not fully understand is how teachers utilize vision in making sense of their work collectively and individually. We also do not know how teachers relate vision with situations where implementation of the change initiative conflicts with their long-held assumptions, beliefs, and practices. In short, previous studies have isolated shared vision as a critical factor associated with deep implementation of second-order change, but further study is needed to get greater clarity on how teachers achieve collective shared vision and use it to work through the challenges associated with implementing fundamental change.

Collaboration

The literature on implementation of change also suggests that collaboration among individuals is significant and a condition that needs to be present when implementing systemic change. Teaching can be very isolating if opportunities for collaboration are not available. As people work together, they develop understandings. Fullan (1991) uses the term "interactive professionalism" to describe how teachers respond to change. Fullan talks about social learning and the fact that interaction is at the base of it. It is with the interaction of others that people learn new patterns of behavior.
Often times, teachers are at the receiving end of mandated change. Important decisions are made that directly affect teachers; yet they are excluded from making them. Barth (1990) suggests that this creates feeling of inefficacy and isolation. Stoll (as cited in Meister, 2000) goes on to say that when this happens, teachers find it even more difficult to imagine collaborating with others. Gray (1989) reports that the most compelling evidence about leaving stakeholders out of the decision-making process is that they are the ones with the power to implement the decisions. Without teacher buy-in, one has to wonder whether successful change is possible. Fullan (1991) elaborates on the personal development that needs to occur in a social context. A significant change requires changes in beliefs, teaching style and materials. A school or organization needs to offer new opportunities for teachers to relate to one another. Maeroff (1993) confirms that changing the school atmosphere will depend on altering the informal rules by which teachers relate to one another. Mike Schmoker (2005) referenced Judith Little when discussing school improvement. “Little brought professional privacy to the forefront and exposed improvement’s best friend: The right kind of collegiality and collaboration…” (p. 41). The literature suggests that the notion of teachers working in isolation needs to change.

Working within a group can become a powerful thing in creating change. Wideen (1992) wrote that people will get inspired and find their identity within the group. He also comments on certain norms, beliefs, expectations and support that are created to allow for risk-taking during the implementation of change. Collegiality has to do with the extent to which teachers and principals share common work values, engage in specific conversation about their work, and help each other engage in the work of the school
(Little, 1981). Fullan (1991) argues that schools that have norms of collegiality and experimentation are far more likely to implement new ideas successfully. The energy that group work can generate was supported by Grimmett and Crehan (as cited in Meister, 2000). They found that it was not just the teamwork that created the willingness to attempt new endeavors, but the joint action that emerged from the group’s purposes and obligations as they shaped their shared tasks and outcomes. In summation, Barth (1990) argued that teachers working in any kind of team are given a built-in support system.

Little (1981) defined collaboration as the presence of four specific behaviors in adults: (a) they talk about practice; (b) they observe each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration; (c) they work together planning, designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum; and (d) they share craft knowledge. Gray (1989) went on to explain that collaboration is successful if the new solutions that emerged could not have been envisioned or enacted by one person. She proposed five critical features for the stakeholders: (a) they are interdependent; (b) they solve differences by dealing with difference constructively; (c) they share ownership over all decisions; (d) they share collective responsibility for the future direction of the domain; and (e) they view collaboration as an emergent process, not a temporary state.

Rick DuFour has many published books and articles where he discusses professional learning communities. At the heart of a professional learning community is collaboration. Professional learning communities can be defined as a group of educators who embrace learning, work collaboratively to help all students learn, use formative assessments and focus on results, and assume individual responsibility to create such
schools. These educators are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2006).

As this case study calls for an examination of the conditions needed for implementing the deep change to a school-wide balanced literacy program, collaboration among the staff will be examined. The literature suggests that working together as a professional learning community supports collaboration. We also know that teachers working in isolation do not have the same supportive network that teachers within a group have. Literature suggests that teamwork provides the support needed to take risks while implementing a deep change. Energy is created through collaboration and new solutions generated collectively rather than individually. As the investigation takes place from the perspective of the teachers and individuals who lived through the change, it will be interesting to see how they articulate opportunities for collaboration and if they articulate collaboration as being a valued condition of successful change. Further study is needed on collaboration as it is described by the teachers or staff involved directly with the implementation of a second-order change. We need to know if collaboration is a valued condition of successful second-order change by the people involved with the change. We also to know how teachers involved would describe the collaborative efforts and their usefulness as the implementation of a successful change took place.

Professional Development

The literature also suggests that professional development is a key condition for the systemic implementation of change in an organization. Bohlman and Deal (1991)
wrote that change creates feelings of incompetence and insecurity because it takes away people’s ability to perform their work with confidence and success. Professional development becomes important to encourage feelings of competence. Fullan (1991) also suggested that the unlearning of old ways is underestimated as teachers learn these new skills and that changes in beliefs, practice, and methods represent profound changes that affect teachers’ professional self-development. Huberman and Miles (1984) added that in the early stages of implementing change, people must think that the needs being addressed are pertinent and that they are making progress toward meeting them. Barth (1990) wrote that most school districts operate from a “deficit” model of adult growth. This type of staff development includes workshops presented by outsiders and doesn’t create much, if any change in practice. Typically, these types of workshops do not include group work. However, professional development can be a way to begin successful organizational change.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) stated four major elements that need to be understood about teacher development. First is the teacher’s purpose. These are the things that teacher’s value and view as important to their teaching. They believe certain things will work while other things will not work. Staff development must acknowledge and respect the teacher’s voice. A community needs to be created that allows staff to develop their purposes and goals through discussion. The second is a teacher as a person. Each teacher is an individual who is at a certain stage of their career, age and gender. Third is the real world context in which teachers work. Teachers come from different grade levels and different subject areas. Fourth is the culture of teaching. The working relationships that teachers have with colleagues inside and outside of school are an
element of teacher development. Purpose, person, context, and culture can be understood and addressed by conceptualizing teacher development more thoroughly, which means allowing teachers to voice their concerns, work out their differences, and collaborate for fuller understanding (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

This literature suggests that professional development will only become a staple in the professional lives of teachers when schools become places where teachers learn formally and informally on a daily basis; when professional development promotes self understanding; and when risk taking is promoted (Maeroff, Hargreaves, Fullan, & Barth). To ensure against top-down mandates, Joyce and Showers (1995) wrote that programs such as peer coaching to practice and take risks with each other when implementing new practice. They also suggest that this could build a community of teachers who continuously engage in the study of their craft, develop a shared language and common understanding that is necessary for collaborative study of new practices. According to Fullan (1991), professional development work is critical during the implementation stage of change. It is when people are trying new approaches that they have the most concerns and doubts. Fullan elaborated:

Need, clarity, and the personal benefit/cost ratio must be favorable on balance at some point relatively early in implementation. Ambivalence about whether the change will be favorable is nearly always experienced before the change is attempted. It is only by trying something that we can really know if it works. The problem is compounded because first attempts are frequently awkward, not providing a fair test of the idea. Support during initial trials is critical for getting through the first stages, as is some form of progress. (p. 129)

As teachers begin to implement changes in practice, they are only one step ahead of their students and sometimes managing time and students is difficult (Hord et al., 1987).
Teachers need opportunities to be grouped together so they can discuss issues and problems with a knowledgeable leader who can provide the technical assistance as well as support.

Professional learning communities provide a structure for professional development to take place. DuFour, DuFour and Eaker suggest a shift from external short-term trainings and individual learning to job-embedded learning. An expectation that learning is ongoing through a collaborative team process is assumed. Professional learning communities work on team-based action research and learn by doing. Roland Barth stated, "A most fundamental best practice in a professional learning community is to promote the qualities and dispositions of insatiable, lifelong learning in every member of the school community (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, p. 118). Dennis Sparks is an advocate for job-embedded staff development; he argues for schools to be organized into professional learning communities in which staff members learn from one another as part of their routine work practices (p. 154). Michael Fullan stated, "structured collegiality was richly connected to a litany of benefits — from job satisfaction to getting results (p. 144)." Experts agree that professional development is critical to implementing a change in practice. Many suggest that working together in a professional learning community is the most effective approach.

As discussed above, quality professional development is another important condition as the implementation of change gets underway. Lambert (2003) defined professional development, "to include learning opportunities that can be found in collegial conversations, coaching episodes, shared decision-making groups, reflective journals, parent forums, or other such occasions" (p. 22). Literature supports professional
development as needed to encourage feelings of competence. We know that when new practice is being implemented, teachers’ needs must be met as the new skills they are learning may challenge their assumptions, beliefs or practices. Professional development that promotes risk taking and where teachers see the benefits outweighing the cost are most successful. This study will examine the teacher’s point of view regarding professional development in relation to the other elements of change and its significance to the successful change itself. We need to know how teachers, who have gone through a deep, systemic second-order change, describe professional development as it relates to the implementation of school-wide balanced literacy. Further study is needed to realize the extent that professional development figures in the experiences of teachers who work through to deep implementation of a second-order change. We also need to know the various forms of professional development teachers associate with helping them work to a full and successful implementation of a second-order change strategy. We need to know if and how teachers utilized professional development as a condition of change during the implementation stages of balanced literacy.

Administrative Support and Leadership

Research shows that administrative support and leadership play an important role in implementing change and is a condition that can be controlled when implementing a change. The district administrator is the single most important person for setting the expectations and the tone of the change pattern within the local school district (Fullan, 1991). This is set at the time of implementation. Huberman and Miles (1984) stated that the adopted change will not be implemented on any scale unless the central staff provides
advocacy by maintaining a serious commitment to change, exerting direct influence, using its power to protect the innovation from opportunistic adaptation, and supplying a steady flow of support. They go on to say that building support, usually by the principal is critical even if he or she does not play an active role in the change. In his work with outstanding teachers, Maeroff (1993) reported that these teachers attribute their success in part to a supportive and understanding principal. These teachers feel safe in taking risks because their principals do not condemn failure when it is connected to a sincere effort to change. On the other side, Lieberman and Miller (as cited in Meister, 2000) stated that teachers who knew their principals as punishing or critical will not take risks. Through research, Wideen (1992) concluded that the foundation that supported change was the principal’s attitude toward professionalism and a vision of a better education for children.

Robertson (as cited in Meister, 2000) described several general characteristics of a good principal: negotiates solutions to problems, uses collegial management styles, takes risks, generates warmth and caring, has low personal control needs, juggles multiple priorities with ease, and puts relationships first. Collegiality in a school is supported by the behaviors of the principal. Little (as cited in Barth, 1990, p. 33) identified these behaviors as: (a) states expectations explicitly for cooperation among teachers, (b) models collegiality, (c) rewards collegiality by granting release time, recognition, space, materials, or funds to teachers who work as colleagues, (d) protects teachers who initially engage in collegial behavior and risking the retribution of their fellow teachers. Fullan (2001) stated that leaders will be empowered to deal with complex change when they integrate five core competencies. These competencies include: (a) attending to a broader moral purpose, (b) keeping on top of the change process, (c) cultivating relationships, (d)
sharing knowledge and, (e) setting a vision and context for creating coherence in the organization. Elmore (2005) elaborated on distributed leadership:

...my authority to require you to do something you might not otherwise do depends on my capacity to create the opportunity for you to learn how to do it, and educate me on the process of learning how to do it, so that I become better at enabling you to do it the next time. (p. 69)

As noted earlier, vision is one of the five critical conditions of implementing change. Roberts and Pruitt (2003) “suggest the principal has the express responsibility for taking the lead in creating the shared vision, providing for its refinement, and keeping it alive by continually communicating it to all members of the school community” (p. 30). The principal or other leader must provide ongoing daily attention to the elements that support a learning community. These include a focus on student outcomes, collaborative learning, shared leadership, and the commitment to a common vision.

Robert Marzano’s work identifies 21 responsibilities of a leader important to first-order change with seven of these responsibilities related to second-order change (2005, p. 70). These responsibilities are based on staff perceptions of a change being implemented. These responsibilities are ranked in order according to the relationship with second-order change. They are as follows:

1) Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
2) Optimizer
3) Intellectual stimulator
4) Change agent
5) Monitoring/evaluating
6) Flexibility
7) Ideals/beliefs

A principal should be knowledgeable on how the change or innovation will affect curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Another responsibility is the leader as
optimizer. The principal should be a driving force of the new change and express his belief in it if the staff members embrace it. Intellectual stimulation requires being knowledgeable about the research and theory of the change or innovation. The leader will foster new knowledge through staff readings and discussions. Being the change agent requires the principal to challenge the status quo with no guarantees of success.

Continually monitoring and evaluating the impact of the change is another responsibility of the principal according to Marzano. The final two responsibilities include flexibility, which allows adjustments to be made as the change is being implemented, and the responsibility of the leader in operating in a manner consistent with his ideals and beliefs.

While these responsibilities support second-order change, Marzano’s factor analysis also revealed four responsibilities that were negatively affected by second-order change. They are culture, communication, order, and input. Staff perceptions include the fact that a principal may have to deal with some negative perceptions while seeking a second-order change. The culture may suffer as common language and team spirit may deteriorate. Staff may perceive that communication has deteriorated because of the change or innovation. Order and routine might be compromised as well as the level of input by staff members may deteriorate. Fullan (1993) explains that second-order change is messy. Marzano (2005) states, “to successfully implement a second-order change initiative, a school leader must ratchet up his idealism, energy, and enthusiasm. Additionally, the school leader must be willing to live through a period of frustration and even anger from some staff members” (p. 75).
This case study examines successful implementation to school-wide balanced literacy which involves both first and second-order changes. The close examination of the issues associated with deep implementation of second-order change includes the administrative support and leadership. The literature suggests that the leader needs to be committed to the change and be supportive to those implementing at the classroom level. We know that the leader should protect the initiative and provide safety in risk taking to the individuals involved. Literature supports leaders as those who encourage collegiality and do not condemn those who take risks and fail. This study will closely examine if and how teachers articulate supportive leadership as a critical condition in the implementation of deep second-order change and to what extent. This case study will examine administrative support and leadership from the perspective of the teachers involved at the classroom level and will develop an understanding of what types of support teachers’ value from their leadership. We need to know how those at the “street-level” experience and describe the leadership during the implementation of the deep change and how they see it in relation to the other conditions articulated in the literature as being needed for successful change.

Assessment and Continuance of Change Implementation

As change is implemented in an organization, the literature suggests that the assessment and continuance of the change needs to be monitored and done. When Fullan (1991) discussed implementing a new program, he identified three dimensions: (a) the possible use of new or revised materials, (b) the possible use of new teaching approaches; and (c) the possible alterations of beliefs. A timeline needs to be developed to ensure a
complete implementation. Research suggests that to truly assimilate new practices into
daily classroom practices will take from 18 months to 2 years (Corbett, Dawson, &
Firestone, 1984). Fullan (1991) suggests up to 5 years is required for this to occur.
Fullan talks about change involving both cognitive and behavioral modifications for the
students and the teachers. He ascertains that the assessment must include their reactions
to the change and learning outcomes. Unless the continuing maintenance and assessment
of the change is planned; Havelock (as cited in Meister, 2000) stated that there would not
be as much acceptance when failures occur. Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall
(1987) explained this further:

After teachers start to use a new program or practice, monitoring activity
can be influential in reminding teachers that their attention is required for
the program. It helps teachers recognize that the improvement project is a
priority, that a commitment has been made to it, and that somebody cares
about them, about the change, and how it is occurring in the classrooms.
Monitoring is also a natural complement to consultation/reinforcement in
that it provides valuable data about how individuals are doing and what
their assistance needs might be (p. 77).

Research also shows that there needs to be opportunities for teachers to discuss
the new practices (Corbett, Dawson, & Firestone, 1984). This allows for reinforcement
of the new practices. These discussions give teachers the opportunity to share their
pointed out the advantages to group discussions in monitoring new practices, which
include: (a) less time consuming, (b) increased feelings of safety and allows for risk-
taking, (c) helps the individual move toward a deeper commitment, and (d) legitimizes
feelings of doubt. When Hord et al. (1987) wrote about this refinement period, teacher
recognition, praise, and monitoring of the implementation is valued. This type of
collaboration encourages people at different levels of proficiency to work together as they further the implementation process (Glickman, 1993, p. 79).

The ongoing work of professional learning communities also provides an opportunity for evaluating or monitoring the change in practice. The frequent collaboration by staff members allow for adjustments and improvements to the implementation. Michael Fullan explains that professional learning communities “…dig deeply into learning. They engage in disciplined inquiry and continuous improvement in order to ‘raise the bar’ and ‘close the gap’ of student learning and achievement” (p. 209). The necessity of ongoing meetings to evaluate and monitor the progress of the change is valuable according to many experts.

This case study examines the implementation of a deep second-order change as a process. Literature suggests that monitoring and assessing the change during the implementation supports a successful second-order change implementation. The opportunity for teachers to discuss the new practice and their successes and failures with it, can increase their commitment and focus on the change. This study will examine the implementation process through the eyes of the teacher and investigate how they explain the monitoring and evaluation of the change. This case study will see if and how the teachers themselves attribute the successful implementation to the condition of monitoring and assessing and its possible relation to the other conditions of change. Previous studies have identified the assessment and evaluation of second-order change as a condition of successful implementation. We need to get to a deeper clarity of how those at the “street level” understand the change process and what they articulate as being
significant conditions of monitoring and assessing as strategies to guide the pathway toward successful implementation.

*Implications for Adult Learning*

The literature on what conditions support the implementation of a systemic change in a school identifies various factors that need to be present within the school setting. These are conditions that are created by the people working within the system that may or may not be initiating the change. This act of creation usually involves some form of learning. Even when the people who must implement change have guidance for that work through identified conditions, the actual work of creating those conditions is deeply contextual and deeply personal. With concentrated and collective effort around those identified conditions, whether the factors addressed by this effort are enough to get a given group of people in a given school to deep implementation of fundamental or second-order change is also unknown. The learning and adaptation required for implementation of a major change strategy by any given group of individuals can be so varied that the significance of and interaction between any of the research identified conditions or factors can be entirely different from context to context.

The literature does identify, however, a ubiquitous problem with the implementation of second-order systemic change in that the greater the degree of second-order adaptation required of the people implementing the change, the greater the likelihood that there will be myriad ways in which those people must confront the fact that their long-held assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors that do not align with the change initiative. These areas of dissonance or misalignment create places where unlearning
must often precede any new learning associated with implementing the change. There is
some research on this aspect of the learning process that accompanies second-order
change, but we need to know more about how schools and individual teachers get
through the challenges associated with both the unlearning and learning that accompanies
second-order change. Understanding this process could be key to understanding how
some schools get to a point where the change becomes fully embedded in how the school
functions and others do not.

The conditions that can be controlled at the school level may hinder or help the
depth implementation of second-order change. Even factors associated with deep
implementation in the literature may play out in a given school in such a way as to
counteract with the process of implementation. There may also be conditions that are
controlled at the district or school system level that impinge on those conditions at a
school or classroom level that supports a full scale shift in the ways people think about
and function in their work. Fullan (2001) suggests that the future of educational change
is dependent on whether accountability and the professional learning community learn to
work through the discomfort of each other’s presence and come to respect and draw on
each other as essential resources (p. 267). What Fullan is acknowledging is both the need
to cultivate both individual and shared learning coupled with both individual and shared
accountability for the results. Adopting this paradigm for working through challenges at
both the school and district or community levels in order to fully implement change
strategies is, itself a change of second-order proportions for teachers who are encultured
to an individualistic frame for thinking about, learning about, and going about their work.
**Sense Making**

Just as adult learning is personal and different from person to person; sense making also occurs on an individual level. Geert Kelchtermans’ narrative biographical work with teachers reminds us that teachers’ emotions have to be understood in relation to the vulnerability that constitutes a structural condition of the teaching job (2005). Teachers, in general, feel a sense of responsibility for the success of their students. “Teaching implies an ethical relationship of responsibility in which one engages oneself as a person. This commitment cannot be properly conceptualized as just an instrumental, intentional or technical relationship” (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 998). As teachers experience the implementation of deep change, they may also have to work through feelings of inadequacy, or challenges in their assumptions or beliefs about teaching. “Emotions are understood as experiences that result from teachers’ embeddedness in and interactions with their professional environment” (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996). As this study examines a complete change process from a retrospective, it is critical to examine not only the elements associated with successful change and the effects of adult learning; but it is also important to understand how those at the “street level” made sense of their experience.

This study will allow the researcher to examine a case where teachers worked through these issues associated with a specific major change initiative and utilize a retrospective to analyze how the issues of change, learning, and adaptation played out for the teachers who lived through the change process. The study will also provide an
opportunity to see how conditions associated in previous research with implementation of second-order change apply to and interact in this case.

Conclusion

Current school reform requires a school organization to not only provide complete access to education but also requires the organization to be successful with all students through a rigorous core curriculum. The reality that schools are now held accountable through the No Child Left Behind legislation, suggests that the need for deep systemic change cannot be ignored. Literature tells us that these deep systemic changes include overlapping layers of both first and second-order changes. Within these changes, both single and double-loop learning occurs. The great challenges put upon education today often require a new approach or new way of thinking, which inevitably leads to taking on the challenges of implementing second-order change in varying degrees and at various levels of complexity. This new way of thinking may challenge the dominant and long-held beliefs, assumptions and practices in the school setting and leave teachers trying to make sense of it. Although change can be very personal and vary from context to context, there are specific conditions outlined in the literature that support a deep successful change. Where deep second-order change is involved, the literature outlines the conditions of a shared vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of the change as being supportive in this new type of school reform. When these conditions are present in a school setting and a new initiative is underway, the teachers required to implement the deep change often find themselves engaged in and responsible for new learning.
What the literature does not fully articulate is what the teachers experience as they go through the complex process of a deep systemic change that may involve them in a constant state of adapting to new learning. The literature informs us from the outside looking in. This case study research will examine, through the eyes of the teachers who lived through a deep second-order change years ago, what factors or combination of conditions existed at this particular school as they implemented a successful balanced literacy program and how they made sense of it. This research will also attempt to discover any impact that this change initiative had on the participant’s perspective or professional practice years later.

This study is interested in how this process happens for teachers in a school that undertakes a major systemic change initiative involving both elements of first and second-order change. The impact of a major change initiative on any given individual is going to be a different mix of first and second-order change depending upon the dissonance or gap between that person’s internal framework of assumptions, beliefs, and paradigms along with their habits of practice (Fullan, 2001). Of interest in this study is the way in which a given group of teachers work through the process of adapting to change and adopting whatever personal or collective changes are necessary in order for the change to fully permeate the collective practice of the group.

The intention of this study is to come to a deeper understanding of the second-order change process, how people lived through it, and how it impacts professional perspectives or practice years later. This understanding could provide greater guidance to the field in a time when all school systems are adjusting to a fundamentally different and new agenda that requires accountability for both providing a rigorous core curriculum for
all students and ensuring success in that rigorous set of curriculum expectations for all students at the same time. In other words, learning from a retrospective state how teachers actually process their experiences after working through the complexities of making fundamental changes in their systems, operations, and practices to support a major school improvement strategy, could provide important insight into a very complex process. While the current state of the literature has isolated some of the factors that are associated with this process, we need to learn more about how those factors interact with each other and how they form the nexus of shared experience for teachers who work through all of the challenges associated with making fundamental shifts in their work in order to achieve fundamentally different results for the students they serve.
CHAPTER III

STUDY METHODOLOGY

To study the process of deep second-order change as perceived by teachers during the implementation of a balanced literacy program requires a methodology that allows the researcher to examine the process within the context of the situation. The purpose of this chapter is to clearly articulate the research design. This includes a rationale for the methodology of the study; the methods and procedures that will be used in the study; the subjects, sampling and access; the data analysis approach; and the limitations and delimitations of this study. To examine how the implementation of balanced literacy with its possible alteration of teacher beliefs and assumptions that can in turn alter teacher practice at the classroom level, the researcher’s close examination of a school and its teacher reflections of the process may provide the information needed to answer the research questions stated in chapter I.

Overview

This study is a critical case study of a Title I elementary school and its implementation of a planned change to raise reading achievement and overall literacy levels. According to Patton (2002), a critical case study is one that makes a point dramatically. He defines a characteristic of a critical case as the recognition that “if it happens there, it will happen anywhere” (p. 236). A critical case would be important in
the scheme of things and through the collection of data would help develop an understanding of what is happening in that particular case. Another characteristic is having a key informant observation that "if that group is having problems, then we can be sure all the groups are having problems." (p. 236). Resources that are limited is another reason to use a critical case. One must use a site that will give the most information and have the biggest impact on the development of knowledge. A critical case is worthy of study if it is information-rich (Patton, 2002).

This particular case meets the criteria of a critical case study and, therefore, will be examined in context of the implementation of a balanced literacy program over a five year span. The school selected for this study has been identified as a critical case because of (a) the nature of the change involving significant alterations of both assumption and practice; (b) the school-wide application of the change; (c) the level of new learning required by the implementers of the change (i.e., the teachers); (d) the impetus for the change, i.e., raising student reading achievement; and (e) the improvements in student outcomes associated with the change.

Additionally, the researcher was a full teacher participant in the case study school during the change and believes that Meister’s (2000) five elements of second-order change are reflected in her own recollections of the change experience. The school selected for this case study also offered the researcher convenient access to the teachers who experienced the full change process. The researcher’s continued association with and access to the group of individuals who were deeply involved in the change process, eight years after the implementation has taken place, facilitated an authentic discussion on the change process experience. A clue to the significance of the change experience for the
participants in this study was their readiness and ability to reflect back on the change process at this time and provide rich descriptions associated with both their recollections and reflections.

The focus of this case was on the implementation of the change with a concentration on the change process as perceived by the teachers involved. The study was conducted from a historical perspective and the data for the case were collected through reflective retrospection. Yin (as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 27) defined the research process in a case study as “...an empirical inquiry that investigated a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” At this particular Title I elementary school, there was a successful implementation of new practice; thus, it was identified as a critical case. This study offers an inquiry into the phenomenon by developing a reconstruction of the teacher processes and experiences. Through reflection, this inquiry was designed to elicit information on how individual teachers made sense out of their experience of successful change and its impact on their professional practice today. This case study is particularistic and bounded in that it focuses on one innovation within one school building. “Case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, p. 1).”

Yin (2003) describes five components of a research design that are especially important to case studies.

1) A study’s questions,
2) Its propositions, if any,
3) Its unit(s) of analysis,
4) The logic linking the data to the propositions, and
5) The criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, p. 21).

The Questions

This case study explored the questions of how teachers describe the change process and describe their own experiences or new learning within the change process. The case study strategy is most appropriate for study questions that ask “how” the teachers understand their own experience with change and the impact that change made on who they are and how they practice as teachers.

The Proposition

The proposition that successful second-order change includes vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change (Meister, 2000) framed the assumptions that guided this research and served as the basis for engaging teachers in reconstructing their experience as participants in a successful systemic change initiative. These proposition elements served as a useful lens for examining the “how” and “why” aspects of change in the critical case selected for this study, but that lens did not preclude the discovery of other elements and their interaction with the whole of the change experience for the teachers.

Unit of Analysis

Teachers who participated in a systemic change experience to implement a balanced literacy program by the case study Title I elementary school are the unit of
analysis for this research. The data collected in this research were interpreted against the theoretical lens of the five essential elements for facilitating change, i.e., vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and an assessment of change (Meister, 2000); however, teacher reflections guided the interpretation of the data allowing for the discovery of elements, interactions, and insights that emerge from the data.

Logic for Linking the Data to the Propositions

The five elements for facilitating or leading successful change implementation proposed by Meister (2000) were examined for links to the Title I elementary school’s implementation of balanced literacy by examining the data to isolate if and how the five elements play out in teachers’ retrospective understanding of their own experience with the change. Further, the data were analyzed for linkages between the recalled experience of study participants looking back on the change process and their current teaching perspectives and practices.

Criteria for Interpreting the Findings

Although Yin states that there is no precise way of setting the criteria for interpreting the findings in a case study, it can be beneficial to interpret the findings based on the elements that literature has articulated on successful implementation of change. A qualitative research design such as this case study is appropriate as the researcher looks to answer the question of how teachers internalize their experience with a deep change process after the process has been completed, and how they relate their
experience with that change process to their current teaching perspectives and practices.

The prevailing criteria for interpreting the findings in this case rest on the two primary points of inquiry:

1) How do the teachers’ recollections and reflections on the actual change experience compare to the theoretical lens used for this study, i.e., Meister’s (2000) five elements for facilitating and leading deep, second-order (systemic change)?

2) How are teachers who experienced a successful second-order change different today because of their experience with that change?

Study Methods and Procedures

The Title I elementary school, which will herein, be referred to as Reading Elementary School, is an example of where a deep, systemic or second-order change occurred. Through my research, I describe the context of the situation and specific implementation procedures through the eyes of the teacher, which may lead me to a better understanding of what is needed for long term change. Merriam (1998) identified qualitative case studies as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. My focus on the balanced literacy implementation is an example of the particularistic feature of qualitative case studies. This case study is confined to this one innovation and its successful implementation.

This study is descriptive in nature because it contains a rich, “thick” description of the change process. The study is heuristic in that it provides insight to the reader of the change to balanced literacy. It may bring new meaning or simply confirm what the
reader already knows. For example, the elements of change that are outlined in the literature may surface in this case but there also may be other elements of change to be discovered through this critical case that also support a successful second-order change. Change is a process and the importance of process is critical to a case study. Sanders (1981, as cited in Merriam, p. 33) stated, “Case studies help us to understand processes of events, projects, and programs and to discover context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object.” The implementation of the change to balanced literacy at this particular elementary school as a case study allows for the study of the characteristics of change from a retrospective view as identified and described by the people who lived through the change and determine any impact being a part of that change has had on their perspective or practice today.

As the Title One teacher in the school for five years, I already have a professional relationship with the participants of this study. I am a participant-observer throughout this case study as I am considered one of the many teacher leaders at Reading School. Proper consent forms were obtained and permission granted by all participants.

This case study examined Reading Elementary School over the span of five years. As the researcher, I looked, retrospectively, at this elementary school’s reading initiative that began in the Spring of 2000. The balanced literacy approach to the teaching of reading was first introduced to the entire staff in the spring. Over the course of five years, this balanced literacy program evolved and expanded teacher knowledge. This study focused on the elementary school from the teachers’ perspective and looked at how the balanced literacy initiative was implemented, what new learning took place in the process, and what the factors in making the implementation successful were, as defined
earlier. Literature suggests that a) shared vision, b) collaboration, c) professional development, d) administrative support and leadership, and e) the assessment and continuance of change are critical in the implementation of change. This study focused on these five areas to see if they were in existence during the implementation and to what degree teachers identified them as critical. The study focused on the teachers' work in this school and their perceptions of the process of the change implementation after it had been completed. It will also attempt to determine if or how present day perspectives or practice may have been influenced by being a part of this complete second-order change process more than five years ago.

Subjects, Sampling, and Access

To best understand this case study, one must become familiar with the school itself. Reading Elementary School was located in the southeast quadrant of an urban school district which sat directly outside of a major city. This quadrant had been referred to as the poorest part of the city. The neighborhood surrounding the school consisted mainly of small, two-bedroom rental houses. Students from a nearby neighborhood were also bussed to attend Reading Elementary. That neighborhood was an area known for high crime and had various subsidized housing projects. Various industrial factories separate the school from this neighborhood. One third of Reading Elementary students were school of choice, mainly coming from the major city. The student population was approximately 240 students in grades kindergarten through fourth during the implementation years. During the first three years of the balanced literacy initiative,
Reading Elementary had only grades kindergarten through third. Declining enrollment was the reason for bringing back fourth grade to Reading Elementary in 2003.

The students at Reading Elementary came from a diverse background. In 2004, approximately 30% of the students were Chaldean, 5% Vietnamese, 3% Caucasian, and the remaining 62% being African American. The school received school-wide Title I funding with approximately 77% of the families qualifying for free or reduce-priced lunches. Reading Elementary was one of two schools in the district to receive a federal grant that reduced class size. Over the past five years the average class size had been between 16 and 18 students in grades K-3. Grade 4 had an average of 25 students. All four elementary schools in this school district were given the same initial exposure to balanced literacy through a cohort of district educators. This particular school took the initiative of implementing balanced literacy to a deeper level. This is another reason why this case was identified as a critical case to examine while researching the change process through the eyes of the teachers.

The culture and climate at Reading Elementary was warm and welcoming. Visitors were greeted by the office staff upon entering the building. The principal was extremely accessible and visited each classroom daily. He had been working in the district for over thirty years and had been the principal of this elementary for eleven years. As principal, he knew all of his students and their families. Often times, the principal would make home visits to assist the family with transportation issues or to address school concerns. Some concerns might have been too many absences, discipline problems or tardiness. The teaching staff also was involved with the needs of their students and families. It was not uncommon for the school to provide homework if
needed, in addition to school supplies. Holiday gifts and food baskets were provided to needy families. The building itself had undergone remodeling in the past few years. New windows, flooring and paint added to the school’s warm appeal. Reading Elementary’s climate gave a sense of family.

This particular elementary school was chosen as the critical case in this study because it met the criteria of being an information-rich exemplar (Patton, 2002). The student population and levels of achievement were challenging; yet, the implementation of the balanced literacy program took place successfully. The idea that if it happened at this school with all of their challenges, then it could happen anywhere supports this as a critical case.

The participants in this study include the teaching staff at Reading Elementary as well as the principal. Ten teachers taught the full 5 years during the implementation and two joined the staff mid-way through the plan. I also included the Title I staff, which included two English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and one media technician/librarian. This sampling of the staff gave me access to rich information on how they perceived their new learning, described any changes in their assumptions or beliefs, and how they described their experiences during the change process. The staff members that were identified by their peers as being leaders in this second-order change were interviewed on an individual basis and are considered key informants. As key informant observations were a clue in identifying a critical case, the number of staff members that were willing to share their thoughts about this change to balanced literacy was confirming that this particular case was valuable.
I gained access into the site as a participant observer as I was the Title I teacher in this building and had built strong professional relationships with the staff. Permission was gained from the district administration to interview staff members and investigate artifacts related to this study. Because I had a direct involvement with this implementation of balanced literacy, it was important that I managed both perspectives of being an active participant in the setting as well as the facilitator of research during this inquiry. All subjects were protected and anonymity maintained. Pseudonyms were used to protect the subjects involved.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection for this case study followed the three principles articulated by Yin (2003) to establish construct validity and reliability. The first principle of using multiple sources of evidence was used in collecting data for this study. The interview method, focus group, and written personal narratives were examined. As a participant-observer, I also completed a written narrative. As Maxwell (2005) wrote, “you are the research instrument in your qualitative study, and your eyes and ears are the tools, you use to make sense of what is going on” (p. 20). Being in the role of the Title I teacher for the five years at this elementary, I had built relationships and had informally gathered data. The variety of methods allowed me to triangulate the data and build validity.

Initially I conducted two focus groups with staff members. The purpose of these focus groups was to gain information on the implementation of the balanced literacy. Through some reflective questioning, staff articulated what accounted for the
implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School. Some guiding questions included:

1) Do you feel that balanced literacy was successfully implemented throughout the elementary? If so, why? Or why not?

2) Through our discussion today I hope to gain some insights as to what accounted for the way that balanced literacy was implemented at Reading Elementary School. What are some ideas that come to mind? How did the implementation take place? Who was responsible? (Each person will have a chance to respond.)

3) I would like you to think back to the spring of 2000. This is when balanced literacy was first introduced to the entire Reading Elementary teaching staff. What was the mindset of the staff at this time regarding the teaching of literacy?

4) Let us talk about the leadership in the building. Who were the leaders for implementation of balanced literacy in this school and why do you identify them as being leaders?

5) Describe the culture and climate of Reading Elementary School at the beginning and, again, at the end of the five-year balanced literacy implementation process?

6) We have talked about the leadership, culture, and mindset of teachers and the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School today. Are there any other ideas that you would like to share that might contribute to
my study of the implementation of the balanced literacy program at Reading School?

**Figure 1. Five Areas Affecting Implementation**

- Vision
- Collaboration
- Professional Development
- Leadership
- Assessment of the Change

Figure 1: Five Areas Affecting Implementation

After the focus groups, I conducted individual interviews with the identified leaders and other specifically involved staff of the implementation process. The interviews were guided and semi-structured. This allowed me to focus as responses were given. My goal was to see if the five areas that the literature suggested for implementation of change surfaced as important at Reading Elementary School, and to find to what degree teachers attributed their new learning, or changes in assumptions, beliefs, and changes in practice to them. I wanted to see the ways that the elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and assessment of change played out in the implementation of balanced literacy according to the teachers at Reading Elementary School. I wanted to know which factors (figure 1), in what combination and relationship, the staff attributed to the implementation of balanced literacy. I wanted to know if the case study of Reading School supported the
implementation literature and to determine to what degree and in what combination these elements were stressed by the participants as hallmarks of their experience with the implementation of the balanced literacy program at Reading Elementary School. Finally, I determined if there were other identifiable factors described by the study participants that contributed to the balanced literacy implementation and if it had impacted their perspective about teaching or their professional practice today. The following questions were asked during the interviews:

1) What was your role at Reading Elementary School during the implementation of balanced literacy?

2) How were you specifically involved with the change to balanced literacy?

3) How would you describe the degree of implementation of the balanced literacy initiative at the end of the five-year implementation period?

4) Many initiatives never get off the ground; why do you think the balanced literacy initiative reached the level of implementation you described?

5) Literature suggests that in order to have successful implementation of a teacher change, vision is needed. Did Reading School have a shared vision? If so, was it related to balanced literacy?

6) Collaboration is also identified as needed by the literature. Was there collaboration during the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading? If so, explain.

7) We hear a lot about professional development in schools; please explain the opportunities that existed at Reading School during the implementation of balanced literacy.
8) Where and who were the leaders involved with the change to balanced literacy? What was their significance?

9) The change to balanced literacy occurred over a five year span. How did the balanced literacy program evolve over this time? Were there points along the way where data was collected to monitor implementation? As a result of any monitoring, were there adjustments made in the implementation? If so, please describe those adjustments. Did you ever assess the effects of it and alter the program?

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, I collected and studied a written narrative by the participants. This narrative provided my subjects the opportunity to individually reflect on their responses from previous interviews and respond in a written format. This narrative allowed the participants an opportunity to respond after the interviews where the reconstruction of the past years was done and reflect on the entire change process. The prompts that were used include:

1) Reflecting back, please describe your personal path and level of success implementing the change. Please, also, describe what aided or interfered with your success in implementing the change.

2) What, if any, new learning took place for you as a professional? Is any of that new learning evident in your teaching today?

3) Thinking back, did going through this implementation of a new practice (i.e., balanced literacy) challenge any personal or professional beliefs you had regarding your responsibilities as a teacher of reading? If so, how? Has this had an impact on what you believe today? If so, how?
4) Describe any specific changes in your practice that happened during the implementation of balanced literacy. Are any of those practices being used by you today?

5) Reflecting on where you are today as a professional educator, are there ways that you are different as a result of being part of the change at Reading Elementary?

These three methods of data collection helped to build a complete understanding of this elementary school’s implementation of a deep change to balanced literacy and determine the impact that being a part of the change process has had on their perspective or professional practice today.

The second principle Yin presents is the creation of a case study database. Patton (1987) sometimes referred to this as a case record. This deals with the collection, organization, and documentation of the vast amounts of data that often exist with case studies. Patton explained, “the case record includes all major information that will be used in doing the case analysis and case study … organized for ready access either chronologically and/or topically” (p. 148). For this study, the database was created from the raw data collected through the focus group translations, interviews, and artifacts. It was in a format in which an outside investigator could review the data in an organized manner. This increased the reliability of the entire case study.

The final principle Yin outlines is the ability to maintain a chain of evidence. The data for this study were collected and organized in a manner which allowed an external observer to trace back from the study’s conclusions to the research questions and vice versa. Evidence was collected, organized and available in a manner that supported the
Data analysis. In following Yin's three principles during the collection of data, this study established construct validity and reliability with the case study evidence (2003).

**Data Analysis Approach**

Throughout the data collection process, I analyzed the content. According to Merriam (1998), "data analysis is one of the few facets...of doing qualitative research in which there is a right way and a wrong way...the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection (p. 162). Ongoing analysis allowed me to maintain my focus and realize the content of my data.

Patton (1987) discusses several ways to analyze case study data, which include inductive analysis with indigenous typologies and deductive analysis. For this study, I first completed an inductive analysis with the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives. Through the inductive analysis, I attempted to identify any indigenous themes or subthemes that emerged from the data. Following the inductive analysis and using the coded data sets, I conducted a deductive analysis of personal change elements looking through the lens of new learning, new assumptions and beliefs, and new practices as they related to the themes identified in my inductive analysis. This analysis allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the personal change experience articulated by the study participants as they reflected on their change experience years ago and any impact that it may have had on their current practices. My final analysis was a deductive analysis using the elements Meister (2002) outlined in her literature review that support deep, systemic change. The elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change were
analyzed throughout each of the three raw data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives. The interaction among the elements listed above might have suggested other generalizations or themes that could add to the current body of literature on the successful implementation of deep second-order change. The people involved at the classroom level may have suggested other themes that can lead me, the researcher, to new ideas on what it takes to increase the likelihood of successful second-order change. The final approach in data analysis dealt with indigenous typologies. Patton (1987) described this as a classifications system where the verbal categories used by the participants break up the complexity of reality into parts (p. 150). The inductive and deductive themes and subthemes were then compared to determine if any of the inductive indigenous themes or subthemes reflect, extend, clarify, or run contrary to Meister’s (2000) theoretical framework for change. The inductive and two deductive analyses provided me with a complete and thorough understanding of the data sets, which included focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives.

Following the independent data analysis of the focus group data, interview data and written narrative data, I then did a triangulation of the data. I looked for common themes and ideas that emerged across all sources of data. Noting similarities and differences among the data provided support and added validity to my study.

*The Researcher*

As the researcher, I must disclose my close connection to this particular case being studied. As stated earlier, I was a Title I teacher in this particular elementary building and may be considered one of the teacher leaders. I attempted to control any
bias by using only the data to arrive at any conclusions. I wrote an epic and responded to the focus questions, interview questions, and narrative myself. This helped disclose my personal thoughts and ideas on the topic being studied and also added to the data collection. Being a staff member also allowed me to be deeply entrenched in the process of implementing the balanced literacy program and had professional relationships with those involved. Having the trust and professional relationships with the subjects may have allowed the subjects to be more open and honest in their responses. My current position is not one of any authority over the subjects and in fact is in a different school district. Therefore, there were minimal if any consequences or implications for the subjects.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study has the delimitation of one school’s change in one practice which was to balanced literacy. It was also limited to the number of staff that was interviewed during the data collection. Another limitation was the researcher’s involvement in the change at the case study school. This implementation process occurred over a 5-year span. The time that has elapsed until the data collection took place was limited to the recollection of the staff being interviewed.

Summary

In summary, to best understand the process of deep second-order change as described by the people who had lived through the change, and to determine any impact that the change may have had on their professional practice today, a qualitative case
study, from a historical perspective, of one school’s successful implementation of balanced literacy was appropriate. This methodology with a data collection process of interviews, focus groups, and written narratives helped me to shape an understanding of to what the teachers attributed their new learning, possible change in beliefs and assumptions, and changes in practice. Examining the change process in retrospect allowed participants to be reflective on the change process as a whole, rather than in real time. The data collection methods used allowed focus groups to remember and generate details together, followed by the individual interviews as well as individual reflection time. The individual reflection time allowed the subjects to respond on an individual level and may have provided evidence that being a part of the deep change process has influenced their current perspectives on practice.

The degree and interaction of the elements articulated in the literature on successful implementation may or may not be articulated by the teachers as being significant in effecting change in the classroom level, just as there may have been other elements identified as significant to implementing deep change during this research. Nevertheless, it was valuable to study this topic within the context of the situation in which successful change occurred.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

In chapter III, I described two types of data analysis that would be used in this case study. By employing both inductive and deductive analyses, I was able to (a) let the data “talk” for themselves (Patton, 1987) and (b) yield specific insights against two prefigured frames. Those frames were (a) personal change, and (b) elements associated with deep, systemic change from the literature. In dealing with data analysis, this chapter is organized to first present results realized through an inductive analysis of the interview, focus group, and narrative data that identified indigenous themes and subthemes. After discussing the findings from the indigenous themes and subthemes from the inductive analysis, this chapter discusses the indigenous themes in conjunction with the three elements of personal change (new learning, new beliefs, and new practices) and the Meister (2000) framework of five elements that support systemic change (vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and assessment of change).

Analysis Strategies

By examining the transcripts from the three data sources, I looked for common elements, key vocabulary, or salient points, organized the points and elements into
categories, and assigned themes to the categories based on the language of the study participants. From there, I identified clarifiers for each theme and organized the clarifiers as subthemes. These themes and subthemes capture both the broadly significant elements of the participants’ experiences and the common ways those broad elements played out across participants as they reflected on their experiences in going through the change to balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School years earlier. Through the inductive analysis, I was able to remain open to themes and subthemes that may have identified aspects of participants’ individual or shared experience that both illustrate elements of deep, systemic change found in the literature and represent any aspects that are unique to this particular case and extend beyond, clarify, or run contrary to the current literature.

Change is a focus of this study and it was important to examine the data for rich stories and illustrations of how teachers, themselves may have changed personally as a result of living through the experience of implementing a major systemic change for literacy in their school. Through deductive analysis of the coded data sets, I also noted examples of how the change to balanced literacy changed some teachers personally. Within each of the three indigenous themes, I examined the coded responses looking specifically for what participants described as new learning, new assumptions and beliefs, or new practices under each of the three indigenous themes: teacher empowerment, time, and supportive culture. By using this three-part lens, I extracted common themes regarding how teachers describe any personal changes during and after the implementation of balanced literacy against the frame of the three indigenous themes. Of particular interest in this part of the analysis were any changes that represented a lasting
or long-term effect on participants’ teaching practices well after the experience of working on the implementation of the balanced literacy initiative several years later.

For the final part of my analysis, I conducted a deductive analysis of the raw data sets utilizing the theoretical lens that serves as the conceptual framework for this study, i.e., Meister’s (2000) five elements associated with facilitating and leading second-order systemic change. I deductively analyzed the data sets for evidence of the elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change that are so clearly articulated in the literature on deep, second-order change. To assess the prominence of each of Meister’s five elements in the data, I did a cross-tab analysis associating responses from each data set with the findings of the deductive analysis against the Meister framework.

After completing each stage of the analysis, as described above, I did a comparative analysis to determine if and how the results of the inductive analysis relates to the results of the deductive analysis. In discussing this final stage of data analysis at the close of this chapter, I looked for ways in which the themes and subthemes from the inductive analysis reflect, extend, clarify, or contradict the five elements from Meister’s theoretical frame.

Results of Inductive Analysis and Deductive Analysis for Personal Change

*Overview*

After analyzing the data sets of focus group transcriptions, individual interview transcriptions, and written narratives by the participants, three overarching themes
presented themselves as prominent in the data. These themes are: (a) teacher empowerment, (b) time, and (c) building culture. Table 1 presents the themes, along with the subthemes that both illustrate and frame the important elements that emerged from the data for each theme. Within each theme, the first stage of deductive analysis looked for elements of personal change. Table 2 provides common illustrations of personal change expressed as (a) new learning, (b) changes in assumptions and beliefs, and (c) changes in practice, as they relate to the themes identified through the inductive analysis.

Table 1: Indigenous Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Empowerment</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Building Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Starting Small</td>
<td>• Implement Strategies</td>
<td>• Collaboration/Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supportive Climate</td>
<td>• Over Time</td>
<td>• Strong Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Purposeful Professional</td>
<td>• Professional Development</td>
<td>• Shared Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>• Assessment</td>
<td>• Learning For All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher-led</td>
<td>• Student Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Deductive Analysis of Personal Change Under Each of the Indigenous Themes

| Personal Change Related To          | Personal Change Related To Time      | Personal Change Related To Building  |
| Teacher Empowerment                 |                                      | Culture                               |
| New Learning:                       |                                      |                                       |
| • Principal/Teachers                | New Learning:                        |                                       |
|       learning together              | • Strategy mastery                   |                                       |
| • Reflecting on current             | • Organizing/Leveling                |                                       |
|       practice                      |       materials                      |                                       |
| • Investigating new                 | • Teacher development                |                                       |
|       strategies/best practices      |                                       |                                       |
| • Teaching each other               |                                       |                                       |
|                                      |                                       |                                       |
|                                      |                                       |                                       |
Table 2 – Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Change Related To Teacher Empowerment</th>
<th>Personal Change Related To Time</th>
<th>Personal Change Related To Building Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs:</td>
<td>Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs:</td>
<td>Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respect the process</td>
<td>• Implementation in stages</td>
<td>• Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Small group can lead change</td>
<td>• Reflection on practice</td>
<td>• Consensus building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher buy in</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shared responsibility for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflection/assessment of new practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in Practice:</td>
<td>Changes in Practice:</td>
<td>Changes in Practice:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers as reading “experts”</td>
<td>• Book clubs</td>
<td>• Sharing materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individualizing instruction</td>
<td>• Monthly Grade Level meetings</td>
<td>• Sharing ideas/lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment-driven instruction</td>
<td>• Individualized student</td>
<td>• Collaboration with colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Common language</td>
<td>assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Summer literacy camp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 1: Teacher Empowerment

An overarching theme that emerged from my inductive analysis of the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives is the notion of teacher empowerment. As the researcher, I am going to use the frame of teacher empowerment, telling the story of the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School as it was recollected by the participants of this study and presented in the data. The participants of this study recalled their experiences of the deep, systemic
change at Reading Elementary School and provided many stories related to the empowerment of teachers. One illustration of teacher empowerment is when a participant spoke of the building principal and said, "(He) told us, 'tell me what you need to be successful and I will see that you get it' and he empowered us in such a way that it made us want to do things and want to learn more for ourselves and for our kids." The data include rich stories where a small number of staff began learning about the components of balanced literacy through a cohort and then began implementing the new strategies they had learned in their own classrooms, eventually sharing with their colleagues and leading the deep, systemic change school-wide.

During the year in which this deep, systemic change began, the school district in which Reading Elementary School was located in was in a partnership with a university where staff members were working towards a master’s degree in reading. Although this cohort from the university partnership included staff members from across the school district, there were four Reading Elementary staff members who participated. This small group of staff members from Reading Elementary, who attended classes in the evenings, learned about a balanced literacy approach.

As this cohort experimented with their newly-learned strategies and improved upon their classroom practices, this small group of staff members became empowered to share their new learning with some of their noncohort colleagues. This was illustrated by a participant, who was also a cohort member, when she said, "...each person ... pulled in a couple other people and while we were pulling them in on a personal level, we were also going to training to learn about MLPP ... guided reading ... shared reading..." The stories from the participants of this study described a supportive climate where
collaboration between cohort and noncohort members was encouraged. The data illustrated that when the change initiative began, teachers were empowered.

With their leader's support, a small group of empowered staff initiated a whole-school initiative change to balanced literacy. The three data sets provided illustrations where this small group planned and led purposeful staff development to the rest of the staff at Reading Elementary School. As the entire staff came on board with the implementation, teachers planned their own building professional development based on their needs and fostered a climate that included adult learning. This was illustrated by a participant when she said,

...once teachers got the training ... it was effective because they got it from other teachers, it didn't come from the top down, it came from your own colleagues ... once we started teaching each other, there was a comfort zone where you could go and ask questions...

The climate was supportive of adult learning as teachers led their own professional development. The overarching theme of teacher empowerment clearly surfaced in the data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narrative as the inductive analysis was performed.

Through the inductive analysis of these rich stories of personal change where teacher empowerment emerged as an indigenous theme, there were subthemes that emerged from these stories that clarify and frame the main theme (see table 1). The subthemes that relate to teacher empowerment include: (a) starting small, (b) supportive climate, (c) purposeful professional development and (d) teacher-led. The following paragraphs outline the subthemes and provide support for the subtheme as it relates to the
Subthemes

Subtheme A: Starting Small

Through the inductive analysis where the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment emerged, the idea that the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy began as a small endeavor is noteworthy. As the participants of this study reflected on their experience of the change process, they identified a small group or cohort of teachers who were empowered to begin the new approach to reading at this elementary school. One participant illustrated that the small start began with the cohort and then evolved into more staff being a part of the change.

Initially, the people that were involved in the cohort got the ball rolling and when other people saw it working or other teachers speaking highly of it, then more people were willing to try it and wanted to try it.

The data support the idea that when the staff witnessed the small group of teachers having success with the balanced literacy program, they were motivated to get involved just as the cohort members were involved with the change. In a transcription, one participant stated,

...people that were members of the cohort group came back and were enthusiastic about it and they were talking about it and trying it ... teachers who weren’t in the cohort group wanted to jump on board because it looked like it was something that was working.

Through my inductive analysis where the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment surfaced, the idea that the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy at Reading...
Elementary School began as a small group endeavor is clarified as a subtheme of teacher empowerment in this study.

*Subtheme B: Supportive Climate*

Just as starting out small is a subtheme to the overarching theme of teacher empowerment, the subtheme of a supportive climate was noted from the inductive analysis of the three data sets. The transcriptions from focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives include illustrations that the climate at Reading Elementary School was supportive and encouraged teachers to become leaders, thus empowering them. During the reflection of the participants on their change experiences, stories were shared that illustrated the professional conversation that occurred not only during teaching time but also during nonteaching time. An illustration of the climate that was empowering came from a participant when she said, “I think we even did professional development at lunchtime, we were asking ‘what do you do? How’s it working? What do you do?’ … We were doing our own professional development out of curiosity because it was working…” This datum is descriptive of the supportive and collaborative climate that was in existence at Reading Elementary as the staff was empowered to steer their own learning during the implementation of the change to balanced literacy. Additional support that provided a description of the supportive climate at Reading Elementary School came from another participant as she recalled a professional conversation that occurred between two people during the implementation of the change,
...when we were talking about kids we were always ‘he is at a level D and
...he moved up 6 levels’ and I remember coming down the hall with my
paper and saying ‘... would you look at the comprehension, do you think
it’s a 3 or a 4?’ I mean, we were talking about it all the time.”

The professional conversation that existed between these two teachers at this elementary
school is an example of staff members being empowered to collaborate and discuss new
procedures or practices that were put in place during the implementation of balanced
literacy. The supportive and professional climate at Reading Elementary School was
identified as a subtheme of the overarching theme of teacher empowerment through the
three data sets.

Subtheme C: Purposeful Professional Development

The third subtheme that was identified during the inductive analysis from the
overarching theme of teacher empowerment is the notion of purposeful professional
development. The three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and
written narratives illustrated that the professional development opportunities that existed
at Reading Elementary school were designed by the teachers themselves and reflected
what the teachers themselves saw as beneficial to them at that particular time. One
participant from the study illustrated this when she recalled a conversation with her
principal regarding weekly staff meetings, “I remember us approaching [the principal]
and saying ‘can you take everything you’re going to say and just type it up so we can
have these book talks?’...and we got to do a professional book club.” This subtheme of
purposeful professional development was also supported by the following statement from
a study participant:
We had some powerful discussions about the books we were reading and people were sharing some of their individual things ... talk about your own students ... so we were talking about things that directly applied to our classrooms and we were trying to help each other problem solve...”

The recollection by participants of purposeful professional development opportunities that were initiated by the teaching staff and directly related to the implementation of the systemic change to balanced literacy is supportive of the overarching theme of teacher empowerment.

Subtheme D: Teacher Leader

The overarching theme of teacher empowerment not only includes the subthemes of starting small, supportive climate and purposeful professional development, but also includes the subtheme of teacher as leader. The deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School was a teacher-led initiative which emerged as a subtheme during the inductive analysis of the three data sets. The transcriptions from focus groups, interviews, and written narratives described the professional development opportunities, implementation, and reflection of the new program as tasks that were led by the teachers at Reading Elementary School. In one transcription, the building principal provided support for teacher leadership as he recalled how the deep, systemic change began. He said,

"It wasn’t really much of my doing because my background was all secondary, but I had a staff of people who were interested and cared about what was going on with our kids and wanted to develop a program to meet their needs and make them more successful."

The participants in this study recalled their experience of the deep change process and shared stories which illustrated that the change was led by teachers. Support for this
came from a participant when she said, "...everybody had to be a leader in their own classroom, just agreeing to take on this new role and supporting each other ... we were all leaders ... changing and growing and being able to reflect back ... we led where we wanted to go..." The data illustrated that the same small group of teacher leaders who initially began the implementation of balanced literacy led the entire staff in the change process to balanced literacy. One participant illustrated this as she recalled her involvement in a professional development session. She recalled, "...we took on the leadership for the shared reading...everybody was taking responsibility and we were all learning from each other..." The inductive analysis of the three data sets, revealed the subtheme of teacher leadership characterized by teachers who initiated, trained, and implemented the balanced literacy program at Reading Elementary School.

Conclusion

The indigenous theme of teacher empowerment was identified through my inductive analysis of the focus group, individual interview, and narrative data as the deep, systemic change process to balanced literacy was examined in retrospect. From the overarching theme of teacher empowerment, there were four subthemes that were realized as the thick, rich stories in the data were analyzed. The subthemes that clarify and frame the main theme of teacher empowerment include: (a) starting small, (b) supportive climate, (c) purposeful professional development, and (d) teacher-led. These subthemes provide clarity to the main theme of teacher empowerment.
Personal Change Related to Teacher Empowerment

The second part of my data analysis included a deductive analysis of the coded data sets where the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment was realized. To examine the elements of personal change as expressed by the participants in this study, my deductive analysis used the frame of new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. Using the three-part frame, I deductively analyzed the data to identify any personal changes articulated by the participants of this study that impacted their professional practice immediately after implementation or impacting their practice several years afterward. In the following paragraphs, I first present the results of my deductive analysis across the three elements of personal change, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice as they related to the theme of teacher empowerment during the implementation; then, I present the results that the personal change had on participants’ professional practice years later.

New Learning Related to Teacher Empowerment During Implementation

Through a deductive analysis of the coded data sets of focus groups, individual interview, and written narratives, new learning was identified as the elements of personal change process were examined. Table 2 outlines the new learning related to teacher empowerment during and after the change process that were identified in the data. These include (a) principal and teachers learning together, (b) reflecting on current practice, (c) investigating new strategies or best practice, and (d) teaching each other. The three data
sets provide illustrations of this new learning as the participants reflected on their change experience.

An illustration of both the principal and teachers learning together was recalled and described by the study participants and realized in the data. One participant remembered a small grant that her first grade team helped write so they could get “little books that the kids could read successfully.” As part of that grant, the first grade teachers along with the principal took a reading class where they learned about balanced literacy. In addition, the principal at this school spoke of how he wanted to get involved with the reading program which included some new learning for him. He knew there were some people who were not on board that were a part of the cohort. He stated, “…I wanted to be involved … I wanted them to be involved … I think that really changed some attitudes about the literacy program we had going on at [Reading].” The experience of learning alongside the building administrator influenced the personal change experience of the teachers at Reading Elementary School.

Through my deductive analysis of personal change under the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment, new learning was also realized in the recalled stories from the study participants as they reflected on current practice at Reading Elementary School. One participant recalled, “As a staff, we started looking at what we were doing in terms of a literacy program at [Reading] and we were not happy with the results.” This reflection led the staff “… to develop a program to meet their students’ needs and make them more successful.” As presented in the data, the reflection on current practice was identified by the participants of this study as a precursor to the new learning that took place at Reading Elementary School.
The investigation of new strategies and best practice, by the teachers themselves, that would support and increase student achievement in reading was outlined in the three data sets when they were analyzed deductively using the personal change element of new learning. Support for new learning that was evidenced in the data included one participant’s statement about “[monthly meetings] where we could talk about where we need to go, what we should be doing, plan and talk about things.” Participants recalled opportunities for new learning that were available to them as they underwent the deep, systemic change. Additional support included, “...you went to a lot of professional things that we couldn’t attend and you brought back a lot of things that we were unaware of...” The data suggested that one staff member would attend outside trainings on best practices and bring the information back to Reading Elementary School where teachers were empowered to learn new strategies at monthly meetings.

Through my deductive analysis on the elements of personal change, new learning was identified in the data as the study participants recalled illustrations of “teachers teaching other teachers” about the components of balanced literacy. As one participant recalled her relationship with another cohort member, she said, “she was coming back and telling me things she was learning there so we started guided reading groups...we started leveling the kids...we began to see results...were motivated to keep going.” The data also revealed that several different teachers trained the rest of the staff during various staff meetings on the components of balanced literacy. New learning related to the theme of teacher empowerment was realized through my deductive analysis of the elements of personal change. This new learning included (a) principal and teachers
learning together, (b) reflecting on current practice, (c) investigating new strategies or best practice, and (d) teaching each other.

Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs Related to Teacher Empowerment During Implementation

The second element of personal change, under the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment is the possibility of changes in assumptions and beliefs. Through my deductive analysis of the coded data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, changes in assumptions and beliefs were identified in the data sets as the deep systemic change to balanced literacy was examined. Table 2 shows the changes in assumptions and beliefs that were identified in the coded data sets related to teacher empowerment. These include (a) respect the process, (b) small group can lead deep change, (c) teacher buy in, and (d) reflection and assessment of new practices.

Changes in assumptions and beliefs as related to teacher empowerment were identified in the data sets as participants reflected on their experience with deep, systemic change and recalled the need to respect the process of change. In the data, the participants compared their change to balanced literacy to other changes that they had been a part of in previous years. The balanced literacy approach was not a program where the expectation was to train everyone at once and then implement the program fully and completely at one time.

One participant described a changed belief system when she said, “this program came from within…not a canned program.” In retrospect, the realization that the balanced literacy implementation would be a process and evolve over time challenged the
belief systems of the staff at Reading Elementary School. Additional support included, "it's a process and we need to respect the process and not just the end result." As the deductive analysis of the elements of personal change was conducted, the empowerment of teachers influencing the implementation process at Reading Elementary School was identified.

Another possible change in assumptions and beliefs that was identified in the three data sets included the notion that deep, systemic change can be led by a small group. The coded data included rich stories from the study participants which described how the teachers were individually searching for ways to be successful with a challenging student population and were primarily working in isolation prior to the balanced literacy initiative. One participant stated, "People were bouncing all over ... we were trying stuff..." The stories in the data sets also described when the balanced literacy initiative began and how teams of teachers were training each other and organizing the implementation. One participant stated, "the trained staff ... each took an area and once we got started ... it just spread." Through my deductive analysis using the elements of personal change, the assumptions and belief that teachers worked in isolation was changed.

Another change in assumptions and beliefs related to teacher empowerment that surfaced from the three data sets during the deductive analysis included teacher buy in. The coded data included support of the balanced literacy program implementation as it was initiated by the staff at Reading Elementary School. An illustration of the strong shared belief system is when a participant recalled, "...everybody bought into it...we all had that same vision that we were going to try this...we wanted to try this and we wanted
our kids to be successful...” More support from the data included, “I think the biggest factor is that everyone bought into it...if you buy into something and you see that it's working, you're more excited to try it and to do it...” Stories and examples of teacher buy in were identified in the data as the assumptions and beliefs related to teacher empowerment were examined through the deductive analysis using the personal change elements.

The reflection and assessment of new practices was described by the participants of this study through the data when changes in assumptions and beliefs were examined through deductive analysis. Participants reflected on their changes in practice, which was a change in beliefs for the staff at Reading Elementary School. Previously, once staff members were trained in a new program, they implemented it until further notice; never formally stopping to reflect and assess whether the program was working or appropriate for their students. These programs were mainly handed down to teachers from administration. The data from this study reflect a change in beliefs when one participant said, “…we stopped and said this is a problem...what are we going to do about it...every time there was a problem, there was that discussion, what are we going to do?” Additional support from the data sets included the statement, “it was through a lot of blood, sweat and tears at our expense, but that constant self assessment and group assessment is what would allow that program to grow and change and become what it was.” The staff had changed their approach to one that included reflection on practice. Changes in assumptions and beliefs related to teacher empowerment were identified in the deductive analysis when stories of reflection and assessment of practice were articulated by the study participants through the three data sets.
Teacher empowerment as it relates to possible changes in assumptions and beliefs was realized through the deductive analysis of the three data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives. The analysis of a change in assumptions and beliefs as one element of a personal change included data supportive of the following ideas: (a) respect the process, (b) small group can lead deep change, (c) teacher buy in, (d) reflection and assessment of new practices. These four ideas surfaced in the data sets as a change in assumptions and beliefs was examined.

Changes in Practice Related to Teacher Empowerment During Implementation

The final element of deep, systemic change that was deductively analyzed under the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment was the possibility of a change in practice. The coded data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives were deductively analyzed for changes in practice as related to teacher empowerment. These changes in practice are noted in table 2 and include, (a) teachers as reading experts, (b) individualizing instruction, (c) assessment driven instruction, and (d) common language.

As new practices were examined in the data sets, illustrations of teachers as reading experts were identified. One participant recalled her frustrating experience prior to the balanced literacy implementation with a textbook that did not meet the needs of her students. The increased necessity for all classroom teachers to be experts in the teaching of reading due to the varied abilities of students was being realized and the district adopted textbook was not sufficient; thus creating an interest in balanced literacy. She stated, “...every teacher is not a reading specialist, nowadays yeah, but back then it wasn’t so teachers were trying to use the book.” The data support that the standard
practice of using a single textbook to teach reading to all students was changed as the implementation of the change to balanced literacy got underway. Through the daily interactions with empowered cohort members who were sharing new strategies that would meet the needs of all students, not only were noncohort teachers' knowledge increased allowing them to become experts in reading; but classroom practices were altered.

As personal change related to the theme of teacher empowerment was deductively analyzed for changes in practice, the individualizing of instruction was noted in the data sets. The rich stories shared by the study participants included recollections of teachers instructing students by their individual needs. A study participant compared it to something special education teachers had been doing for years with individualizing instruction. In relation to the balanced literacy implementation she said, “that came with a lot of training and to specifically teach what we had been doing in Special Ed for years, phonics...patterns...all the pieces that came with balanced literacy...” Through the deductive analysis of the data sets, a change in practice by the empowered teachers at Reading Elementary School to individualize student instruction was realized.

Another new practice that was realized through the deductive analysis of the elements of personal change that was related to teacher empowerment was using assessment-driven instruction. The teachers at Reading Elementary School, who were constantly focused on increasing student achievement, discovered a need to use a common assessment when determining a student’s reading level and eventually agreed upon the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). Illustrations from the data describe teachers using data from a DRA to determine what the student needs were and
where they needed more training. Much reflection by the study participants surfaced in the data sets around the DRA and where student skills were lacking. One participant described a change in practice that included “assess first instead of last.” This key change in practice was driven by empowered teachers who were going through the deep, systemic personal change to balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School.

The final new practice that was realized through the deductive analysis of the elements of personal change was a common language described by the participants of this study. The three data sets included stories from participants as they reflected on their own personal change experience and articulated the development of a common language by the staff at Reading Elementary School. This common language was illustrated in the data set as a participant recalled, “there was a common language that was spoken around the building between teachers and kids...it was almost like that building had individualized teaching for almost every kid.” The participant that recalled this common language was one of the two teachers who transferred into Reading Elementary after the implementation was under way. The shared language was something that she needed to learn right away to best communicate with her students and her colleagues. The common language was a change in practice, as previously teachers were searching independently for a more successful reading program and used language that supported the particular program that they were using at the time. Through my deductive analysis under the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment, the final element of deep, systemic change, i.e., changes in practice, was realized in through the three data sets.

The indigenous theme of teacher empowerment as it related to possible changes in practice was realized through the deductive analysis of the three data sets of focus
groups, individual interviews, and written narratives. Through recollection, the participants of this study often described the change process with statements such as “...it was the teachers that decided which direction and the next step that we needed to go.” This illustrates the empowerment that the teachers possessed within Reading Elementary School. These changes in practice included (a) teachers as reading experts, (b) individualizing instruction, (c) assessment driven instruction, and (d) common language.

Personal Change Related to Teacher Empowerment - Years Later

Of particular interest in this study is the lasting or long term effect the experience of being a part of the successful, deep, systemic change to balanced literacy had on the staff at Reading Elementary School. Through my deductive analysis of the personal change elements as they related to the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment, I examined the three data sets of focus group data, individual interview data, and personal narrative data for illustrations of changes that continue to have an effect on teacher practices today, i.e., several years later. As years passed, the environment, building, and colleagues with which the participants of this study work have changed.

The personal change elements of new learning, new beliefs and new practices related to teacher empowerment that were analyzed deductively in the data sets illustrate some long term effects on teachers’ practices today. In the data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, some of the participants of this study noted a continued change in their practice as a result of being involved with the deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School. Participants described using some of the strategies and assessments, such as guided reading groups, centers, DRA, and the
comprehension strategies that were learned during the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School.

One participant shared, “I still incorporate many of the components of balanced literacy in my classroom. My years at (Reading) taught me that a single approach to reading will not meet everyone’s needs.” Another participant stated, “Being at a new school, I was very shocked and upset that this [assessing] was not happening … myself and a few other teachers from [Reading] brought this up several times and fought to have DRA and/or DIBLES testing … after two years of battle, we finally have some teachers on board with us.” The deductive analysis of the elements of personal change identified some support by the participants that their new learning, beliefs, and practices related to teacher empowerment are evident in their professional practice today.

The analysis of the data also noted other participants that are not able to use the balanced literacy approach exactly as they had learned it due to some mandates from grants or building leaders, so it was not evident in their teaching practice today. The power tended to be on the mandate instead of the teachers or individual student achievement. One participant shared,

…the impact on this truly came through when I moved to another school in the district and I had to teach reading with the use of a specific reading program, which was dictated by a grant. It had guided reading in it, but it was not at the level of my readers. I wasn’t able to use my own big books, poems, or other tools that I had so much fun enticing my students’ reading desires with. I felt trapped and as though I had gone backwards in the appropriate choice to teach reading…unfortunately, I had no choice.

Another participant stated,

…all of the balanced literacy is gone. The district bought into a canned program and now I am forced to follow it…the canned program has some
elements of balanced literacy, but it is scripted to what I have to say and do each day.

The deductive analysis of the data sets from the participants that were not able to use the balanced literacy program today as they did at Reading Elementary School did not identify the elements of personal change as the theme of teacher empowerment was examined. In fact, these participants did not identify any support that the empowerment of teachers was in existence at their current schools.

Theme 2: Time

Not only does teacher empowerment surface as an overarching theme in the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, but the main theme of time also presents itself in the three data sets. Time, related to the implementation of the deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School, emerged as a theme when the data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives were analyzed inductively. As the researcher, I am first going to tell the story through the frame of time and how it was recalled by the participants of this study years later and presented in the data as the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy took place at Reading Elementary School.

The implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School took place over the span of five years. The data included stories from the participants that described how the balanced literacy program evolved over those five years. An illustration of time as an overarching theme includes, “...we were given the time to look at things ... to test ... to successfully implement it...” In the beginning, a small group of
teachers initiated the change, created a plan for bringing the rest of the staff on board, and
led the deep, systemic change over time. One step in the plan for bringing the entire
teaching staff on board was training the staff on the components of balanced literacy and
giving them an overview of the program. This was done in the spring, toward the end of
the school year, offering staff the opportunity to research and make plans over their
summer break in order to implement in the fall. As the implementation began in the fall,
teachers were trained on the DRA, which was the common assessment for leveling their
students. The stories in the data sets provided illustrations that, using a common
assessment and analyzing the data from it, opened many doors for teacher development.

The student assessment data not only showed teachers where their students
needed instruction; but the teachers also realized where their teaching skills needed
improvement. Teachers assessed their students four times a year, which resulted in
reflection on student learning and best practices. The data provide support for the notion
of time, as one participant stated, “I think sometimes people throw so much stuff at you
and expect you to just know it like that, that it will fail, because you don’t really take time
to perfect it.” Additional support came from a participant when she said, “...you can’t
just do everything, boom, you have to know everything by the end of the year, you do
little steps ... and then you add another thing to it....” As the deep, systemic change was
examined inductively, the rich stories in the data sets clearly present time as an
overarching indigenous theme.

The indigenous theme of time was identified as an overarching theme in the three
data sets of focus group data, individual interview data, and written narrative as the
participants of this study recalled their experience of deep, systemic change at Reading
Elementary School. There are also three subthemes that help to clarify and frame the main, indigenous theme of time. As shown in figure 1, the subthemes of time are (a) implement new strategies over time, (b) professional development, and (c) assessment.

Subthemes

Subtheme A: Implement New Strategies Over Time

Through the inductive analysis where the indigenous theme of time emerged, the idea that the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy was implemented over time with new strategies is noteworthy. As the participants of this study recalled their experience with the change process, they articulated how teachers were given time to adapt to new strategies. The three data sets provide illustrations that teachers learned new strategies at Reading Elementary School and were given time not only to comprehend the information but also time to implement the new strategies.

An illustration of this subtheme in the data includes, “...just as we give our kids time to learn something, we gave ourselves as adults, time to learn something.” Additional support from a study participant includes, “I thought, we were really going to give this the time it needs, not this fly by the seat of your pants again.” My inductive analysis that identified the overarching theme of time as the deep, system change to balanced literacy was examined also provided clarification that the new strategies learned were implemented over an extended period of time.
Subtheme B: Professional Development

A second subtheme that was identified to clarify the indigenous theme of time is professional development and the allotment of time it was given during the deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School. As the three data sets were inductively analyzed, participants recalled many opportunities for professional development that was purposeful and directly related to their classroom instruction. Participants described monthly grade level meetings, card marking meetings, book clubs, and other workshops that they participated in during the deep change experience.

One transcription illustrated this subtheme: “...we were given time during the day once every card marking or so to come up with plans and discuss how we were doing things and how we could do things better ... we were fortunate that we had time...” More support from the data included, “...giving us the professional development time to look at different aspects of it ... was so valuable.” Time for a variety of professional development activities was identified in the data sets as a clarifying subtheme of the overarching theme of time that was identified in the inductive analysis.

Subtheme C: Assessment

In addition to the subthemes of implementing new strategies over time and professional development, a final subtheme of assessment was identified as a clarifier in the overarching theme of time as the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy was inductively analyzed. The three data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives illustrate that time was spent on assessment by the participants of this
study. Participants not only described the value of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) assessment used with students that increased student and teacher learning; but also described time spent assessing the implementation process itself. First, the teachers were provided classroom coverage so they could complete the DRA with their students. This was illustrated by a study participant when she said, “...to show growth over time, we would have DRA coverage ... we did it every marking period...” The data provide support that participants also spent time informally evaluating the balanced literacy program as it was being implemented. A participant in the study recalled, “We had time to meet together so that we could say, ‘this worked, this didn’t work’...” The subtheme of assessment under the framework of the overarching theme of time was identified in the three data sets through my inductive analysis of the deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School.

Conclusion

The inductive analysis of the three data sets of focus group data, individual interview data, and written narratives identified the indigenous theme of time as an overarching theme during the deep change to balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School. To clarify the theme of time, the subthemes of (a) implement new strategies over time, (b) professional development, and (c) assessment were presented.

Personal Change Related to Time

The second part of my analysis included a deductive analysis of the coded data sets where the indigenous theme of time was realized. My deductive analysis uses the
three elements of personal change, which include new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice to identify how participants of this study articulate any impact that the systemic change process had on their professional practice immediately after implementation or impacting their practice several years later. The coded data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives were deductively analyzed to determine impact on professional practice. In the following paragraphs, I first present the results of my deductive analysis across the three elements of personal change, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice as they related to the theme of time during the implementation. Finally, I present the results that the personal change had on participants professional practice years later.

New Learning Related to Time During Implementation

In the deductive analysis of the coded data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives, new learning was identified as I examined the three elements of personal change as they were related to time. Table 2 outlines the new learning related to time that existed during and after the change process. They are (a) strategy mastery, (b) organizing and leveling books, and (c) teacher development.

As the coded data sets were deductively analyzed for new learning, the mastery of new strategies that the participants were learning over time were identified. The specific new strategies, learned over the course of three and four years, were articulated by the participants of this study and included the balanced literacy format, DRA, retelling strategies, and comprehension strategies. One illustration that supports the notion that the strategies associated with the balanced literacy program were learned and implemented
over time includes, “...see how the timeline went? It wasn’t in one year we’re going to
do balanced literacy, do DRA testing, expect them to get 16 or higher, to say that we have
good comprehension... It happened over ...years...” The strategies that were learned
and mastered by the participants in this study during the deep, systemic change were
rolled out over time.

As the participants learned new strategies to use in their classrooms, they also
learned how to organize and level the reading materials that were needed in a balanced
literacy classroom. The coded data sets illustrated time the staff at Reading Elementary
spent while implementing the balanced literacy program to learn about the characteristics
of book leveling; set up a literacy library where resources were stored for teachers;
actually leveling books in their classrooms; and organizing a leveled library for student
book check out. As one participant stated, “We were given time to level books... just
things that directly applied to our classroom...” The time spent learning and leveling
books by the teachers at Reading Elementary School was new to the teachers as they
implemented the balanced literacy program.

The new learning that took place during the deep, systemic change at Reading
Elementary School also involved teacher development. Teachers developed their skills
by observing other teachers. As this systemic change was teacher-led by empowered
teachers, the data provided support that the staff of Reading enhanced their knowledge of
various aspects of balanced literacy by observing in their colleagues classrooms to gain
new learning about balanced literacy. One participant who was a cohort member
illustrated teachers observing other teachers when she said, “I had a lot of different
teachers ... coming in to watch my lessons to see how I was doing it so they could do the
same thing in their classroom...” The teachers dedicated time for themselves to learn and develop their professional practice.

As the elements of personal change were deductively analyzed through the frame of the indigenous theme of time, illustrations of new learning were identified in the data. The three data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and personal narratives illustrated new learning that included (a) strategy mastery, (b) organizing and leveling books, and (c) teacher development.

Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs Related to Time During Implementation

Another element of personal change that was deductively analyzed through the three coded data sets is the possibility of changes in the assumptions and beliefs of the participants during the change to balanced literacy. Table 2 outlines the changes in assumptions and beliefs that were identified in the data that were related to the theme of time which include (a) implementation in stages and (b) reflection on practice.

As the coded data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives were deductively analyzed for changes in assumptions and beliefs, the notion that the deep, systemic change would take time surfaced. In the past, the participants recalled new programs that were implemented by every teacher at once and immediately after a brief training. The balanced literacy implementation was different as it evolved in stages and the training was ongoing. This was a change in the belief system of the staff at Reading Elementary School. The coded data illustrated this when a participant said,
that was a very nice luxury to be able to roll it out over a period of time because most of the time ... we want instant results and this whole balanced literacy thing was very patient the way it played out when you look back on it and think, you know it was slow, but it built like it should...

Giving a new program ample time to be implemented through stages was a change in assumption and beliefs at Reading Elementary School.

Another change in assumptions and beliefs that was identified in the deductive analysis of the coded data sets was the reflection on practice related to the theme of time. Not only was the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy implemented over time, but the participants of this study illustrated time to reflect on their teaching practice as part of a new belief system. The participants recalled several opportunities where they were given time to reflect on their practice and collaborate with their colleagues to find solutions to problems. One participant illustrated this when she recalled the time given for grade level meetings during the day, rather than after school which had been previously done. She said,

Those were awesome because that is when we really started to tweak things ... when you really want to work on something, you want some deep thought ... you have to say, let's give this a chunk of time here.

The belief that reflection on practice will lead to greater understanding by staff members during a deep, systemic change was a shift for the staff at Reading Elementary School and was identified in the three data sets.

The elements of change were deductively analyzed through the three data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives, where changes in assumptions and beliefs were identified under the theme of time. The changes in assumptions and
beliefs that were identified were, a) implementation of change takes time and (b) reflection on practice.

*Changes in Practice Related to Time During Implementation*

The indigenous theme of time as it related to possible changes in practice was realized through the deductive analysis of the three data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives. As shown in table 2, the changes in practice that were identified include (a) book clubs, (b) monthly grade level meetings, (c) individual student assessments, and (d) summer literacy camp.

As the coded data sets were deductively analyzed for changes in practice as the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy took place as recollected by the participants of this study, book clubs as a change in practice were recalled by the participants. Participants of this study recalled when the staff meeting time format changed from a "housekeeping" agenda to a professional book club initiated by the teachers. An illustration of this included, "...having an administrator that gives you time during staff meetings ... allow us time to do our professional development ... book studies..." This allotment of time for book studies was a change in practice from previously held staff meetings where "housekeeping" items were the focus.

The three data sets also presented illustrations of monthly grade level meetings where time was spent during the day rather than after school. This change in practice was illustrated by a study participant when she said, "we had time to meet ... constant meeting to reflect, review and revise ... if you don't have the time to sit and fix it, then
it's not going to get fixed...” The participants told stories of a change in practice where time was given during the day for monthly grade level meetings to reflect on practice.

The deductive analysis realized another change in practice related to time that included time for individual student assessment was identified in the three data sets. Part of the balanced literacy program included teachers completing an individual DRA assessment on each of their students four times a year. Data support that this assessment was a time consuming but valuable tool that helped to steer student instruction. Participants recalled the time that was arranged for each teacher to complete these assessments and spoke of its value. One participant said, “DRA was successful ... we were trained ... we had the time...” When the quarterly reading assessments needed to take place, the building secretary took the responsibility of arranging substitute coverage for the teachers. These changes in practice that included all staff members and related to individual student assessment were illustrated in the three data sets as they were deductively analyzed through the elements of personal change.

As data were analyzed for changes in practice as part of the personal change elements, related to the theme of time, a summer literacy camp was recalled by the participants of this study. Through the data, stories of how teachers used their student assessment data and realized how much reading achievement students lost over the summer led them to create a summer literacy camp. This change in practice was illustrated by a study participant when she said,

We realized ... what they were losing over the summer and I’ll say I’ve been in this district for 12 years and I’ve never taught, tutoring, summer school, anything, but the year we stayed open and did that summer program ... I believed in it...
A change in practice related to increasing student achievement included evaluating data and organizing and teaching a summer literacy program was identified in the data as the elements of personal change were examined.

The three coded data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives support the indigenous theme of time as the elements of personal change were inductively analyzed. The changes in practice that were identified in the data included (a) book clubs, (b) monthly grade level meetings, (c) individual student assessments, and (d) summer literacy camp.

Personal Change Related to Time-Years Later

The lasting or long-term effects the experience of being a part of the successful, deep, systemic change to balanced literacy had on the staff at Reading Elementary School is of particular interest in this study. Through my deductive analysis of the three personal change elements as they related to the indigenous theme of time, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice, I examined the three data sets of focus group data, individual interview data, and personal narrative data for illustrations of personal change that continue to have an effect on teacher practices several years later.

Many of the participants of this study are currently working in other buildings and at different levels than they experienced at Reading Elementary School, and two participants have retired. The new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice related to time have not completely carried over in teachers’ professional practices today as articulated in the data. The three data sets illustrate stories
from the participants of this study where their current working environment does not allow adequate time for deep, systemic change. Some participants are able to implement some of the best practices of balanced literacy that were learned at Reading Elementary School individually in their own classrooms, but the same amount of time is not allocated for these tasks. The rich stories that the participants shared in the data sets do not include time for group reflection or personal growth that was so prevalent during the years of balanced literacy implementation at Reading Elementary School.

Theme 3: Building Culture

A third and final overarching theme that emerged from my inductive analysis of the three data sets of focus group, individual interview, and written narrative data is building culture. As the researcher, I am going to tell the story of the deep, systemic change to a balanced literacy program at Reading Elementary School through the framework of building culture. The participants of this study provided thick, rich stories as they recalled their deep change experience at Reading Elementary and provided illustrations of change that included a building culture that supported the implementation of balanced literacy at this elementary school.

A unique building culture at Reading Elementary School was illustrated in the data by the study participants. Reading Elementary was a supportive and collaborative place where the staff worked together for the betterment of their students, socially and academically. There was a focus on learning for all students. The principal of this building was nurturing to both his staff and students. The staff at Reading shared the leadership and responsibility for all initiatives. Some words that participants used to
describe the climate at Reading Elementary School were “family,” “professional,”
“respected,” “friendly,” “non-judgmental,” “nurturing,” and “caring.” This type of
climate fostered a building culture that would allow deep, systemic change to take place.

The inductive analysis of the thick, rich stories of personal change included in the
three data sets identified building culture as an overarching indigenous theme. The three
data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives provide support
for the subthemes that frame and serve as clarifiers of the main theme of building culture.
Table 1 shows the following subthemes that support building culture as an overarching
theme: (a) collaboration and sharing, (b) strong relationships, (c) shared leadership, and
(d) learning for all. The following paragraphs will outline the subthemes and provide
support from the three data sets.

Subthemes

Subtheme A: Collaboration and Sharing

Through the inductive analysis where the overarching theme of building culture
was identified, the subtheme of collaboration and sharing is supported in the data. The
participants in this study recalled their change experience and elaborated on the
collaboration and sharing of information that existed during the implementation. One
participant who was a special education teacher at the school provided support when she
said, “I felt like I was part of the staff, finally for the first time, I had been in so many
buildings everywhere doing my own thing, a separate entity and not part of ‘the staff’…”
The entire staff, including general education teachers, special education teachers, English
as second language teachers, paraprofessionals, the principal, and the clerical staff worked together at Reading Elementary School to implement the balanced literacy program. Formal and informal opportunities for collaboration and sharing occurred at lunchtime, grade level meetings, and staff meetings. Additional support for the subtheme of collaboration and sharing came from a study participant when she said, “...everybody was sharing ... there wasn’t a lot of takers, there was a lot of give and take...” The inductive analysis of the deep, systemic change that was recalled by the study participants identified collaboration and sharing as a subtheme of the overarching theme of building culture.

**Subtheme B: Strong Relationships**

The overarching theme of building culture was identified in my inductive analysis along with the subtheme of strong relationships, which serves as a clarifier of the theme. As the deep, systemic change was examined through the three data sets, the relationships that were in existence at Reading Elementary School were described by study participants. The building culture included a value on personal and professional relationships with people. Study participants recalled stories during the years of implementation where the staff got together casually and professionally. A participant illustrated this when she recalled something the principal did during the years of deep, systemic change. She said, “[He] made a point to keep people together, we had monthly little get-togethers, we had Christmas ... we would even get together in the summertime just to touch base...” The gatherings that the participants recalled provided opportunities
to build trusting relationships. The data support that the trust was transferred over into the professional lives of the staff at Reading Elementary. Support from the data includes,

...Now that I look back on it, there were teachers in their 20s, 30s, 60s, 70s and everybody was at a different stage and level in their lives ... but yet everybody respected each other ... whatever was going on in their life at that time...

The staff at Reading Elementary was also a stable staff where the majority of the teachers remained year after year. An illustration from the data includes, “We developed this family relationship because we had worked together year after year ... we had the same core group...” The subtheme of strong relationships as it framed the overarching theme of building culture was realized through the three data sets.

**Subtheme C: Shared Leadership**

Shared leadership is a subtheme that was illustrated in the data sets as the theme of building culture was identified in the inductive analysis. The building administrator experienced the deep, systemic change process alongside of his staff and shared the responsibility of initiating the change process. The small cohort of teachers that began the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School displayed leadership qualities. The principal shared his leadership with teacher leaders and encouraged them. One participant in the study that was a cohort member recalled, “The principal trusted us and we trusted him not to undermine us and change things.” The data provide support that the building leader’s actions allowed the deep, systemic change process to take place. Support from the data also includes, “...that was [principal], though, I think he lets you be yourself ... I think that affects you professionally.” The
inductive analysis identified building culture as an indigenous theme from the three data sets with the subtheme of shared leadership clarifying the main theme.

*Subtheme D: Learning for All*

The main theme of building culture was identified in my inductive analysis with learning for all as a clarifying subtheme. Reading Elementary School operated under a motto that all students would reach their fullest potential. The data supported that the staff worked under this same vision as they experienced the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy. One participant reflected on the many issues that students often brought to Reading Elementary School,

> We had all these other factors but for the most part, we stayed very positive and very focused and there weren’t any naysayers that said this won’t happen or you can’t do this here or that won’t work with our population.

Additional support included a recollection by a participant when she stated, “I think it was successful because we had a group of teachers that were willing to change and to learn and were pretty open-minded about things especially when they believed that they worked for the kids.” The three data collections provide illustrations that learning for all was a subtheme of the overarching theme of building culture as the inductive analysis was done.

*Conclusion*

The overarching indigenous theme of building culture was identified in my inductive analysis of the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy as it was examined in
the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives. The subthemes of (a) collaboration and sharing, (b) strong relationships, (c) shared leadership, and (d) learning for all were clarifiers under the frame of building culture as the thick, rich stories from the study participants were analyzed.

**Personal Change Related to Building Culture**

Following the inductive analysis of the data where the indigenous theme of building culture was identified, a deductive analysis of the coded data was conducted to examine the elements of personal change, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. The elements of personal change, as articulated by the participants in this study were analyzed for any impact that the systemic change process had on their professional practice immediately after implementation or impacting their practice today. In the following paragraphs, I first present the results of my deductive analysis across the three elements of personal change, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice as they related to the theme of time during the implementation. Finally, I present the results that the personal change had on participants professional practice years later.

**New Learning Related to Building Culture During Implementation**

In the deductive analysis of the coded data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives, new learning was identified as I examined the three elements of personal change as they related to building culture. Table 2 outlines the new learning related to building culture that existed during and after the change process. The
new learning related to building culture includes (a) colleague dependence and (b) lesson development.

Colleague dependence as it related to building culture was a new learning that was identified as a result of the deductive analysis across the elements of personal change. The thick, rich stories that were articulated by the study participants contained support that the staff at Reading Elementary School depended on each other for lesson ideas, improvements in practice, and knowledge of new strategies. The building culture at Reading Elementary School supported the staff working together and strategizing to improve classroom practice, ultimately increasing student achievement. A participant from the study who transferred to Reading Elementary after the implementation of balanced literacy had already begun recalled,

When you came here everybody was doing the same thing, so if you didn’t do the same thing, it was like you would be an outcast...so you jumped on the band wagon because that’s what everyone was doing and everyone was enthused and if you had trouble somebody could help you.

New learning was evident in the data as the participants reflected back on their personal experience of the change. Additional support for new learning came from another participant who said,

We respected each other for our areas of expertise ... we were willing to share and take criticism because we were positive and we felt confident in what we did ... when we had criticism it was more constructive and we were fine with it, we didn’t feel bad or hold it against anybody, we were always open.

The culture at Reading Elementary School included colleagues who depended on each other for new learning.
Another new learning that was related to building culture as the data was deductively analyzed was the development of lessons by teachers. The participants of this study provided rich stories of teachers sharing and developing lessons. The data provide support that as teachers implemented balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School they learned how to create and share lessons that correlated to the leveled books they were using. An illustration from the data included,

...if one teacher had done a book and did the lessons that had a focused skill, we shared that focus skill, so the next teacher that used the book didn’t have to try to figure out what the focus skill was that went with it.

The data provide support that the new learning related to building culture included the development of lessons by teachers.

My deductive analysis across the overarching indigenous theme of building culture using the elements of personal change identified two new areas of learning in the data sets. The new areas of learning that were identified in the data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives were (a) colleague dependence and (b) lesson development.

Changes in Assumptions and Beliefs Related to Building Culture During Implementation

Another element of personal change that was deductively analyzed through the three coded data sets is the possibility of changes in the assumptions and beliefs of the participants during the change to balanced literacy. Through my deductive analysis I identified three possible changes in the assumptions and beliefs of the participants in this study. Table 2 illustrates them as follows: (a) teamwork, (b) consensus building, and (c) shared responsibility of all students.
Teamwork as related to building culture was identified in the coded data sets as a possible change in the assumptions and beliefs of the staff members at Reading Elementary School. The staff at Reading Elementary School worked together during the implementation of balanced literacy, which was a different belief for some staff members. One participant from the study recalled,

... I mean I never felt like I was a stranger in this building at all, even from day one,... everybody looked out for everybody, I mean I felt like people were looking out for me when I came in, I was supported...

The assumption that people would work together rather than in isolation was new for some staff members. Support for the belief system at Reading Elementary which included everyone working together to ensure student success was supported when a study participant stated, “I mean everyone was just kind of like a team...” Teamwork was described as part of the building culture and was identified as a change in assumption and belief as the three coded data sets were deductively analyzed through the change process.

Another possible change in assumptions and beliefs that was related to building culture was the notion of consensus building. The deductive analysis of the coded data sets identified and illustrated staff experiences where discussions took place when a decision regarding the implementation of balanced literacy was needed. The discussion and consensus building that occurred between all vested staff members challenged some belief systems. When a plan or decision was needed regarding their implementation process, the staff at Reading Elementary School would discuss, gather each other’s ideas and opinions, and proceed in a manner that was agreed upon by a majority of the staff members. An illustration of how the staff worked toward consensus regarding the
comprehension assessments was shared by a study participant. She said, "...we have to go back and look at comprehension ... what would make someone go on to the next level and ... collaboratively agree what worked..." Once the agreement was made, a memo was created and the entire staff agreed to follow the new procedure. The coded data sets provided support that consensus building as it related to building culture at Reading Elementary School was in existence during the change process.

The shared responsibility for all students was a challenge to the existing assumptions and belief systems of the staff at Reading Elementary School. As the elements of personal change were examined in the three coded data sets, the notion that all students were the responsibility of every staff member was realized. The data provided support that the student academic achievement was the responsibility of all Reading Elementary staff members, which was in contrast to a previously held notion that a teacher was responsible for her own students. One participant reflected on the change and shared,

I'll never forget having one teacher send a very pleased student to my room to report he had grown seven levels that year ... Though the emphasis was ... on the student's achievement, it was, for me, a first in the recognition of my ability as a special educator to assist the general educators in student success.

As personal change was deductively analyzed through the three data sets, a change in assumptions and beliefs was evident as the study participants recalled thick, rich stories related to a building culture where there was a shared responsibility for all students.

My deductive analysis of the overarching theme of building culture in the coded data sets identified a change in the assumptions and belief systems of the study participants. The assumptions and beliefs that were challenged as an element of personal
change included (a) teamwork, (b) consensus building, and (c) shared responsibility of all students.

New Practices Related to Building Culture During the Implementation

New practices as an element of personal change were identified in my deductive analysis of the three coded data sets of focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives. Table 2 outlines the new practices that were identified in the data sets as the elements of personal change were examined under the overarching theme of building culture. These include: (a) sharing materials, (b) sharing ideas/lessons, and (c) collaboration with colleagues.

The coded data sets included stories from the study participants who recalled sharing materials, which was a change in practice during the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School. All teachers had agreed to move their own personal classroom materials that might benefit the entire staff into a literacy library where they could be shared. One study participant stated, “...we did start sharing materials, that was a big step...you know how hard it is to give up your own stuff...” A change in practice at Reading Elementary School during the implementation of balanced literacy was illustrated in the data as study participants recalled stories of their personal change experience that included the of sharing materials.

Another change in practice that was realized through the deductive analysis of the coded data sets includes the sharing of ideas and lessons by the teachers at Reading Elementary School. The participants of this study recalled stories of the implementation of balanced literacy where teachers would include their own personal lessons that they
created to use with leveled books. The teachers would include a copy of their "created" lesson with the leveled book when they returned it to the literacy library (a shared resource room by all staff). When another teacher used the same leveled book, that teacher could use the lesson. This change in practice was illustrated by a study participant when she said, "...we shared that focus skill, so the next teacher that used that book didn't have to try to figure out what the focus skill was that went with it..." As the personal change elements were deductively analyzed through the coded data sets, teachers sharing ideas and lessons were identified as a change in practice.

The collaboration with colleagues as it related to building culture was another change in practice that was supported in the coded data as it was deductively analyzed through personal change. The building culture at Reading Elementary School during the implementation of balanced literacy included multiple opportunities for the staff at Reading to collaborate with each other. The data provide support that opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, such as grade level meetings, book clubs, and cohort meetings existed as they experienced the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy. This was illustrated in the data when a participant shared, "we used to do grade level meetings for the whole district and when it was moved to grade level meetings at our building...I think that is when it becomes powerful...these are people you want to connect with..." The coded data support that the collaboration with colleagues at Reading Elementary School was a change in practice.

As I deductively analyzed the three elements of personal change through the three coded data sets, new practices were identified related to the overarching indigenous theme of building culture at Reading Elementary School. The practices that were
identified included (a) sharing materials, (b) sharing ideas/lessons, and (c) collaboration with colleagues.

**Personal Change Related to Building Culture-Years Later**

Of particular interest in this study is the lasting or long-term effect the experience of being a part of the successful, deep, systemic change to balanced literacy had on the staff at Reading Elementary School. Through my deductive analysis of the personal change elements as they related to the indigenous theme of building culture, I examined the three data sets of focus group data, individual interview data, and personal narrative data for illustrations of changes that continue to have an effect on teacher practices today.

Years have passed since the implementation of balanced literacy took place at Reading Elementary School, and the staff that once worked together is now working in different environments. Some participants have retired, while others have transferred to different buildings or even different districts. As the participants recalled their past experience with deep, systemic change through the data sets, the participants also provided some insights related to their current situation. Participants have shared clear differences related to building culture that have an effect on their practices today. The data illustrate that the personal change experience and knowledge of balanced literacy individually exists within the participants of this study; however, the building culture in which they currently work does not always allow for the same support and collaboration that existed at Reading Elementary School. One participant shared an experience that she had in her current building that is related to building culture:
I see now, years later, how far ahead we were as compared to other elementaries in [the district] because we had those conversations and I don’t think that’s happened quite yet around here ... that people are comfortable to go around and talk about kids’ comprehension levels and scores...

Another participant who continues to teach at Reading Elementary School, which has been realigned to an early childhood building and has a different building principal, recalled differences in the building culture today even though it is the same physical building. She shared, “lip service is given to ‘what’s best for kids’ but I don’t feel it…” This is in direct contrast to the recollections the participants had regarding building culture during the implementation years. The personal change that included new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice were personally taken by the participants of this study to the other buildings, but the data support that the various building cultures affect whether or not the new changes in practice are transferred to the new building.

Conclusion of Inductive and Deductive Analysis

After conducting both the inductive and deductive analyses in the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, the indigenous themes of teacher empowerment, time, and building culture were identified as well as the elements of personal change as they related to the main themes. The inductive analysis identified the three overarching themes of teacher empowerment, time, and building culture, with clarifiers that served as subthemes and framed the main indigenous themes. Table 1 outlined the main themes and subthemes as critical elements of this study. The deductive analysis of this study used the elements of personal change that included new
learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. The three-part lens provided insights on the personal change experience as shared by the participants of this study through the three coded data sets. The elements of personal change related to the three indigenous themes were outlined in table 2. The personal change experiences as reported in a retrospective by the participants of this study were analyzed using the three elements of personal change to not only identify changes in teacher professional practice during the implementation years, but also to analyze the data for any effect the change experience had on practice years later.

Results of Deductive Analysis Against Meister’s Five Elements

Overview

A deductive analysis was completed against the theoretical framework of this study, which looked through the lenses of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change (Meister, 2000). This part of the analysis was conducted to assess the prominence of each of these elements, which are articulated in the literature on change as described by the teachers who lived through the experience at Reading Elementary School. The literature is very clear in outlining these themes as being critical to achieving deep, systemic change. By analyzing the transcriptions from the focus group interviews, individual interviews, and the written narratives, I was able to find elements that support each of the themes of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change at Reading Elementary School during its implementation of balanced literacy. By cross-
tabulating the results of the deductive analysis across all data sets of this study, I was able to determine the prominence of each of these themes as captured in the interviews, focus groups, and written narratives of the study participants from Reading Elementary School as they reflected on their experience with change during the implementation of balanced literacy.

In my deductive analysis I mined the raw data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives for illustrations or incidents of Meister’s (2000) themes of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change, which the literature has determined critical for deep level change. The illustrative points that the participants of this study articulated, related to each of Meister’s themes, were then organized into the appropriate theme in order to determine the prominence of each theme. Table 3 outlines the themes of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change with the number of illustrations that were provided by the participants of this study. In the following paragraphs, I will present the results of my deductive analysis against Meister’s elements and will discuss the prominence of each element.

Table 3: Deductive Analysis against Meister's (2000) Themes of Incident Prominence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes &amp; Illustrating Points</th>
<th>Focus Group Interviews</th>
<th>Individual Interviews</th>
<th>Written Narratives</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Student-centered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Staff buy in</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading as goal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
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Table 3 – Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes &amp; Illustrating Points</th>
<th>Focus Group Interviews</th>
<th>Individual Interviews</th>
<th>Written Narratives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Working together to increase student achievement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Empowered teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaboration with support staff</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Problem solvers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Time for adult learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Principal learning with staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teachers training teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Non-traditional methods</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>• Building principal</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teacher leaders</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cohort</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment of the change</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cohort success</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Material evaluation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reflection using student data</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Merging with “canned” program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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**Prominence of Vision**

Vision as a theme in this deductive analysis emerged as prominent (with 56 distinct illustrations) in this study of deep, systemic change. The data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives include examples by the participants related to the theme of vision that fall primarily into three illustrating
subthemes: (a) student centered, (b) staff buy in, and (c) reading as a goal. The ways in which participants cited these three subthemes all related to the ways in which the goals of the reading initiative became a strongly-held, shared commitment. Participants described how the reading initiative derived from and deepened the school's student-centered orientation. They also described how the reading initiative came to be "owned" by the whole staff and how the staff coalesced around the focus on literacy.

The participants of this study reflected on their experience of deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary and recalled the implementation of balanced literacy to be an initiative that fit within their broader school vision. The vision that the participants spoke of was not in print on letterhead and posters, but rather was a "motto" or underlying understanding of a shared, common purpose by staff for student achievement. Participants shared that the students at Reading Elementary school were the focus and priority of all initiatives and that the content area of reading became a building goal that aligned with the overarching emphasis on student success.

Participants reflected that student needs always came first and daily practices were student-centered. The participants elaborated and remembered the belief that Reading Elementary students first needed to possess reading skills before they could be successful in the other content areas. Participants also described how the staff bought into this idea and operated under that shared vision. An illustration from an individual interview that supported this theme is,

I think we had a shared belief ... we wanted our kids to be more successful, and I think that's what drove us to look at balanced literacy ... I think the balanced literacy came as part of the vision, not the other way around.
Meister’s theme of vision was clearly evident in the data with the illustrating subthemes of (a) student centered, (b) staff buy in, and (c) reading as a goal. These illustrations emerged from the deductive analysis as individually prominent (see table 4) and their aggregate prominence in the data suggest that the essence of the three subthemes supports the interpretation that shared vision was a strong component of the participants’ common experience.

Prominence of Collaboration

Meister’s theme of collaboration was identified as the most prominent, with 73 distinct illustrations that the deductive analysis derived from the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives. Participants of this study described the staff at Reading Elementary as having been collaborative in their efforts while implementing deep, systemic change. Four illustrating points were identified in the deductive analysis of the element of collaboration in the data sets. These illustrating points or subthemes are (a) working together to increase student achievement, (b) empowered teachers, (c) collaboration with support staff, and (d) problem solvers.

Collaborative efforts were described in the three data sets as the staff at Reading Elementary School worked together to increase student achievement with the implementation of balanced literacy. The implementation of balanced literacy was an initiative that the teachers were empowered to lead. As one focus group transcription read,

I think it really empowered the teachers too. I think I felt I was a part of it. I didn’t feel like anybody was telling me what to do. I felt like I was kind of helping, you know, getting it going, or keeping it going.
According to the data, the deep, systemic change included the entire staff at Reading Elementary School as study participants recalled the involvement of the teachers, principal, Title I and ESL staff, clerical staff, and paraprofessionals. Several mentions of involving the support staff indicated that broad staff involvement was a component of collaboration that held some prominence in participants’ memories of the experience.

The data provide extensive illustrations of specific collaborative engagements such as staff meetings, grade level meetings, professional development meetings and daily interactions during teacher lunchtimes. Study participants’ reflections on the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary school also made note of the problem solving that the staff experienced as they met in grade levels, professional development and staff meetings.

In summary, a variety of collaborative efforts by the staff occurred over an extended period of time as the balanced literacy implementation evolved into a deep level change. This collaboration was characterized by working together to stay focused on the desired improvements in student achievement, by broad-based involvement, by feelings of collective empowerment, and by examples of shared problem solving. Thus, the theme of collaboration was most prominent in the subthemes of (a) working together to increase student achievement, (b) empowered teachers, (c) collaboration with support staff, and (d) problem solvers.

Prominence of Professional Development

The theme of professional development was prominent in the three data sets (with 63 distinct illustrations) as they were analyzed deductively against Meister’s framework.
The focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, included four illustrating subthemes of professional development as recalled by the participants of this study. The illustrating subthemes were (a) time for adult learning, (b) principal learning with staff, (c) teachers training teachers, and (d) non-traditional methods. These points, as remembered by the participants of this study, were illustrated in the three data sets, and they support professional development as a relatively prominent theme.

The deep, systemic change to balanced literacy required the staff at Reading Elementary School to learn new strategies as they implemented balanced literacy in their classrooms. The data include several recollections from study participants about time allocated for professional development activities to learn new strategies. The professional learning activities that were described by study participants included several cited experiences of teachers learning the new approach to reading alongside their building principal. The participants acknowledged their administrator's consistent presence at professional development sessions, which often included teachers training other teachers.

The benefit of professional development presented by colleagues was illustrated in the data: "...teachers got the training, and I think it was effective because they got it from teachers ... once we started teaching each other, there was a comfort zone where you could go and ask questions..." The participants of this study reflected on their experience of deep, systemic change and illustrated non-traditional ways that professional development occurred during the implementation of balanced literacy. The study participants spoke about book clubs, grade level meetings, and other opportunities where the staff reflected on their practice, revisited professional development plans and created
a routine of continuous learning. These all illustrate how participants formed their shared learning routines around non-traditional forms of professional development, i.e., many references to professional learning were outside of the traditional formal training with the “outside experts” model.

The illustrative subthemes of (a) time for adult learning, (b) principal learning with staff, (c) teachers training teachers, and (d) non-traditional methods, outline the ways and nuances of how Meister’s theme of professional development was evident in the recalled experiences of participants and associated by them as critical to achieving deep, systemic change. Like the themes of vision and collaboration, the theme of Professional Development was characterized by subthemes and examples that align with a change process in which staff ownership played a prominent role.

Prominence of Leadership

Leadership as a critical theme to achieving deep, systemic change had a relatively high prominence (with 68 distinct illustrations) in the three sets of data that were deductively analyzed in this study of deep, systemic change to a balanced literacy program at Reading Elementary School. Leadership by the participants of this study was characterized through the following three illustrating subthemes that illustrate the sources of leadership within the school during the implementation of the balanced literacy initiative: (a) building principal, (b) teacher leaders, and (c) cohort. While distinct illustrations of principal leadership were slightly more prominent than those of teacher leaders, many of the principal leader illustrations had something to do with how the principal cultivated leadership among the teachers.
The data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives include rich stories from the study participants that articulate the building leader as prominent in the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy. The building leader, or principal, was clearly articulated by study participants across all three data sets. The data supported the principal as a critical person in supporting the balanced literacy initiative with time, resources, new learning, and emotional support. One statement of support from an individual interview transcription includes,

I think it was because [the principal] let us bounce off each other, because he let us share that enthusiasm, let us run a staff meeting, that’s why things happened there that you did not see at other buildings, he was key to the change.

Not only was the building administrator identified in the data as a leader, but teachers were also identified by study participants for their leadership practices.

Teacher leadership was identified in the three data sets where study participants reflected on the balanced literacy implementation and recalled stories of teachers initiating and leading the deep, systemic change. The data identified teachers who presented a variety of professional development sessions to other teachers at Reading Elementary School. Teachers demonstrated lessons, initiated the reorganization of staff meeting time and, were critical leaders in the implementation of balanced literacy. The small cohort of teachers as leaders had a relatively low prominence in the data compared to the illustrating points of building administrator and teacher leaders. The cohort of teachers led the implementation to balance literacy initially but other teacher leaders quickly came “on board.” In the three data sets, leadership had a relatively high prominence as the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy was deductively analyzed,
with the illustrative points of the building administrator, teacher, and the cohort being identified in the analyzed data. As with the ways in which Meister’s previously discussed themes presented themselves in the data, leadership was characterized as a shared commodity with the emphasis on shared ownership.

Prominence of the Assessment of Change

The assessment of change held a relatively prominent (with 61 distinct illustrations) place in the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, as it was deductively analyzed against Meister’s (2000) framework for critical deep level change. In the data, four illustrative subthemes emerged to characterize the theme of assessment of change as it was recalled by the study participants from Reading Elementary School. The subthemes are (a) cohort success, (b) material evaluation, (c) reflection using student data, and (d) merging with a “canned” program.

The implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School evolved over time and was assessed throughout the implementation. The data contained a number of examples from the participants who recalled when the implementation was first begun by the cohort members. The cohort members shared their success with their noncohort colleagues and problem solved areas of concern as they surfaced. The cohort members assessed their own personal changes and collaborated to bring the implementation to the entire staff at Reading Elementary School. During the assessment of the program, the leveled materials were evaluated and inventoried. The small group of teacher leaders that were planning to train and orient the rest of the staff confirmed that managerial issues
(such as the fact that sufficient materials were available for the increased number of staff who would be using them in a full implementation) were addressed along with outcome and quality issues.

The implementation of balanced literacy also required teachers to reflect on their student data. The assessment tools that were a part of the balanced literacy program gave teachers student data that were used to assess the effectiveness of the new reading program in terms of student achievement and teacher practices. The importance of utilizing student data for the assessment of change was identified in this transcription from an individual interview,

...this program also worked because we had data ... we collected a lot of data so we could see areas that needed more work and areas that were working ... as teachers you need to see some numbers that say ‘hey what you’re doing is working’ occasionally...

The assessment of change was also identified as an important factor when the school district brought in a “canned” program, or standard textbook, for reading several years into the implementation. Teachers assessed the program and merged areas that they deemed valuable with their existing balanced literacy program. In other words, teachers were intentional about applying what they had learned through ongoing assessment of their change initiative when it came to adopting and utilizing new textbook resources in their balanced literacy program.

As the subthemes (a) cohort success, (b) material evaluation, (c) reflection using student data, and (d) merging with a “canned” program illustrate, Meister’s (2000) theme of the assessment of change was also critical to deep, systemic change as illustrated by the data. Of particular note in the illustrating subthemes from the data is the absence of
any "top-down" references regarding how assessment of change occurred. The first teacher cohort assessed the success of the limited implementation and used what they found to encourage whole school implementation. Subsequently, the staff as a whole monitored and assessed the implementation through examination of student work and through team activities to troubleshoot and manage implementation. Again, as with the illustrations of Meister's other themes relating to deep implementation, the emphasis is on teacher ownership of both the purposes for the change and the processes for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the change.

Conclusion of Deductive Analysis against Meister's Five Elements

The deductive analysis against the conceptual framework of this study looked through the lens of Meister's (2000) framework of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change. This deductive analysis was done to assess the prominence of each of Meister's themes that the literature articulates as being critical to achieving deep, systemic change as they are described by the teachers who lived through the experience of deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School. The deductive analysis also revealed subthemes that characterize the ways in which Meister's themes applied to the case study school, revealing an overarching thread of shared, broad-based ownership that emerged across each of the themes examined.

Through analysis of the transcriptions from focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, I was able to identify illustrating subthemes in the data that support the themes of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change at Reading Elementary during the deep, systemic change to
balanced literacy. The deductive analysis and cross-tabulation identified collaboration as the single most prominent theme in the three data sets as recalled by the study participants. Leadership was the next most prominent theme in the three data sets followed by the themes of vision, professional development, assessment of change, and finally vision, as shown in table 3. The cross-tabulation of the deductive analysis results allowed me to also determine subthemes related to the characteristics of each element as relived by the study participants as they reflected on their deep, systemic change experience at Reading Elementary School and reveal the prominence of shared, broad-based ownership across each of Meister’s five themes.

Comparative Analysis of Inductive and Deductive Analyses

The final part of this study’s analysis of deep, systemic change as experienced by those staff members who lived through the change at Reading Elementary, included a comparative analysis between the inductive analysis where the indigenous themes and subthemes of teacher empowerment, time, and building culture were identified with the deductive analysis of Meister’s (2000) framework of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change. Through analysis of the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, the themes from the inductive and deductive analysis were compared to determine if any themes from the inductive analysis reflect, extend, clarify, or run contrary to the theoretical framework of Meister.

The indigenous theme of teacher empowerment confirms, extends and provides some clarification to Meister’s themes of professional development, collaboration and
leadership. The subtheme of purposeful professional development that is evidenced in the data from this study confirms and provides clarification to Meister’s theme of professional development with an emphasis on teacher ownership and empowerment. As teachers at Reading Elementary School were empowered, this study identified support for teachers developing and creating their own professional development based on their personal needs. Meister identified professional development as a critical element in the implementation of change, but this study identified purposeful professional development that begins with teachers, developed by teachers, and owned by teachers as an important variation on that theme.

The indigenous theme of teacher empowerment and broad-based shared ownership also extends Meister’s theme of collaboration. Along with purposeful professional development, this study identified a supportive climate for teacher-led change as a subtheme of teacher empowerment. A supportive climate with empowered teachers leading change through purposeful professional development provides for a more defined collaboration as deep, systemic change is implemented.

The theme of teacher empowerment further clarified and extended Meister’s theme of leadership as the data in this study identified teachers as leaders at Reading Elementary School. The leadership of the teachers was a critical element in the implementation of balanced literacy that was realized through the inductive analysis. The small start by a cohort of teachers to implement the balanced literacy program extends Meister’s theme of leadership by illustrating how a small group of empowered teachers can provide the leadership impetus for a major, whole-school change initiative. This was also a subtheme that was identified in the inductive analysis of this case study. The
notion of starting small was a subtheme of teacher empowerment but is related to the overarching theme of leadership. The overarching theme of teacher empowerment from the inductive analysis of the deep, systemic change at Reading Elementary School provides confirmation, extension and clarification of Meister’s themes of professional development, collaboration and leadership.

The indigenous theme of time that was identified in my inductive analysis of the three data sets provided clarification to the themes of professional development and assessment of change from the deductive analysis against Meister’s themes. The inductive analysis identified time as an overarching theme that impacted the level of professional development and assessment of change that could take place.

The deductive analysis identified professional development as a critical element for deep change, but the data from this study clarified that adequate time must be allocated for teacher development, especially when teachers are engaging in multiple, non-traditional ways of creating a culture for shared learning. Meister’s theme of assessing the change also required allocated time as identified in the three data sets of this particular case study. The implementation of new teaching strategies over time as well as time for impact on student achievement to be measured are subthemes that were related to time and act as clarifiers to Meister’s theme of the assessment of change. The data from this case study clearly identified time as a critical overarching theme for the successful implementation of a deep, systemic change.

The final but most telling inductive theme of this case study is building culture. The indigenous theme of building culture is interwoven through Meister’s framework of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of
change. The data from this case study identified building culture, along with the subtheme of strong relationships, as a critical element for successful deep, systemic change. The building culture during the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School, as described by the participants of this study, included descriptions of a shared vision of increasing student achievement in reading. This was achieved through the empowerment of teachers who collaboratively gained new knowledge and developed themselves professionally. The data in this study supported that the teacher leadership and collaboration allowed them to assess their changes as balanced literacy was implemented at Reading Elementary School. The theme of building culture extends Meister's elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change as it is interwoven through these critical elements for deep, systemic change. Throughout both the inductive and the deductive analyses, the most prominent characteristic of school culture for the case study school was broad-based, shared ownership. Moving from a few teachers to all teachers and members of the support staff, the balanced literacy initiative captured a culture characterized by commitment to a common goal or vision, fueled by teacher empowerment, and carried out through broad, whole school ownership for both implementation and the impact of the implementation.

Study Limitations

It is critical to revisit the limitations of this case study as the results from the inductive and deductive analyses are presented. This study was limited by the fact that over four years have passed since the implementation to balanced literacy occurred and
retrospective reflections and recollections can be filtered by time. Also, this case study examines only one elementary school and may not be reflective of non-elementary or even other elementary cases.

The process of first gathering focus group data, following with individual interviews, and finally collecting written narratives allowed participants to engage with and review data collected through transcriptions from previous data collection interactions. This may have assisted participants in building upon their initial recollections, but the quality of the data collected by the researcher is still limited to the power of participants’ memories and the strength of their abilities to reflect on and interpret those memories.

This study on deep change is limited to this one school and one change initiative. It is limited to the number of staff that was involved with the focus group interviews, individual interviews, and the written narrative pieces. The researcher was an involved staff member at Reading Elementary School during the implementation of balanced literacy. Measures were taken to reduce bias, and the researcher completed an epic responding to the same questions that the subjects were asked through the data collection process. An understanding of the limitations to this study is important as the results are presented.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary and Discussion of Results

Overview

The final chapter of this study begins with an overview of the study, which will assist the reader’s understanding of this study on deep, systemic change in its entirety. The overview includes a review of the background of the study, a restatement of the research problem and a review of the methodology used in this study. The findings of this study on deep, systemic change in retrospection, which were presented in chapter IV, are also reviewed. Following the findings, the implications for this study are presented along with recommendations for further study. This chapter concludes with remarks from the researcher.

The purpose of this qualitative, critical case study of Reading Elementary School’s implementation of balanced literacy was to examine the change experience as described by staff members as they reflect back on their involvement with a multi-year implementation process around a balanced literacy initiative. Participants were asked to both describe the implementation process in retrospect and reflect on what, if any, impact the change experience had on the staff at the “street level” (Lipsky, 1980). In a postmodern society change is the norm; therefore, the better understanding we have of
deep, systemic change, the better we will be at adapting to it. The increasing demands put on schools to shift from universal access to universal academic success for all students puts school organizations in a constant mode of change, always seeking best practices to increase student performance.

This study’s purpose was to learn how teachers made sense of their change experience and possibly translated that experience into changes in their knowledge, professional practice, and their internal understanding during implementation years later, in their current practice. How teachers see themselves as professionals, understand their work, and shape their practice are significant factors in their responses to change (Elmore, 2005). Through engaging the teachers who had previously worked through a significant change process in a case study school, this study sought to find the missing pieces that explain more about the experiences teachers go through in the change process and how those experiences might relate to the factors that previous research has associated with successful change. Additionally, this study explored if and how teachers’ personal experiences with that change process was associated with how they see themselves as teachers and how their teaching practices are shaped today.

This study is somewhat unique in that it examined the change process in retrospect after the process was completed. Observing change as it unfolds can be a reliable source of understanding “just what is going on,” but retrospection can be a powerful way of understanding how people make sense of an experience long after it is over and learning how people are actually changed by being part of the experience under study. Better understanding of this aspect of change can be important for schools, because teachers hold the power to resist or implement and sustain new strategies at the
classroom level. Another unique aspect of this case study is that it also examined if and how participants internalized their deep, systemic change experience in ways that had any lasting effect on teaching assumptions, beliefs, and practices years later.

Finally, this study was conducted as a retrospective case analysis requiring the participants to reflect on their change experiences years after they had lived through it. Through participants’ retrospective reflections long after the change process had been experienced and completed offered a new perspective in examining deep, systemic change. The school selected for this case study successfully implemented a major systemic change around balanced literacy, but subsequently fell prey to district enrollment decline resulting in closure of the building before this study was completed. As a result, study participants were dispersed to other schools, but their experiences together as they implemented the balanced literacy initiative at Reading Elementary stayed with them long after they left the school and became part of another school community. This heightened the richness of participants’ recollections and reflections and made this case a powerful source for retrospective analysis.

*Recap of Study Problem and Purpose*

With increased mandates on schools to achieve greater results with all students, it is important that school systems operate at peak levels. Schools must employ the best strategies and practices to obtain the results mandated by the No Child Left Behind legislation. With this in mind, it is likely that schools will be in a constant mode of change, forever searching for best practices to meet the individual needs of all students. The more familiar and comfortable teachers are with being in a constant mode of change,
the more likely they will adapt and implement the changes at the classroom level. This study looked to gain an understanding of how teachers processed their experience of deep, systemic change so it may be used to build capacity for future deep level change initiatives.

This study sought to learn how teachers’ retrospective understanding of their experiences with the change process related to, clarified, extended beyond, or ran contrary to each of Meister’s (2000) five elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change that she identified as necessary for the implementation of deep, systemic change. This study also wanted to know what teachers’ remembered experiences suggested about the elements of personal change that included new learning, possible changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. Additionally, this study sought to examine any lasting effect the change experience may have had on teachers in terms of how they see themselves as teachers and how their teaching practices are shaped today.

“Qualitative research can reveal how all parts work together to form a whole” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). A qualitative research design was used for this critical case study as the change process was examined in retrospect. The historical perspective of this case with the rich stories shared by the participants allowed each theme in Meister’s framework on change implementation to be examined along with other themes that surfaced. Examining the thick, rich data from stories that were gathered through focus groups, individual interviews, and written narratives not only allowed me to examine the whole change process after it had been completed, but also the parts that participants identified as critical to their personal change.
To complete the data analysis of this study, both inductive and deductive analyses were used. First, the three data sets of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives were examined inductively to identify any indigenous themes and subthemes that were present. Following this analysis, the coded data sets were deductively analyzed against the elements of personal change, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. These data were also analyzed for any effect that the change experience may have had on teacher perspectives or practices today. Next, an additional deductive analysis was completed against Meister’s (2000) framework for change implementation. The raw data were deductively analyzed to see if any examples of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change were prominent in the data. Finally, the analyses were compared to identify whether this case study data clarified, confirmed, extended, or ran contrary to the elements identified by Meister.

Review of Findings

As the researcher, I was able to find answers to my research questions through my data analysis of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narrative data sets. The indigenous themes that I was able to identify in my inductive analysis included teacher empowerment, time, and building culture. I will first present how these findings were realized against Meister’s (2000) framework of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change, and then present the findings realized in the analysis against the elements of personal change, i.e., new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. It is critical for the reader to
understand how my indigenous themes are related to the two prefigured frames of (a) elements associated with implementation of deep, systemic change and (b) personal change.

**Teacher Empowerment Related to Meister's Themes**

The indigenous theme of teacher empowerment was found to be related to Meister's (2000) themes of professional development, collaboration, and leadership. The staff members at Reading Elementary School were empowered to organize and plan their own professional development sessions. The data outlined that the professional development that teachers explained was purposeful to them and often non-traditional in format. Moreover, professional development was described as being teacher-initiated, teacher-determined, teacher-delivered, and teacher-assessed against the goals of the balanced literacy initiative. This information helps to clarify Meister's theme of professional development, which did not specify professional development as being teacher-initiated. Further nuance is offered on Meister's theme of professional development through examples of how professional dialogue about student results and student needs stimulated professional learning through book studies, teacher work sessions, staff meetings, and other formal and informal learning experiences for staff. The link in the data between teacher empowerment, student centered collaboration, and adult learning is the major finding of this study related to professional development.

Meister's theme of collaboration was strongly reflected in this research as the subtheme of supportive climate was identified under teacher empowerment. Collaborative efforts between staff members were not only described by the participants
in this study, but the participants also recalled the supportive climate in which the collaboration occurred. Additionally, participants repeatedly linked teacher empowerment, collaboration, and supportive climate as mutually reinforcing elements. This link between the three elements stands out as the major clarification and extension of Meister's collaboration theme in this study. Participants seemed to internalize the interdependence between doing collaborative work, functioning as empowered professionals, and sustaining both with a supportive climate.

Meister's theme of leadership was also clarified and extended by this research. Throughout the data the principal, as a leader, was directly linked with teacher empowerment. Numerous examples recounted how the principal encouraged initiative, honored teacher ideas, supported experimentation, and realigned focus and resources to support a major teacher-led change initiative. This empowering leadership was a critical factor in the deep, systemic change as a small group of teachers became knowledgeable and led the charge of the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School. The indigenous theme of teacher empowerment emerged from the inductive data analysis in ways that encompassed Meister's elements of professional development, collaboration, and leadership providing a rich illustration of how leadership that focuses on teacher empowerment can yield dividends in the areas of professional learning and collaboration as well. The interface between leadership and teacher empowerment as they were recounted by participants in this case study of deep, systemic change gives definition to the theme of supportive climate as one in which shared ownership is the focus of the support. This, in turn, has relevance to the exercise of leadership as a means to empower people and build their capacity to both own and create successful change.
Time Related to Meister’s Themes

The indigenous theme of time adds clarification to Meister’s themes of professional development and the assessment of change. The importance associated with the allocation of time for teacher development was clearly found in the data sets of this study. Meister’s theme of professional development was not only reflected but clarified as participants recalled the amount of time allocated for professional development and captured for professional learning through a wide variety of means, e.g., book studies, work sessions, staff meetings, and trainings.

The implementation of new teaching strategies over time was an example of the link between time and Meister’s theme of assessment of change. Study participants recalled how they implemented new teaching strategies in stages rather than all at once. The participants recalled reflecting and evaluating one new strategy before another one was implemented. This act of assessing change in stages as a means for reaching implementation fidelity and impact confirmed the importance of Meister’s theme. When linked with the allocation of the time subtheme, assessing change becomes both a formative and a summative strategy for improving student achievement.

The participants in this case study reflected on their change experiences and recalled the patience of the staff for increasing student achievement. The participants told stories of the staff taking time to assess the effects of balanced literacy through student assessment over a period of time. These stories also illustrated how the staff was able to stay open to what they would learn through assessment of the change process and use that learning to shape their work going forward. In this fashion, assessment of change
can be linked back to empowerment and, through both empowerment and collaboration, to the flexibility to learn together and discover new understandings of the work together.

Meister’s themes of professional development and the assessment of change were clearly strong in the data. Moreover, this study’s indigenous theme of time emerged as a critical lever in creating the conditions for professional development and the opportunity to assess the progress of change. Since both professional learning and assessment of change can be associated through the data back to teacher empowerment and shared ownership, time also emerges as an overarching theme as illustrated through the rich stories of the study participants as they reflected on their deep, systemic change experience.

Building Culture Related to Meister’s Themes

This study found the theme of building culture to be interwoven through all five of Meister’s themes of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change. The most prominent characteristic of school culture was broad-based shared ownership. The participants reflected on their change experience and recalled a shared vision of learning for all with a focus on literacy. This study also found strong relationships where collaboration and sharing along with assessing the effects of balanced literacy were identified as routine practices at Reading Elementary School.

Shared leadership between a teacher cohort (the ones who initiated the balanced literacy project), the teaching staff in general, and the principal was also found throughout the data at this elementary school in ways that gave clarification to Meister’s theme of leadership. The leadership described in this case recognized teacher initiative,
encouraged experimentation, celebrated success, fostered broad-based ownership, and found ways to support the work through allocation of time and other resources. This case illustrates leadership that is all about capacity building that translates directly to teacher empowerment and ownership. With this emphasis, leadership was used to shape a culture for continuous learning that is self-directing and self-sustaining.

This study found a culture of empowerment to be an overarching theme linked directly to the focus on leadership for building capacity and shared ownership. Again, what emerges from this study is the sense of how interwoven Meister’s five themes of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change behave in this case. Building culture emerged from the data as a critical element in this case that both serves to unify Meister’s five themes and to extend the meaning of each of the themes in this case study’s deep, systemic change to balanced literacy. Meister’s five elements were associated with building the culture of empowerment and shared ownership and the culture of empowerment was found to be a critical lever in participants’ recalled experiences of getting to deep implementation with the balanced literacy initiative.

*Personal Change against Indigenous Theme of Teacher Empowerment*

Also of interest in this study was the personal change process, as expressed by the people who lived through the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School. The personal change experiences that the participants articulated happened both during the implementation and after the experience was over. In looking at whether that experience had any lasting impact on participants as professionals, a
number of examples emerged. Through the three data sets, this study found support for the elements of personal change which include new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. Participants shared examples of all three areas of personal change, many of which related strongly to the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment during the implementation of balanced literacy.

Looking back, the participants of this study described new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice, all related to teacher empowerment that occurred during the implementation years. For instance, the findings in this study outlined illustrations of the principal and teachers learning together, teachers learning from each other, teachers conducting inquiry together (using data, readings, and other evidence), and teachers identifying priorities for new learning. Through the data, I also found that staff developed habits of reflecting on current practices and were forever searching to learn about new evidence-based strategies. The staff worked together to target professional learning goals and often learned their new practices from other teachers.

These examples of new learning were possible because of teacher empowerment and fostered additional teacher empowerment. The teachers at Reading Elementary School were empowered to steer their own learning. This study found that teachers who were in control of the implementation of new practices to improve student performance would gain new learning and achieve a deeper level of personal change because they owned their own learning.

This study also found support that empowered teachers did experience a change in assumptions and beliefs during the deep, systemic change process. In retrospect, the
teachers gained a respect for change as a process in and of itself. After the successful change was completed, the participants of this study recalled a new belief that change was a process and that empowered teachers could put value on the process itself. The empowerment of teachers also allowed one small group of teachers to initiate the change to balanced literacy. Having been empowered themselves, the original small group, or cohort, allowed the rest of the staff to share ownership for the initiative, thus growing the culture of empowerment through their teacher-to-teacher collaborations and shared decisions. This link between initiative and empowerment and learning and the value of the process associated with making those links was a new assumption as previous implementations were done by the entire staff at one time and not necessarily led by teachers.

The empowered teachers bought into the balanced literacy program, which allowed it to evolve throughout the implementation years. The teachers were empowered to direct the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School which included time for reflection and the assessment of new practices. The practice of reflection was a change in their belief systems and practices. Teacher empowerment was critical to the personal change process, as it supported and allowed for the changes in assumptions and beliefs of those involved with the change (i.e., it created broad-based ownership).

Changes in practice were also found related to the theme of teacher empowerment as the personal change to balanced literacy was studied. This study found that teacher practices altered from textbook-driven to student-driven. As teachers became experts in the teaching of reading, they developed a common language between themselves, their
students, and their colleagues. The instruction that teachers provided during the implementation years was assessment-driven and individualized based on student needs. These changes in practice were the result of the empowerment of teachers as they steered the implementation of balanced literacy. This study found the changes in practice as part of the personal change experience related to teacher empowerment, a critical theme in this case study during the implementation years.

Teacher Empowerment- Years Later

Of particular interest in this study was the impact that the personal change experience had on the participants years later. Years had passed since the successful implementation of balanced literacy took place. Since years had passed, the environment, building, and colleagues with which the participants of this study work have changed, and the level of teacher empowerment that exists in their current work environment varies. Some participants described using the strategies and assessments, such as guided reading groups, centers, DRA, and the comprehension strategies that were learned during the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School, while others did not. This study found that the level of teacher empowerment that existed in the current building depended on the leadership in the building as well as any mandates that the building had to follow. The level of described teacher empowerment in participants’ new environments seemed to parallel the amount of personal change participants carried over into their practice today.
Personal Change against the Indigenous Theme of Time

As the personal change experience of the participants was studied, support for new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice were found that are related to the indigenous theme of time. The personal change that took place during the implementation years at Reading Elementary school included new learning that was dependent on time. Through examination of the three data sets, the staff at the case study school took time to master new strategies. Participants were also given time to learn how to organize and level the materials needed for balanced literacy. Time was also allocated for teacher development or new learning. Through the allocation of time, the participants of this study articulated new learning that occurred during the implementation of balanced literacy.

The indigenous theme of time was also related to a change in assumptions and beliefs as the personal change to balanced literacy was examined through the three data sets. This study found that the implementation of balanced literacy was completed in stages. The stages of implementation occurred over time, which challenged existing belief systems of the teachers who were accustomed to full implementation of new programs happening at once. The change at this case study school allowed time to implement the new program as well as time to reflect on the new practices associated with it. The value put on time during this deep, systemic change to balanced literacy was a change in belief system for the staff at Reading Elementary School. The essence of that change is a shift from thinking about implementation as an “all at once” process to
thinking about the work of implementation as guided change that happens in stages, with new learning and adaptation at intervals along the way.

As the staff at this case study school experienced a deep personal change, changes in practice related to the theme of time during the implementation were shared by the participants. The participants in this study articulated several changes in practice such as book clubs, monthly grade level meetings, individualized student assessments, and a summer literacy camp. These changes in practice required a new use of time which was identified as an indigenous theme in this case study of deep, systemic change.

Time-Years Later

This study is interested in the long term effects that the personal change to balanced literacy had on the perspectives or practices of the participants in this study. The new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice related to time have not completely carried over in teachers’ professional practices today as articulated in the data. The three data sets illustrated stories from the participants of this study where their current working environments do not allow adequate time for deep, systemic change. Although some teachers continue to implement the balanced literacy components in their current classroom, the extra time that it takes to collaborate around continued share learning is not acknowledged in their new environment. Neither was time to reflect as a group on new practices or time for personal growth found in the descriptions of current practices of most study participants. As this study was done in retrospection after the change process had been completed, the participants articulated the prominence of the theme of time in their shared experience implementing the balanced
literacy program at Reading Elementary. Unfortunately, while participants still expressed conviction about the value of time for collaboration, shared learning, and assessment of their change work, today most are in an environment that treats time much differently. Along with the loss of time for collaboration, participants described a loss in the area of empowerment as well. In this way, time emerges as a critical factor in both achieving and sustaining personal change and evolution.

**Personal Change against the Indigenous Theme of Building Culture**

In retrospect, the participants of this study expressed new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice related to building culture that occurred during the implementation years. As the personal change experience was examined through the lens of new learning, a building culture that included colleague interdependence was found. This study found that the staff at Reading Elementary School learned to rely on each other for new information, new ideas and new learning. The culture at this case study school allowed for this to take place as participants also learned to share the lessons that they developed. The building culture, including broad-based shared ownership, at Reading Elementary School supported the staff working together and strategizing to improve classroom practice, ultimately increasing student achievement. As the participants reflected on their personal change experience, this study found staff members who articulated their new learning to include colleague dependence and the value of collaborative or shared lesson development.

The building culture of this case study school is related to changes in assumptions and beliefs that occurred as the participants reflected back on their personal change
experience during the implementation years of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School. This study found new beliefs in support of teamwork, consensus building, and a shared responsibility for all students as critical components of the personal change as articulated by the participants. The staff at Reading Elementary School worked together as a team during the implementation years and used consensus when decisions for implementation needed to be made. As everyone shared in the responsibility of student achievement, the staff worked as a team in improving the balanced literacy program. A shared responsibility and the importance of working together in making decisions for the school was a new belief for many of the staff at Reading, but this study found that the building culture that was in existence at the time fostered and nurtured those new beliefs.

This study also found the personal change experience to include alterations in practice related to the theme of building culture. In retrospect, the participants noted changes in practice that included sharing materials, sharing ideas and lessons, and collaborating with colleagues. During the implementation of balanced literacy at Reading Elementary School, the positive building culture that was in existence supported teacher empowerment and provided a rich environment for changes in practice to occur. Participants recalled the creation of a shared literacy library resource center where all teachers contributed their own classroom materials for use by the entire staff. The building culture at Reading Elementary School allowed teachers to collaborate with colleagues and share ideas, lessons, and resources – all signs of both an empowered and interdependent culture.
This case study is not only interested in examining the personal change experience during the implementation, it is also interested in any long-term effects that the experience may have brought into teaching perspectives or practices of the participants today. Although years have passed and the environment, building, and colleagues with which the participants of this study work have changed, this study found building culture to be a critical theme to examine for carryover into practices years later. Participants shared clear differences related to building culture in their new setting that have an effect on their practices today. The data illustrated that the personal change experience and knowledge of balanced literacy individually exists within the participants of this study today; however, the building culture in which they currently work doesn’t always allow for the support and collaboration that existed at Reading Elementary School. The personal change experience that included new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice were personally taken by the participants of this study to the other buildings; but the data in this study supports that the various building cultures affect whether or not the new changes in practice are transferred to the new building.

Implication of Findings

A New Lens for Change

I began this case study with the intention of learning more about systemic and personal change associated with implementing a major change initiative at the school.
level by using Meister’s (2000) lens of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change. My intention was to use her lens to see if it offered an understanding of what went on in this particular case during its implementation of balanced literacy. I looked for ways that clarified, confirmed, extended or ran contrary to the lens of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership and the assessment of change. The results of the study both extend and clarify Meister’s lens and support a new lens that places Meister’s five elements within a culture of broad-based shared ownership linked to changes in classroom practice by teacher empowerment (see figure 2).

Critical to a new lens that this case suggests is the notion of teacher empowerment as the lever of change. In this case, teacher empowerment took the form of initiating, shaping, assessing, and adjusting as the change initiative emerged, took hold, and permeated the school. Teacher empowerment was evident in decisions that addressed both adult and student learning. The lever of teacher empowerment for this case interacted with and extended all five elements of Meister’s lens and suggested how those elements might represent a system of both process and content that help focus the work of empowered teachers and assist them in a reciprocal process of building a culture of shared ownership and shaping a shared classroom practice of evidence based strategies. A major finding in this case is a culture which is characterized by broad-based shared ownership for both student and adult learning, while teacher empowerment as a driving force behind the implementation of change impacting classroom practice.
Figure 2: A New Lens for Understanding Change

- Lens
- Assessment of Change
- Vision
- Process
- Development of Common Purpose
- Collaboration
- Content
- Buy In
- Professional Development
- Leadership
- Adult Learning

Teacher Empowerment as the change lever

Broad-based Shared Practice Validated by evidence of student learning

Culture Classroom Practice

Adult Learning

Professional Development

Collaboration

Content

Buy In

Development of Common Purpose

Process

Vision

Assessment of Change

Broad-based Shared Practice Validated by evidence of student learning
Figure 2 illustrates a proposed lens for understanding this case study. This study sought to develop a better understanding of change that permeates a school and reshapes classroom practice for better student results. The case provided an illustration of one school's transformation to broad-based shared practice validated through evidence of student learning. This study has identified a culture that has a shared ownership for student and adult learning along with shared classroom practice. In this case, the culture of shared ownership for adult and student learning appeared to deepen as the teachers shaped shared classroom practices supported by evidence of student learning. Teachers' descriptions of the change process illustrated how changes in the culture and classroom practice were both fueled by teacher empowerment and supported by the elements in Meister's lens. As culture and classroom practice interacted and impacted each other, teacher empowerment was a constant means by which the staff engaged with both the content and processes of change as suggested by Meister's lens and clarified by the findings of this study.

The process system suggested by the findings of this study and noted in figure 2 places Meister's elements of vision into a circle of influence with collaboration and the assessment of change. The findings of this study complete the picture of the process of change by adding, "development of a common purpose" to this circle of process for linking changes in culture with changes in classroom practice. The culture within this building encouraged a process where there was development of a common purpose through collaboration and shared vision. The school began with a vision, collaborated regarding the vision and came to a common purpose. This continually evolved over the years of implementation as they assessed the change and their vision evolved. This
process, by which the staff in this case study school operated, both influenced and was
influenced by the culture which, in turn, impacted classroom practice.

This study found that while this system of process was continually evolving, there
was also a system of content evolving. This system of content included Meister’s
elements of professional development and leadership. Critical in this system of content
was the adult learning that occurred as a result of professional development. Teacher
initiative stimulated adult learning, and as adult learning took place, teachers who were
learning to demonstrate increased initiative, leadership and ownership. As teacher
leadership in the school strengthened, there was more buy in from the staff. As more
teachers bought deeper into the change, they initiated more professional learning and
used their learning to shape classroom practice. As teachers became more vested in their
shared practice, they increased their assessment of learning to refine that practice. In this
fashion, the two systems of content and process worked like inter-connected gears with a
power source of teacher empowerment operating to connect culture and classroom
practice as mirrored fronts for the manifestation of change in the school.

Like the system of process, the system of content was both powered by and
contributed to the culture of broad-based shared ownership resulting in broad-based
shared practice. As figure 2 illustrates, both the system of process and the system of
content were critical to the emergence of a culture focused on and supportive of
substantive change in classroom practice tied to evidence of student learning. The
content system gives the process system its substance and the process system gives the
content system its momentum. Both systems in this case functioned in an environment of
teacher empowerment which may account for the emergence of both a culture of shared
ownership for adult and student learning mirrored by shared classroom practice based on evidence of student learning.

Discovering the New Lens through Three Levels of Analysis

The new lens that I propose attempts to make sense out of the “messiness” of systemic change. As the researcher, I would not have reached this level of understanding the change process in this case without first understanding the data using both inductive deductive analyses approaches. By letting the data speak freely through an inductive analysis, I discovered the indigenous elements of culture, time and teacher empowerment. By looking deductively at the three elements of personal change, I uncovered the essence of how culture and classroom practice feed off of and help shape one another. Finally, through a deductive analysis using Meister’s lens, I was able to see how the five elements Meister isolated from the literature provide some basis for understanding a case of deep, systemic change at a school level. I was also able to add some context to Meister’s lens by linking the elements to a culture of shared ownership for adult and student learning, the shaping of a shared practice supported by evidence of student learning and the power of teacher empowerment to fuel a change process.

Integrating the Theme of Time with the New Lens

Figure 2 captures an illustration of how Meister’s elements and additional elements isolated in this case might work together in schools where systemic change emerges through an initial teacher initiative on a small scale and blossoms into a school-wide change initiative on a large scale. There is, however, a third theme that emerged
from the data for this study that is not directly illustrated by figure 2. That is the theme of
time. As consistently illustrated by participants’ descriptions and recollections, systemic
change in the case study school unfolded over a period of several years. Two points
relative to time appear key to understanding this case. First, conditions in the school
allowed a few teachers to start small, learn from their experiences, and share their work
with the staff in a safe and unpressured environment. As the first group of teachers
learned, time was created to share that learning and engage others. This led to more time
for learning and engagement and, eventually, to major changes in how time was used as a
resource in the school. In figure 2, the two circles representing systems of process and
content revolved slowly at first, then picked up momentum as teacher empowerment and
learning grew and evidence of student learning solidified elements of practice. In this
case, time for allowing the change to emerge, expand, and eventually permeate the school
was a prominent feature. Additionally, the use of time to learn, apply new classroom
practices, reflect on how those practices are working, assess evidence of student learning,
and make refinements became part of the culture of share ownership and part of the way
the school functioned. Both aspects of time for the work to evolve and time allocated as
a resource to support that evolution complete the picture of change in this case study
school.

Summary

In summary, it appears that the deep, systemic change process as retold and
experienced by the staff at Reading Elementary School is a complex process that
included support for all of Meister’s (2000) elements for the deep implementation of
change. The complexity drove this researcher to propose a new lens for examining systemic change. A culture with broad-based shared ownership for adult and student learning both shaped and was shaped through systems of process and content. Also these two systems helped shape a broad-based shared practice that was validated by student learning by linking the work of shaping classroom practice to the work of shaping the school culture. Meister’s elements for deep implementation of change were included as either process or content elements in the proposed lens, while teacher empowerment is suggested as the lever for change. The complex process of change cannot be fully understood without the acknowledgment of the complexity and interdependence of the elements realized in this study.

The elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change were identified in the thick, rich stories that were gathered through the data collections of focus group interviews, individual interviews, and written narratives, but how those elements manifest themselves in the actual change that occurred in Reading Elementary are only understood through the indigenous themes of teacher empowerment, time, and building culture. The three data sets provided support for the indigenous themes as they provided clarity and extensions to the existing framework found in the literature.

Meister’s elements of professional development, collaboration, and leadership were strongly related to the indigenous theme of teacher empowerment. The indigenous theme of time was most strongly related to Meister’s elements of professional development and assessment of change. Building culture as an indigenous theme was interwoven throughout the elements of vision, collaboration, professional development,
leadership and the assessment of change. Additionally, Meister’s theme of collaboration was extended with the indigenous theme of empowerment connected with broad-based ownership. The strength of empowerment and shared ownership in this study suggest that Meister’s framework might be more powerful if collaboration was identified as a subtheme under empowerment and ownership.

All of the elements that the literature identified as necessary for the implementation of deep, systemic change were also present in this case study school. Additionally, this case study also identified the three indigenous themes of teacher empowerment, time, and building culture as the deep, systemic change and personal change to balanced literacy took place at Reading Elementary School several years ago. What stands out, in the way this study verifies Meister’s themes and extends those themes with the three indigenous themes, is the interconnectedness of the elements captured in the themes. The linkages between leadership, time (as a resource) empowerment (with shared ownership) and culture seem to serve as a frame for another set of links between vision, collaboration, professional development, and assessment of change. The first set of links appears to shape the conditions that support the implementation of the balanced literacy initiative and the second set of links seem to shape the work that those conditions enable.

The themes of teacher empowerment, time, and building culture along with Meister’s elements of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change all had an impact on whether a teacher experienced a deep level personal change with new learning, changes in assumptions and beliefs, and changes in practice. This study determined that the themes named above were associated with
whether the personal change carried over into practice years later. This study found that the new learning and practices gained during the successful change implementation that teachers can control individually carried over quite consistently into their current practices in new school settings.

New learning and practices that need a culture of support, leadership, allocation of time, and empowerment, however, did not carry over for people who found themselves in schools where the critical culture and leadership characteristics were missing. Thus, new learning and practices related to collaboration, professional development, shared vision, and assessment of learning were difficult to sustain in settings where the culture is not one characterized by teacher empowerment, allocation of time, and shared ownership.

The leadership, mandates, and priorities within participants’ current settings were found to impact whether the change experience at Reading Elementary transferred notably in the practices of the teachers outside of their sphere of control within the classroom. The teachers’ current building culture hindered some of the teachers from bringing their change experience into their current practice. The teachers who experienced successful, deep level change brought their new learning and belief systems into their new settings, but if the culture did not support their belief system, it became difficult to sustain new practices gained at Reading Elementary.

The data from this study suggest that teachers who have been a part of deep, systemic change and moved into a culture that does not possess the same elements needed for successful change implementation may confront a conflict between their new professional learning, assumptions, beliefs, and practices and the norms established in their new environment. In the case of this study, participants who experienced this
conflict became professionally dissatisfied and unhappy in their new setting. These findings suggest that, if teachers who experience deep systemic change in one school move into a culture that is misaligned with who they are professionally as a result of the change experience, they will have a difficult time applying their new knowledge, assumptions, beliefs and practices in the new setting. Moreover, this misalignment between the ways the change experience has changed them, may lead teachers to become dissatisfied and frustrated.

The question is whether such feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration will lead teachers to try and recreate the culture they left or simply capitulate to the new one. In this study, we are concerned with how teachers change as a result of being part a successful implementation of a change initiative. Specifically, we were looking for personal changes that can be associated with changes in the school that support successful implementation. While this study illuminated some aspects of personal change associated with the deep implementation of a major systemic change initiative, the data could not examine the ability to sustain personal changes and to use them to facilitate subsequent successful change initiatives in the same setting since all study participants had gone to new schools subsequent to the closing of Reading Elementary. This study did, however, illustrate the roadblocks teachers can experience when trying to sustain their new learning, assumptions, beliefs, and practices in a new setting where the conditions that supported deep implementation do not exist.
Applications of Study Findings

As schools continue to be responsible for meeting the high demands for increased student achievement put upon them by current legislation, it is imperative for them to be operating at peak levels. In order for schools to operate at peak levels, they must employ the best teaching strategies and methods for student achievement. To meet this challenge, teachers must be familiar with deep, systemic change as they will likely be in a constant mode of change, searching for the current best practices, some of which will require fundamental change to the way teachers typically view and carry out their work.

This study examined the deep, systemic change process as retold by the teachers who lived through the experience hoping to learn what the teachers themselves associate with the success of the change process. The assumption that guided this study is that, by gaining a better understanding of how teachers processed their successful change experience, we may also gain a clearer understanding of what teachers believe is needed for a successful implementation of future deep change initiatives. Additionally, this study attempted to learn if teachers transferred any part of their personal change experience into their professional practice years later.

There are clearly applications that may be derived from the implications of this case study. One strong implication from this study is the theme of culture as a driving force behind all other elements for deep, systemic change, including personal change. Teacher empowerment emerged as a critical factor associated with culture and an important lever for the implementation of change at the classroom level. Together, culture for shared ownership of adult and student learning and empowerment of teachers
to act on that culture served as the foundation for all the other elements found in this case study. This suggests that empowerment without a focus on ownership for adult and student learning might not yield the level of change in classroom practice achieved in this case.

It is important to closely examine the indigenous theme of building culture as it surfaced in this study on deep, systemic change. From the results of this study, one can infer that the culture in a school with broad-based shared ownership can be a driving force for achieving successful, deep implementation of a systemic change. Meister’s five elements for change implementation all emerged as prominent components, but this study delineated that a building culture for broad-based shared ownership is of value when teachers are responsible for implementing the deep change. The data from this case study suggest that the culture within a building is relevant to any or all parts of Meister’s (2000) framework of vision, collaboration, professional development, leadership, and the assessment of change. Conversely, each of the elements of Meister’s framework can be used to build the culture of empowerment or broad-based shared leadership and ownership.

As the participants in this study tried to make sense of their deep, systemic change experiences after they had taken place, this study found that it was the attention to a specific kind of building culture that associated with whether the change happened at the classroom door (Lipsky, 1980). The results of this study suggest that how people within a building relate to one another around a common purpose becomes manifested in the culture. This study illustrates how a shared vision can be formed as a group of people who collaborate and are willing to follow each other’s lead. This case also showed that,
as a group of people worked together and collaborated for shared learning, their shared vision grew and evolved to one that fed a culture of shared responsibility for adult and student learning.

Professional development became an effective element of implementation in this case where the building culture was supportive of adult learning. Adults learning together about the new initiative fostered leadership among a staff which, in turn, helped to steer the next steps of implementation. When people at the classroom level have a valued voice in how the implementation gets done, this study suggests there is more buy in, more shared learning, more accountability for results and, thus, greater odds for success. Teachers in the case school became reflective learners, and because the staff shared the same vision and commitment to achieving it, they reflected on their practice to see any successes or improvements that were needed. The continued assessment of the change is an element identified in the literature and also implicated in this study is critical feature of a culture of shared accountability for results.

This study was also interested in learning if the deep, systemic change experience had any long lasting effects on the teachers’ classroom practices. The reflections of the participants of this study led to even stronger conclusions that building culture is not only relevant to achieving deep, systemic change, it is also relevant to how teachers carry the experience of that change into their future work. As years passed and the study participants transitioned into different school environments with a significant number of different people, characteristics of the building culture were often given as the reason why the participants did not carry over balanced literacy practices or other changes in professional practice into their new schools. The participants who did describe balanced
literacy practices that carried over into their new school environments elaborated that it
was not the same magnitude of a change. Some of the individual practices were carried
over, but the collaborative efforts and shared vision was missing from the new
environment.

Other participants shared how their beliefs and new learning about teaching
reading carried over into their new school environment, but they were not able to fully act
on them in their new environments; thus, they experienced limits to how much the
Reading Elementary experience continued to affect their overall professional practice in
their new settings. The results of this study implied that the building culture was a
driving force during the implementation of deep, systemic change and continued to be a
factor as the “changed” teacher tried to transfer his or her experience into a new school
environment.

Another implication of this study with potential broad applications is teacher
empowerment. As this study sought to learn more about how deep, systemic change
happened at the classroom door, example after example of teachers taking initiative,
teachers learning from one another, teachers reflecting on their work and making
adjustments, and teachers setting directions for further work emerged. The empowerment
of the teachers to lead and shape the deep, systemic change may account for the fact that
they developed increasing vested interest in the success of the implemented change.
When a small group of teachers initiated a deep change that fell within the shared vision
of the staff and the whole staff became empowered to build on their lead, the group
collectively became energized to achieve success. This study suggests that a school
culture with broad-based shared ownership can begin with a small group of empowered
teachers who, in turn, help empower others. The involvement of teachers from the "grass roots" of a change in this case suggests that change initiated by a few can result in large-scale change implemented at the classroom level when conditions encourage widening the circle of shared ownership and decision making prerogative.

The implications from this case study include the theme of culture as a driving force behind all other elements for deep, systemic change including personal change. The most prominent characteristic of school culture was broad-based shared ownership. This study suggests that to increase the likelihood of deep, systemic change within a school building, time spent building a culture that includes a shared ownership by all is worthwhile. In addition, the implications of teacher empowerment as a factor in implementing change at the classroom level is a prominent finding from this study, as school organizations must rely on teachers to implement these changes within their own classrooms. To increase the likelihood of the change being implemented wholeheartedly by teachers, this study highlights the importance of empowering teachers to drive the change, create shared ownership for specific strategies associated with the change, and be accountable for the impact of the change.

Recommendations for Future Research

This case study, conducted as a retrospective case analysis, was completed to develop an understanding of how teachers process and attribute the successful implementation of deep, systemic change. In gaining that information, the hope was to offer insight to other school leaders who are faced with change initiatives on a recurring basis. As this study identified support for Meister's (2000) elements for successful
change implementation, it also noted the significance of a collaborative building culture characterized by broad-based shared ownership for adult and student learning. Further research on the development of a culture that pivots around adult and student learning would add to the already existing body of literature on culture and the link between culture and changes in classroom practice.

More research on the long term effects of personal change when teachers are part of deep systemic change at a school level might provide insight on how teachers can replicate the experience for themselves and how school leaders can use the success of one change initiative to shape the next one. It is suggested that any further research be done in a more timely fashion immediately following the change implementation. This would aid in the recollections and memories of the study participants as they recall their experiences and support the use of a participatory action research approach. It would also be interesting to follow the personal changes of a group of teachers who were a part of the same deep, systemic change but not reassigned and divided as a staff. Further research as to whether future change initiatives were successful with the same staff in the same building culture would be enlightening.

Concluding Remarks

Since I was a participant observer in this case study research, I had a firsthand experience with the changes that occurred at Reading Elementary School. As I lived through the deep, systemic change to balanced literacy, I was often amazed and intrigued by the thought of examining what it was, at this particular school building that made things “work.” When I became a school administrator my curiosity grew as I was
working towards achieving this same type of deep, systemic change in my new school district. Clearly, what I was experiencing in my new school was not the same; and so, this research was born.

As this research began years after the staff at Reading Elementary School had either left the school district or been transferred to another building, I began to talk and gather data for my research study. A unique element to this study is the fact that I was able to reconvene this group of staff members who were excited and willing to relive those “Reading Elementary years.” It has been almost four years since our final year together at Reading Elementary School, but when this group got together, the memories felt like yesterday. Perhaps this speaks to the impact of the successful change experience had on this group of professionals. Truly, what existed at this case study school was remarkable and worth studying.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Letter of Approval
Date: November 13, 2006

To: Patricia Reeves, Principal Investigator
   Donna Anderson, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 06-05-06

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "The Implementation of Balanced Literacy in a Title I Elementary School and the Role of Teacher Leaders" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: November 13, 2007
Appendix B

Focus Group Questions
Focus Group Questions

1) Do you feel that balanced literacy was successfully implemented throughout the elementary? If so, why? Or why not?

2) Through our discussion today I hope to gain some insights as to what accounted for the way that balanced literacy was implemented at Lessenger Elementary School. What are some ideas that come to mind? How did the implementation take place? Who was responsible? (each person will have a chance to respond).

3) I'd like you to think back to the spring of 2000. This is when balanced literacy was first introduced to the entire Lessenger Elementary teaching staff. What was the mindset of the staff at this time regarding the teaching of literacy?

4) Let's talk about the leadership in the building. Who were the leaders for implementation of balanced literacy in this school and why do you identify them as being leaders?

5) Describe the culture and climate of Lessenger Elementary School at the beginning and, again, at the end of the five-year balanced literacy implementation process?

6) We've talked about the leadership, culture, and mindset of teachers and the implementation of balanced literacy at Lessenger Elementary School today. Are there any other ideas that you'd like to share that might contribute to my study of the implementation of the balanced literacy program at Lessenger School?
Appendix C

Individual Interview Questions
Individual Interview Questions

1. What was your role at Lessenger Elementary School during the implementation of balanced literacy?

2. How were you specifically involved with the change to balanced literacy?

3. How would you describe the degree of implementation of the balanced literacy initiative at the end of the five year implementation period?

4. Many initiatives never get off the ground, why do you think the balanced literacy initiative reached the level of implementation you described?

5. Literature suggests that in order to have successful implementation of a teacher change, vision is needed. Did Lessenger School have a shared vision? If so, was it related to balanced literacy?

6. Collaboration is also identified as needed by literature. Was their collaboration during the implementation of balanced literacy at Lessenger? If so, explain.

7. We hear a lot about professional development in schools, please explain the opportunities that existed at Lessenger School during the implementation of balanced literacy.

8. Where and who were the leaders involved with the change to balanced literacy? What was their significance?

9. The change to balanced literacy occurred over a five year span. How did the balanced literacy program evolve over this time? Were there points along the way where data was collected to monitor implementation? As a result of any monitoring, were there adjustments made in the implementation? If so, please describe those adjustments. Did you ever assess the effects of it and alter the program?
Appendix D

Written Narrative Prompts
Written Narrative Prompts

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in the focus and/or individual interviews where we discussed the implementation of Balanced Literacy at Lessenger Elementary School. The next step in the data collection of my study is to let you read your responses from the interview and use them to reflect on any impact that going through the implementation process had on you. I am including the transcription of your responses during your interview. Please take time to review, remember and reflect using the prompts below. Your written narrative will be used as data in conducting this study.

Please use the following prompts to help you reflect. Feel free add any additional comments at the end of the prompts.

1. Reflecting back, please describe your personal path and level of success implementing the change. Please, also, describe what aided or interfered with your success in implementing the change.

2. What, if any, new learning took place for you as a professional? Is any of that new learning evident in your teaching today?

3. Thinking back, did going through this implementation of a new practice (ie. Balanced literacy) challenge any personal or profession beliefs you had regarding your responsibilities as a teacher of reading? If so, how? Has this had an impact on what you believe today? If so, how?

4. Describe any specific changes in your practice that happened during the implementation of balanced literacy. Are any of those practices being used by you today?

5. Reflecting on where you are today as a professional educator, are their ways that you are different as a result of being part of the change at Lessenger Elementary?

Thank you for sharing your reflections on your experiences as part of the change to Balanced Literacy at Lessenger Elementary.
Appendix E

Written Narrative Letter
Written Narrative Letter

September 21, 2008

Dear Lessenger Friend,

As I complete the final two chapters in my dissertation study of Lessenger Elementary’s change to balanced literacy, I have one more piece of data to collect. I believe this last piece of data collection will provide great insight into my study.

Enclosed you will find written narrative prompts that I am requesting that you respond to. To help you refresh your memory, I have also enclosed the transcriptions from either a focus group interview that you participated in or the transcription of an individual interview that we did together. I realize that this was over a year ago and you have moved on to other times in your career or life. This last interesting piece of data will allow me to investigate whether or not being a part of the deep change at Lessenger influenced you professionally or impacts your practice today.

If you agree to help me (one more time) with my research study, I would greatly appreciate it. I’m enclosing a small token of gratitude in hopes that you will take a few minutes, treat yourself to a Starbuck’s coffee or treat, and reflect and respond in writing to the prompts included with this letter.

In advance, I want to thank you for your continued cooperation with this project. I would appreciate a timely response. If you could please send back your written response, along with the consent form (signed), I will then be able to analyze my data and complete my research.

Thank you,

Donna Anderson